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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender**  
Fifth session

Addis Ababa, 2 and 3 November 2023

Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Parallel sessions**

## **Reviewing the Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines as a tool to foster the adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals to the local level**

### **Aide-memoire**

#### **I. Background**

1. Members of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) have noted the benefits of sustainable development reviews being conducted by subnational and local governments as part of their efforts to accelerate progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. During the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held in 2020, ECA members concluded that voluntary local reviews were important tools for meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement and mobilization to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa. One participant underscored that, through engagement with numerous stakeholders on the ground, voluntary local reviews had reached a grass-roots audience (ECA/RFSD/2020/17). Also during the sixth session, the Forum requested that ECA members integrate voluntary local reviews into their voluntary national reviews and establish local review mechanisms to improve accountability, transparency and public ownership of the implementation of the two agendas. In addition, members, through the Forum, requested that ECA prepare a template for voluntary local reviews in Africa and share best practices in pursuing voluntary national reviews in the region.

2. In response, ECA worked with United Cities and Local Governments of Africa and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to develop a set of guidelines to assist local governments in Africa in preparing voluntary local reviews as part of efforts to accelerate progress in attaining the two agendas. In drafting the guidelines, ECA drew on its experience in supporting Accra, Harare, Yaoundé, Ngora District (Uganda) and Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe) in conducting voluntary local reviews, while its partners, UN-Habitat and United Cities and Local Government, drew on their previous research on voluntary local reviews.

3. The guidelines were designed to offer best practices to help subregional and local governments to adapt global and regional goals to the local context,

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\* E/ECA/CSPPG/5/1.



map global and regional policies to local priorities and actions, and ensure that grass-roots stakeholder engagement in voluntary local reviews and voluntary national reviews is aligned to support progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, which African States have been pursuing as a part of their commitment to the two agendas. A set of guiding principles and a common template in the guidelines help to link the common goals and targets of the two agendas to enable peer review among localities.

4. The first draft of the guidelines was introduced and discussed during the workshop on voluntary national and local reviews held prior to the seventh session of the Forum. Members provided constructive comments and showed a keen interest in using the guidelines. They urged ECA to finalize and disseminate the guidelines as soon as possible. The *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines* were issued in 2022. A group of experts will meet on 2 November 2023 to carry out an in-depth review of the *Guidelines* and check their quality, relevance and practicality at the local level with a view to issuing a revised edition.

## II. Objectives

5. The purpose of the session is to review the Guidelines to ensure their quality and practicality. The session has the following specific objectives:

(a) Gather feedback from experts and localities that will be used to improve the quality and practicality of the *Guidelines*;

(b) Identify opportunities to apply the *Guidelines* and obtain suggestions on how to disseminate them and increase their uptake as a guide and capacity-building tool.

## III. Expected outcomes

6. The session is expected to result in recommendations for a revised edition of the *Guidelines* that will enhance implementation of the two agendas in African localities. Furthermore, lessons learned, experiences and good practices will be documented to inform and enrich the guidelines for the revised edition.

## IV. Format and content

7. The event will be held as a parallel session during the fifth session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English and French.

## V. Participation

8. The parallel session will bring together experts from countries and localities in Africa, UN-Habitat, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, United Nations Resident Coordinator offices, the African Union Commission and selected Sustainable Development Goals secretariats and voluntary national review secretariats of countries, United Nations entities and other entities.