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Speakers

Development challenges in Africa in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic

Online conference 11-12 February 2021

Session 1: Opening and Keynote Address

Vera Songwe, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, UNECA

Dr Vera Songwe is the UN Under-Secretary-General and 9th Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). As Executive Secretary, Songwe's reforms, focusing on "ideas for a prosperous Africa", have brought to the fore critical issues of macroeconomic stability, development finance, private sector growth, poverty and inequality, the digital transformation, trade and competitiveness. Recently listed as one of Africa's 50 most powerful women by Forbes, Songwe is acknowledged for her long-standing track record of providing policy advice and her wealth of experience in delivering development results for Africa. She has written extensively on development and economic issues including on debt, infrastructure development, fiscal and governance issues. Prior to ECA, she held a number of senior leadership roles with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and World Bank.



Session 2: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on African economies

Mario Pezzini, Director, OECD Development Centre

Mario Pezzini is Director of the OECD Development Centre and Special Advisor to the OECD Secretary-General, on Development. The OECD Development Centre helps policy makers in OECD and partner countries find innovative solutions to the global challenges of development. In his current position, Mario Pezzini also served for a year as Acting Director of the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate. Prior to joining the OECD, Mr. Pezzini was Professor in Industrial Economics at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris as well as in US and Italian Universities. Also, Mr. Pezzini served as an Advisor in the field of economic development, industrial organisation and regional economics in international organisations and think tanks (e.g. ILO, UNIDO, European Commission and Nomisma in Italy).



Stephen Karingi, Director, Regional Integration and Trade, UNECA

Stephen Karingi is currently the Director of the Regional Integration and Trade Division of the Economic Commission for Africa.

He joined the United Nations in April 2004. Before joining the United Nations, Dr. Karingi was a Senior Analyst and the Head of Macroeconomics Division in the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), a public policy think-tank. Before KIPPRA he served as a Lecturer of Economics at Egerton University. He has published extensively in major academic peer-reviewed journals and contributed chapters in edited books with renowned publishers. Dr. Karingi today spearheads policy research in a broad array of areas and is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of African Trade. Dr. Karingi was the winner of the 2013 Alan A. Powell Award in recognition of his contribution to global economic analysis issues from an African perspective. Dr. Karingi is presently serving in the High Level Group on Trade that is looking at EU-Africa relations.



Moses Ikiara, CEO, Kenya Investment Authority

Dr. Moses Ikiara is the Managing Director of the Kenya Investment Authority (KenInvest), a position he took on in 2013. Previously, Dr. Ikiara was the Executive Director of the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), and Policy Analyst at the same Institute. Prior to joining KIPPRA, Dr. Ikiara was a lecturer in the School of Environmental Studies (SES) of Moi University. Dr. Ikiara holds a PhD in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics from the University of Amsterdam. He has substantial experience in public policy research, having published about 38 papers and book chapters in various journals and other outlets. His research experience and interest include sustainable management of environmental and natural resources and the link between economics and ecological issues; tourism policy; trade issues, particularly with respect to services; fisheries; the trade-environment nexus; agricultural and industry policy issues, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).



Session 3: Implications of COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods and welfare

Michael Danquah, Research Fellow, UNU-WIDER

Dr. Michael Danquah is a Research Fellow at UNU-WIDER currently serving as co-focal point for the project Transforming informal work and livelihoods within UNU-WIDER's 2019–23 work programme. Dr. Danquah is a visiting Research Fellow at the Transfer Project and a Researcher for the International Growth Centre (IGC), Ghana. Previously, he worked at the Department of Economics, University of Ghana, Legon. His research interest is in economic development in sub-Saharan Africa, primarily focusing on issues such as informality, inequality and poverty reduction, and productivity growth among others. Dr. Danquah's research has been published in journals such as Empirical Economics, Economic Modelling, Review of Development Economics, African Development Review, Journal of International Development, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, among others.



