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REPORT OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
ON THE PROGRESS MADE ON
THE HOSTING OF THE AFRICAN INCLUSIVE MARKET EXCELLENCE
CENTER (AIMEC) BY THE REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1. The thirty second Ordinary Session of the Executive Council held from 25-26 January 2018, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (EX.CL/ Dec.986-1007(XXXII)), adopted the establishment of the African Inclusive Market Excellence Center (AIMEC) and requested the Commission to submit the relevant structural, financial and legal implications, in line with the AU rules and procedures; as well as to ensure that the selection of the Member State to host AIMEC be carried out in conformity with the relevant criteria.

2. The main objective of the AIMEC is to become the recognized pan-African public-private platform on inclusive business (IB) and inclusive market (IM) policy and programming, identifying, promoting and facilitating the replication and development of best practice in policy and programming across the entire continent. In order to achieve this mission, AIMEC will need to undertake a range of activities, which are grouped into three pillars:

- Pillar One: IDENTIFY and analyze best practice policies and programmes in IB and IM by collecting existing knowledge and evidence on what works and what does not. This will include conducting a detailed mapping of IB and IM policies and programmes, developing analytical products and case studies, and disseminating information via a flagship annual publication and online information platform.
- Pillar Two: FACILITATE the replication, adoption and development of this best practice by acting as a platform for coordination and collaboration between stakeholders: brokering linkages and organising dialogue forums and by hosting an annual conference that brings together key players from across the continent.
- Pillar Three: REPLICATE best practice by providing financial incentives for the scaling of existing Inclusive Business /Inclusive Market programmes and for the piloting of innovative solutions where existing approaches are not effective. This will be done through the establishment of a Catalytic Fund which will competitively award grants aimed at policy makers, development actors and the private sector.

3. During the Thirty-Third Ordinary Session of the Union held on 09-10 February 2020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Commission presented an assessment report of the bids of the countries that offered to host the AIMEC including facilities put forward with regard to hosting the Center in line with the AU selection criteria. The assessment report was based on the visits done in November 2019.

4. The Assembly/AU/Dec.780 (XXXIII) of the aforementioned 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union took note the recommendations of the Executive Council on the Technical Evaluation Mission Report on the Hosting of the African Inclusive Market Excellence Centre (AIMEC) and decided that the Republic of Tunisia shall host the AIMEC.

5. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Commission, in collaboration with the Republic of Tunisia, to finalise the host-country agreement in accordance with the

Executive Council Decision EX.CL/195 (VII) Rev.1 of July 2005 on hosting AU Organs and subsequently mandated the Commission to submit a progress report on the operationalization of the AIMEC to the 34th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU in February 2021.

6. Pursuant to the Decision, the AUC conducted a four day working visit to the Republic of Tunisia in December 2020. The negotiation team comprised of the Office of the Bureau of the Chairperson, Office of the Legal Counsel, Department of Economic Affairs and Office of the Facilities and Management Unit.

1.1. Summary of the program of work

7. The program of work undertaken in Tunisia is summarized as follows:

- (i) Day One: Introductory meeting, meetings with government officials and visits to the proposed facilities;
- (ii) Day Two: visits to proposed facilities; and
- (iii) Day Three and Four: Discussions and negotiations on the Country Host Agreement and a wrap-up meeting at the end of the technical evaluation and negotiation mission.

II. NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS VISITED

8. With a view of reviewing and validating the readiness of the Government of the Republic of Tunisia's to host AIMEC vis-à-vis the bid that was offered and approved, the technical team visited the following Authorities and organizations; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Ministry of Trade, and other relevant Agencies of Government.

Results of the Visits

9. The Commission held very fruitful deliberations with the following Ministries and Departments: Foreign Affairs, Trade, Administrative Affairs, Revenue Authority, Central Bank, Security, Internal Affairs and a legal representative.

10. The Commission and the Government were able to agree on the major provisions of the host agreement.

11. The Government of Tunisia requested for a period not exceeding three weeks (by Mid-January) Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union to provide in writing its conclusive comments after the necessary internal consultations. Further the Government agreed to continue to hold consultations with the AUC in case of any clarifications needed.

12. Regarding the premises, the AUC expressed its sincere appreciation to the Republic of Tunisia for having located the building within an excellent location befitting of an AU entity. It may be noted that the Commission raised some concerns over security issues pertaining to the building which the government of Tunisia promised to resolve to the AU's satisfaction.

13. In regard to the office furniture and equipment, it was agreed in the host agreement that Tunisia would be guided by the AUC once the structure is approved by the relevant AU organs and in conformity with the stated Decision EX.CL/195.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The following recommendations are made for appropriate action to be undertaken:

- i. The AUC be mandated to continue working with the Government of Tunisia on finalizing and signing the host agreement;
- ii. The AUC should work with the relevant policy organs to finalise the Statute of the AIMEC;
- iii. The AUC should finalise the structure of the AIMEC and the budget working with the relevant AU organs;
- iv. The AUC should provide a progress report to the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union.

DRAFT DECISION**The Executive Council,**

1. **TAKES NOTE** of the Progress Report and its recommendations made on the Hosting of the African Inclusive Market Excellence Center (AIMEC);
2. **WELCOMES** the progress made so far in the setting up of the AIMEC;
3. **REQUESTS** the Commission to continue working with the Government of Tunisia on finalizing and signing the host agreement;
4. **ALSO REQUESTS** the AUC to work with the relevant AU Policy Organs to finalise the Statute of the AIMEC;
5. **FURTHER REQUESTS** the AUC to finalise the structure of the AIMEC and the budget working with the Permanent Representative Committee;
6. **MANDATE** the AUC to provide a progress report to the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union

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