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**Highlights of progress at the regional and subregional levels  
in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063  
in the context of the COVID-19 crisis**

## Summary of the 2020 Africa sustainable development report

### A. Progress based on the pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Overall progress against the Sustainable Development Goals

1. African governments have made significant efforts to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063, The Africa we Want, of the African Union into national strategies and development plans, have identified government units to coordinate their implementation and have prioritized specific targets and indicators. In 2019, however, prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, overall progress by Africa towards the Goals measured only 52.9 per cent, with a remaining gap of 47.1 per cent. The North and Southern Africa subregions scored slightly higher than East, West and Central Africa, which were all below the continental average.

2. In terms of their ranking against the Sustainable Development Goals in 2020, the eight top-ranked States were, in order of ranking, Tunisia, Mauritius, Morocco, Algeria, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Botswana and Ghana. Overall, the average score across all States in 2020 was 53.82 per cent, which was slightly higher than the 2019 average, indicating that, after four years of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African continent was halfway towards achieving the Goals and targets by 2030.

#### 2. People pillar

3. In many respects, the people pillar overlaps with the prosperity pillar, in particular given the importance of economic considerations in the determination, under both pillars, of the individual's and family's well-being. The single most important goal related to this pillar is progress in reducing and eliminating poverty, the origins of which are multidimensional. Nearly 40 per cent of all Africans are still living in extreme poverty. The poverty headcount remains consistently low in North Africa, at around 2 per cent, but has risen slightly since 2015. The Central African

\* ECA/RFSD/2022/1.

<sup>1</sup> The present section is drawn from the executive summary of the 2020 Africa Sustainable Development Report, prepared by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Development Programme (forthcoming).



subregion exhibits the highest incidence of poverty, at nearly 67 per cent, which only dropped to approximately 59 per cent in 2019. West Africa had the lowest poverty headcount among the subregions south of the Sahara but even there 35 per cent of the population were living in extreme poverty in 2019.

### **3. Prosperity pillar**

4. The three key aspects of prosperity are efforts by Africa to achieve inclusive economic growth, access to affordable energy and Internet access, through the development of infrastructure that can serve all Africans. In this regard, economic growth, measured by per capita income growth, has lagged behind real income growth in every subregion of the continent for all four decades between 1980 and 2020, meaning that even periods of modest growth have not necessarily translated into higher standards of living for most Africans. In relation to the prosperity pillar, affordable energy is another indicator of the extent to which all Africans have access to one of the key inputs that will facilitate development of a more prosperous Africa. Between 2000 and 2018, while there were wide variations from State to State, the continent on average more than doubled energy access, but is still only slightly more than 50 per cent connected. On average, the number of Internet users per 100 members of the population across Africa increased from 12 in 2011 to 39 in 2018. This represents a 225 per cent increase in Internet usage across Africa from 2011 to 2018 but is still comparatively low.

### **4. Planet pillar**

5. This examines the situation in Africa through an environmental lens, as the continent continues to face enormous environmental challenges. Although many African States have put in place the legal and policy frameworks required to address environmental concerns, progress relating to this pillar has been slow on many fronts. According to the Environmental Performance Index, which calculates the State ranking for 51 African States out of the 180 States surveyed, Seychelles was the highest ranked State in Africa, at thirty-third. Six other African States were among the top 100 States on the index: Egypt, Gabon, Mauritius, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia. Conversely, 33 African States south of the Sahara were among the bottom 50.

### **5. Peace pillar**

6. Based on current trends, Africa is unlikely to achieve any of the goals for peace, security and governance set out in either of the two Agendas. While some States may be excepted, the slow progress in improved governance is generally the overriding factor impeding performance relevant to the peace pillar. There has also been a decline in democratic values, challenges in holding free and fair elections, and unconstitutional changes of government. Africa underperforms on the rule of law, with even basic governing functions – such as civil registration systems – falling short. Human rights abuses and limits on participation are also hindering progress. Furthermore, rampant corruption remains a threat to governance, peace and security. Rather than a convergence around African democratic practices, the gap between democracies and authoritarian States is likely to widen further by 2030.

### **6. Partnerships pillar**

7. The partnerships pillar is concerned with the critical role of development financing as the underlying condition required for African governments to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The availability and effectiveness of resource flows are closely linked to policies and programmes which enable the resources to be generated and used productively. An analysis of the trends in domestic resource management, the composition of financial flows from both domestic and international sources, and debt management indicates that most of the African States are not on track to take full responsibility for financing their development goals, as defined by either the 2030 Agenda or Agenda 2063. The continent's debt management situation is seen as unsustainable.

## B. Progress based on the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>2</sup>

8. Africa has recorded progress on many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals since 2000; the current pace of progress has been insufficient, however, to achieve the Goals by 2030.

9. Substantive progress has been experienced on Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), with moderate progress made on many social Goals, such as on Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 4 (education) and Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation).

10. Africa has seen limited progress on Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy) and Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) poses a major challenge for the continent. The current trends need to be reversed in order for these Goals to be achieved by 2030.

11. Out of the 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, Africa is likely to meet only 9 at the current rate of progress, most of which are environmental and energy targets, such as international cooperation on energy (7.a); water and sanitation (6.a); and financial resources mobilization to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems (15.a and 15.b). For instance, on average across Africa, the total official development assistance for biodiversity has increased by more than 10 per cent annually since 2000. Support for research and development of vaccines and medicines and access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines (3.b) has recorded good progress since 2000.

