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**Regional preparatory workshop for
African voluntary national reviews and
voluntary local reviews: strengthening integration
and reporting on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

Niamey (hybrid), 27 February 2023

Concept note

I. Background

1. Having adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, member States are encouraged to review, on a regular basis, the frameworks and mechanisms that they have in place to implement the two agendas, with a view to fostering inclusive growth and development. As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda encourages member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels that are country-led and country-driven. The process to undertake a review is expected to be rigorous and based on evidence, accurate data and the close involvement and with input from national and local stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, women, children, young people and other relevant groups. Reaching all 17 Sustainable Development Goals requires an integrated, human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach to development. Countries are invited by the President of the Economic and Social Council to formally present their voluntary national reviews during the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which is held on an annual basis under the auspices of the Council.

2. Fifty-three African States had conducted at least one voluntary national review as of the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development, and seven African countries¹ are currently engaged in the review process ahead of the next forum, in July 2023, all seven of whom are preparing their second national review. The ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which will be held in February 2023, comes at the midpoint between the declaration by those countries to pursue a second review and the submission of their reviews and, therefore, it provides an opportunity to share good practices, success stories and common challenges that are specific to the region, and to achieve greater stakeholder involvement in order to enrich the national reviews.

3. African member States have noted the particular benefits of conducting sustainable development reviews at the district, governorate and municipality levels, which complement

¹ Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.



the national review process. Participants at the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held in 2020, underscored the importance of local reviews to meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement, and committed to integrating voluntary local reviews into their national reviews and to increasing accountability, transparency and public ownership of the implementation of the two agendas. By engaging with multiple stakeholders on the ground, voluntary local reviews reach a grass-roots audience, which, in turn, can inform and move the sustainable development process forward. To that end, the Economic Commission for Africa, in partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, developed regional guidelines for voluntary local reviews, as requested by African member States. The guidelines are based on lessons learned from the first five African voluntary local reviews and are being utilized to assist the next cohort of local governments in reviewing and embedding sustainable development at the local level.²

II. Scope of the workshop

4. As a part of its ongoing support for voluntary national and local reviews, the Economic Commission for Africa, in partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UN-Habitat and the African Union, holds an annual preparatory and capacity-building workshop on the margins of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The objectives of the 2023 workshop are to strengthen the capacity of member States to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, link local and national processes, support preparations for the submission of national reviews to the 2023 high-level political forum and identify and promote African priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Countries are encouraged to come to the Summit with actions, plans and policies, which can be outlined in their reviews, to close the Sustainable Development Goal gap by 2030. The workshop will also contribute to a project that is led by UN-Habitat, in partnership with regional commissions, titled “Fostering COVID-19 recovery and SDG implementation through local action in Asia-Pacific, Arab and African countries” by creating opportunities for integration with national and local reviews.

5. The 2023 workshop is taking place at a pivotal stage of the continent’s implementation of the two agendas. The year 2023 marks the end of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the halfway point for the 2030 Agenda. The workshop also comes after the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was hosted in Africa and focused on a number of climate-finance issues that are critical to the continent. These milestones underscore the urgent need to accelerate action on and meet commitments to sustainable development, to reflect on what has and has not worked, and to learn from successful cases of collective action.

6. Climate change, the ongoing global food and energy crises resulting from the war in Ukraine, and the continuing effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have radically changed the development landscape for the countries and localities that are preparing sustainable development reviews. Even before the pandemic, African member States faced significant challenges in implementing the two agendas and had to balance the financing of multiple policy priorities. It is also critical to note that these crises have continued to have an impact on a broad spectrum of human rights, including economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has

² Available at www.uneca.org/voluntary-local-reviews-in-africa/documents.

developed a guidance note on human rights and voluntary national reviews, which presents an important opportunity for member States to pay particular attention to the participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups in voluntary national and local review processes, to ensure that they are not left behind. The workshop, therefore, will provide an opportunity:

(a) To countries that are preparing to submit voluntary national reviews in 2023 to report on the status of their preparations and identify challenges faced in those preparations;