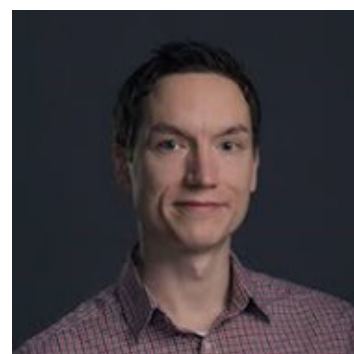
Simone Schotte, Research Associate, UNU-WIDER

Dr. Simone Schotte is an applied microeconomist with research interests in development and labour economics, working specifically at the interface of poverty, inequality, and employment dynamics research. She joined UNU-WIDER as Research Associate in February 2019. Before coming to Helsinki, she worked at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and was a consultant to the World Bank. She holds a PhD in economics from the University of Göttingen, Germany. At UNU-WIDER, Dr. Schotte's main research focus is on questions related to understanding the drivers and livelihood implications of transitions between different types of formal and informal work, as well as the interlinkage between occupational change and earnings inequality dynamics in developing countries. Her research has been published in journals such as *World Development*, *Journal of Economic Inequality*, *Journal of Development Studies*, *Kyklos*, *International Migration Review*, among others.



Jesse Lastunen, Research Associate, UNU-WIDER

Dr. Jesse Lastunen is a research associate at UNU-WIDER, where his work focuses on tax-benefit microsimulation models. He has previously worked for organizations such as OECD, RAND Corporation, Internet Association, and the Technopolis Group, conducting policy-oriented research on labour markets and emerging technologies. Dr. Lastunen received his PhD in policy analysis from the Pardee RAND Graduate School, with analytical concentrations in economics and quantitative methods. He has master's degrees in international economics and technology policy.



Isabella Schmidt, Statistics Specialist in East and Southern African Regional Office, UN WOMEN

Dr. Isabella Schmidt has a PhD in International development, a MPhil Degree in Urban and Regional Science and a MSc in Human Nutrition from Potchefstroom (now North West) University (South Africa). Prior to joining the UNWomen ESARO office, Dr. Schmidt was the Chief Director, Social Statistics, at Statistics South Africa for 10 years. Her primary responsibility was to oversee the production and promote the use of Social Statistics in South Africa. Prior to joining Statistics South Africa in 2008, Dr Schmidt worked for 14 years as an international consultant in various countries in Africa, the Middle East and South America. Her specialization at the time was the monitoring and evaluation of development projects. Her clients were primarily International NGOs, working in the food security and rural development sectors.



Session 4: The new normal and future development of Africa

Satu Santala, Director General for Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

In addition to her role as Director General for the Department of Development Policy, Satu Santala is also Finland's IDA Deputy for the World Bank. Prior to her current role in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Santala was Executive Director from Finland at the World Bank, where she represented Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden. Ms. Santala has held several earlier positions in Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, including Deputy Director General, Department for Development Policy; Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Finland, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Finland, New Delhi, India. She has also held numerous roles with the Finnish Red Cross. During the 2012-2014 Board term, Ms. Santala served on the Board's Committee on Development Effectiveness and the Committee on Human Resources.



Désiré J.M. Vencatachellum, Director of Resource Mobilization and External Finance Department, African Development Bank

Désiré Vencatachellum is Director of the Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Department at the African Development Bank. Désiré is responsible for the African Development Fund, trust funds and co-financing agreements, all of which exceed USD 10 billion. He also served as Director of the Operational Policies Department, and Director of the Research Department. Prior to joining the African Development Bank, Dr. Vencatachellum was Professor of Economics at HEC Montréal, Université de Montréal, Canada. Désiré holds a Ph.D. in Economics (Queen's University, Canada) and a Magistère Ingénieur-Économiste (Université d'Aix-Marseille II, France).



Njuguna Ndung'u, Executive Director, African Economic Research Consortium

Njuguna S. Ndung'u is the Executive Director of the African Economic Research Consortium based in Kenya. Before joining AERC, he held the position of Kenya's Central Bank Governor, from 2007 until March 2015. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and master's and bachelor's degrees in economics from the University of Nairobi. Prior to his appointment as Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya, Prof. Ndung'u held positions at the University of Nairobi where he taught advanced economic theory and econometrics, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA). Prof. Ndung'u has extensive policy, research, and teaching expertise in macroeconomics, microeconomics, econometrics, and poverty reduction.