12. The continent has regressed on 11 targets, ranging from social matters to industrialization and technology issues. Where social indicators are concerned, the continent has regressed on road traffic accidents (3.6), equal access to education (4.5) sanitation and hygiene (6.2), corruption and bribery (16.5) and human trafficking (16.2). Regarding industrialization and technology, the continent has regressed on inclusive and sustainable industrialization (9.2) and domestic technology development (9.b).

13. Manufacturing value added as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) (9.2.1) has decreased, compared with its value in 2000. A similar trend was observed for manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment (9.2.2).

14. Africa needs to accelerate the trend on 47 out of the 67 measurable targets. These include all targets under Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production).

15. From a subregional perspective, the five subregions have experienced various levels of progress in attaining the 17 Goals.

16. Central Africa is on track to achieve only Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), Goal 10 (reduced inequalities) and Goal 15 (life on land) by 2030. If the current trends are maintained on the other Goals, it will not be possible for the subregion to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

17. East Africa is in good shape on Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), and Goal 14 (life below water). The subregion has made progress on Goal 4 (quality education) and Goal 10 (reduced inequalities). Slow progress has been observed on Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and Goal 17 (partnerships for the goals).

18. North Africa has achieved Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 14 (life below water), based on the only available indicators used to track

<sup>2</sup> This section is drawn from the executive summary of the 2020 Africa Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report, prepared by the African Centre for Statistics of ECA.

progress. Little progress has been seen, however, on Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy) and Goal 10 (reduced inequalities). The major challenge in the subregion is posed by Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), on which progress has regressed since 2000. Other significant issues are faced in North Africa on Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), where the subregion appears to have stagnated since 2000.

19. Southern Africa has achieved Goal 14 (life below water), based on the single indicator employed; and has made some significant progress on Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation). Slow progress has been witnessed on Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 15 (life on land). Since 2000, the subregion has regressed on Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and needs to reverse the current trends. Southern Africa has stagnated on Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and Goal 17 (partnerships for the goals).

20. West Africa has achieved Goal 14 (life below water), a conclusion that was reached despite the low level of data availability, so it should be treated with caution. No substantive progress has been observed on any other Goal. Slow progress has been recorded on Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), Goal 15 (life on land), and Goal 17 (partnerships for the goals). The subregion has regressed on Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and has stagnated on Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy) and Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production).

21. There is an urgent need for the subregions to reverse the current trend on Goal 16 – (peace, justice and strong institutions): the situation of peace, justice and strong institutions has deteriorated in all subregions except North Africa since 2000. While the regression on this Goal is relatively low in Central Africa, it is alarmingly high in East Africa.

22. Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) is critical for economies to emerge and develop. Yet, there has been a deterioration in Central and West Africa, and stagnation in East and North Africa. Only Southern Africa has made progress, but it needs to be accelerated to achieve the Goal by 2030.

23. While North Africa has regressed on Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), the Goal will be achieved by West, East and Central Africa if their rate of progress is maintained. The economic growth per capita (target 8.1), however, emerged as a significant challenge in Central Africa, North Africa and Southern Africa. The current trend needs to be reversed in these subregions.

24. Goal 14 (life below water) can be considered to be achieved in almost all subregions, based on the only indicator available.

25. Although no subregion has regressed on Goal 1 (no poverty), no substantive progress has been recorded in any of the subregions.

26. All the subregions have made some progress on Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation) and Goal 10 (reduced inequalities). Goal 6 will be achieved by East Africa if the subregion maintains its rate of progress. On Goal 10, three subregions (Central, East and West Africa) have made substantive progress, while two (North Africa and

Southern Africa) have recorded low progress. Extra effort is therefore needed from all the subregions to be on track to achieve Goal 6 by 2030.

27. Data availability is critically low on the continent. There are 102 targets for which insufficient data are available to measure progress. Only 86 indicators have enough data to allow progress to be measured and projections to be calculated for 2030. For approximately 67 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, there are no data or not enough data to measure progress.

### **C. Impact of COVID-19 on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals**

28. The 2020 Africa sustainable development report posits that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a serious socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis affecting the lives of millions of Africans. In the first instance, the direct health impact of the first wave of COVID-19 was relatively small in terms of infections, morbidity and mortality. As the pandemic continues, however, this may change, as demonstrated by the emergence of the Omicron variant. While the health consequences have been and will continue to be heart-rending, the social and economic consequences of COVID-19 pose the greatest threat to recovery and long-term sustainable development, particularly in Africa. The economic impact of the pandemic on the continent has been severe owing to a drop in global demand for African commodities, and disruptions to global trade and tourism, compounded by the negative domestic economic impact of the lockdowns, in particular on small businesses and the informal sector.

### **D. Policy recommendations**

29. A stark conclusion that arises from the five-pillar analysis is that most African States (in particular those south of the Sahara) are not on track to meet the goals and targets of either the 2030 Agenda or Agenda 2063. The situation has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had serious socioeconomic impacts on the lives of millions of people. It is no exaggeration to say that the current constellation of factors is potentially the greatest challenge confronting Africa since the independence era that began in the 1960s. Under such circumstances, African policymakers are confronted with the herculean task of designing appropriate responses that will help their economies to get back on track, address the socioeconomic circumstances of the citizens affected by the pandemic, and recalibrate their policies and programmes to accelerate or restart efforts to achieve both the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063.

## **References**

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