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Concept note

Digital Conference OIE/North Africa Region

“Covid-19 in North Africa: returning to work after the Covid-19 crisis”

(Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Mauritania)

29 July 2020 (11:00-12:30 CET TIME)

Language: French

Following the appearance of Covid-19 on their territory, North African governments quickly declared a state of health emergency. Several health measures have been put in place to control the spread of the virus. These measures have had significant negative impacts on the economic activities of all North African countries. The Covid-19 outbreak have had a significant impact on the economies of North Africa, leading to declines in oil production, tourism and remittances. Disruption in global value chains and capital flows also weighed on domestic production and demand. ¹

The world of work has been deeply affected by the Covid-19 crisis. Several companies have been subject to compulsory or recommended closures without having had the opportunity to ensure the continuity of their activities. According to the ILO's immediate forecast model, working hours worldwide fell in the first quarter of 2020 by around 4.5 percent (equivalent to around 130 million full-time jobs, based on a weekly duration of 48 hours) compared to the situation before the crisis (fourth quarter 2019). By the end of the second quarter of 2020, total working hours worldwide were expected to be 10.5 percent lower than the quarter before the crisis. The pandemic has evolved, and, with it, the measures taken by governments and businesses to deal with it. For an increasing number of companies, following a mandatory or recommended closing period, returning to work became the unique way to survive.

The economic cost of the several restrictions also led states to progressively lighten them since May 2020. In light of the changing economic situation, assessing from a sub-regional perspective the impact of Covid-19 on the North African private sector and the effectiveness of the measures put in place by governments and companies, from the beginning of the crisis, stands out as a necessity. In addition, while the return to work has become an obligation for many companies, collective discussion on the subject also appears to be a good practice which will foster the formulation of joint actions.

From the onset of the crisis in Africa, IOE was keen to work alongside its African partners. Thus, in April 2020, two digital conferences (one for French-speaking North African countries and the other for English-speaking North African countries) on the theme "**Covid-19 in Africa: sharing of experiences and recommendations for the private sector**" were organized in order to quickly understand the issues and challenges the North African private sector had to face and make recommendations on how to address them. In addition to a guide to work, the IOE also produced, prospectively, in partnership with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), a Return to Work Guide (May 2020). This guide, inter alia, allows companies to assess the situation, to put in place adequate return-to-work measures, to prepare for the post-Covid-19 effects and cope with new work realities.

¹ <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/d9457562-24bd-46e7-a6d2-d98493020462/20200529-COVID-19-Response-Brief-MENA.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=n9xij8P>

Objectives:

The digital conference “**Covid-19 in Africa: returning to work after the Covid-19 crisis**” aims mainly to monitor the impact of the crisis on the North African private sector and making recommendations regarding the return to work in North Africa. More specifically, it intends to:

1. Assess the impacts of social and economic measures taken by governments in North Africa.
2. Provide examples of North African private sector actions in the fight against Covid-19.
3. Discuss strategies and realities related to the return to work in North Africa.
4. Identify common perspectives on ways to facilitate sub-regional collaborations of North African employers' organizations.

FORMAT OF THE DIGITAL CONFERENCE

Panel discussion of Employers’ organisations representatives

PRELIMINARY AGENDA (CET) (time to be confirmed)

1. Mr. Roberto Suárez, Secretary-General, IOE - **Opening remarks** (5 min)
 2. Ms. Saida Neghza, President, Business Africa - **Opening remarks** (5 min)
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3. Mr. Eric Oeschlin, Director for North Africa, International Labour Organization (7 min)
 4. Mr. Muhammed Gueye, Senior Economist, African Development Bank (7 min)
 5. Ms. Johanne Buba, Senior Economist, World Bank (7 min)

Questions:

- How did your institution respond to the Covid- 19 crisis in North Africa?
 - What are the priorities of your institution in North Africa during the post-Covid-19 crisis phase?

6. Mr. El-Mahfoud Megateli, IOE Vice President for Africa/SG Algerian Employers’ Organisation (8 mins)
 7. Mr. Hicham Zouanat, President of the Social Committee, CGEM, Morocco (8 min)
 8. Mr. El Sayed Torky, Adviser, Egyptian Federation of Employers (8 min)
 9. Mr. Khelil Ghariani, Member of the Executive Office, Tunisian Employers’ Organization (8 min)
 10. Mr. El Kory Abdel Mola, Secretary General, Mauritanian Employers Federation (8 min)

Some of the questions that will be discussed include:

- Which economic measures taken by your government during the Covid-19 crisis have been successful? Why?
- Which economic measures taken by your government during the Covid-19 crisis have not been successful? Why?
- How can lessons learned from Covid-19 be integrated into the world of work?
- How can we build a better business environment in North Africa by strengthening synergies between North African employers’ organisations?

11. Q&A (10 mins)
12. Mr. Roberto Suárez, Secretary-General, IOE (5 min) – **Closing remarks**

**Please join us from your computer, tablet or
smartphone:**

Direct link to access the meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/91707873480>

Meeting ID: 917 0787 3480

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N.B.: Please log in 5 minutes before the meeting starts.