



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

North Africa and the challenges of the Covid-19 era





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Preface

The Covid-19 pandemic dragged the world into an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions since the 1929 crisis. The Economic Commission for Africa has revised downwards its growth estimates for the year 2020, which is expected to be around 1.8% in best case scenario. Due to its magnitude and the speed with which it brought entire sectors of the economy to a standstill, some of which represent important sources of employment for North Africa (such as tourism), the crisis soon became multidimensional, putting high pressure on public finance. For North African countries, the crisis comes at a time when the countries' development models were showing signs of running out of steam, as evidenced by the net slowdown in per capita GDP growth from 2010. At the dawn of the pandemic, North Africa was facing volatile growth, chronic fiscal and external deficits, and a high unemployment rate expected to exceed 15% in 2020.

As the pandemic persists, governments in the subregion have the heavy task of managing a crisis which is undermining the resilience of underdeveloped social and health systems. The nature of the

The crisis has not generated a mere cyclical shock; it has induced profound and lasting changes in a large number of areas at the global level (digital acceleration, transformation of work organization, reorganization of global value chains, etc.). The changes induced by the pandemic are conditioning future public policies to create the conditions for an economic recovery commensurable with the socio-economic challenges, particularly in terms of employment and the fight against precariousness and poverty. This report takes stock of the situation in the sub-region in various dimensions (economic, social, technological, governance, etc.) in light of the impact of the pandemic in the short and medium term. It analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of North Africa in the face of the crisis, as well as its vulnerabilities. Finally, it introduces a number of public policy recommendations to prepare North Africa for the challenges of the Covid-19 era.

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