(b) To discuss how climate change, energy and food crises, and the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are affecting development planning and the realization of human rights, especially by marginalized and vulnerable groups, through the review processes;

(c) To focus on the links among the Sustainable Development Goals, the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, and the challenges faced by member States in this regard;

(d) To reflect on the region’s development trajectory at the midway point of the 2030 Agenda and 10 years into the implementation of Agenda 2063;

(e) To share information on the format and scope of voluntary national review presentations for the 2023 high-level political forum, including relevant deadlines;

(f) To brainstorm on African priorities for the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and identify actions, plans and policies to close the Sustainable Development Goal gap by 2030;

(g) To share the experiences and best practices of stakeholders who have previously been involved in the preparation of voluntary national reviews, discuss common challenges and review potential solutions;

(h) To share experiences and best practices in subnational implementation through the preparation of voluntary local reviews, deepen understanding of the links between local and national reviews, and discuss how both types of reviews can help to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(i) To discuss the African regional guidelines for voluntary local reviews and their continuing use in the region’s local reviews, along with other global guidelines for voluntary national and local reviews from partner organizations;

(j) To clarify the vital role of United Nations agencies and entities in the voluntary national and local review processes, including the Development Coordination Office, resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams;

(k) To underscore the importance of using rigorous data-collection and analysis methods in national and local review processes and to share information on the tools that countries and localities have at their disposal in this regard.

7. The workshop will include presentations and discussions, in addition to interactive and engaging group work on specific topics identified by participants. Knowledge products to support the preparation of voluntary national reviews will be introduced.

8. The workshop will conclude with a joint session, co-hosted by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and the United Nations Foundation, that will facilitate dialogue and experience-sharing among former and current voluntary national review countries and with relevant stakeholders from the region. The outputs of the workshop will directly inform the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held from 28 February to 3 March 2023, with the theme of “Accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063”.

III. Key questions

9. The workshop will be guided by the following key questions:

(a) At the end of the first decade of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, what major milestones have been reached? What are the major opportunities emanating from the alignment of the two agendas? Where are the critical gaps that impede progress in Africa?

(b) How can African countries use national and local review processes to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the two agendas?

(c) What are the successes, challenges, gaps and lessons learned from voluntary national and local review preparation processes? How can future voluntary national reviews build on their predecessors? How can stakeholder engagement be further strengthened and institutionalized?

(d) How can voluntary local reviews contribute to the preparation of national reviews, and how can synergies between the two be strengthened, in particular regarding data and stakeholder engagement? How can inclusiveness be ensured in the process?

(e) What are the key guidelines for reporting at the national and subnational levels and how can they be harnessed to assist reviews being undertaken in 2023?

(f) What are the main ways in which ongoing global crises have affected the voluntary national and local review processes?

(g) What further support is needed to complete and follow up on African voluntary national and local reviews?

IV. Expected outcomes

10. The workshop is expected to produce the following outcomes:

(a) Strengthened capacity of countries conducting voluntary national reviews in 2023;

(b) Enhanced consideration of regional specificities, including in relation to Agenda 2063 and human-rights and governance imperatives, in national and local review processes;

(c) Reflection on the best practices in sustainable development in the region after the first decade of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and at the midway point of the 2030 Agenda;

(d) Increased understanding of how voluntary local reviews can enhance national reporting and collaboration among national and local institutions;

(e) Greater awareness and use of the African regional guidelines for voluntary local reviews;

(f) Closer alignment of national development frameworks with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(g) Concrete proposals on actions, plans and policies to close the Sustainable Development Goal gap and to identify and promote African priorities at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

V. Guidance for participants

11. The workshop will be attended by national and local government representatives and representatives of African regional institutions, civil society organizations, academic institutions, local organizations, the private sector and United Nations entities.

12. Participants should be prepared to share information on implementation successes and challenges, gaps in voluntary national and local review processes, stakeholder mapping and engagement, lessons learned in the review processes, and their needs for further assistance.

VI. Contacts

13. Enquiries concerning the organization of the workshop should be directed to:

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