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Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions

Concept note

I. Background

1. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is an annual intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform mandated by the General Assembly through its resolutions 67/290, 70/1 and 70/299. The Forum was put into operation following the adoption of resolutions 930 (XLVIII) and 939 (XLIX) at the eighth and ninth joint annual meetings of the Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration of the African Union and the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa, held in 2015 and 2016, respectively.
2. The Africa Regional Forum undertakes integrated follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. This is because, for Africa, the two agendas provide a synergistic framework for achieving inclusive and people-centred sustainable development in the region.
3. The Africa Regional Forum is one of the three mechanisms mandated to follow up on, review and catalyse action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063. The other mechanisms are the voluntary national reviews and, at the global level, the high-level political forum on sustainable development. To complement these processes and to bolster local action, national and subnational governments have embarked on voluntary local review processes. In that regard, the Africa Regional Forum also provides a platform for peer learning, including on voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews by subnational entities.
4. The Africa Regional Forum is organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and various entities of the United Nations system.
5. Accordingly, the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will be organized by ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and various organizations within the United



Nations system. It will bring together ministers, senior officials, experts and practitioners from members of ECA, the private sector, civil society, academic institutions and United Nations entities.

II. Theme

6. The theme of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum is “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”. It is aligned with the theme of the 2024 meeting of the high-level political forum, namely, “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.

7. At the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the world economy remains vulnerable, navigating an uncertain global environment characterized by subdued global growth, precarious financing conditions, disruptions to global supply chains and rapidly unfolding climatic crises. These multiple and disruptive shocks have particularly weighed on the socioeconomic growth momentum of developing economies, especially vulnerable and low-income countries, making a full recovery from pandemic losses ever more elusive. Crucially, the significant monetary tightening and lingering policy uncertainty worldwide have exacerbated debt distress and vulnerability, principally for countries with severely constrained fiscal positions. External debt service for least developed countries is estimated to have increased from \$46 billion in 2021 to approximately \$60 billion in 2023, hindering the ability to stimulate recovery and growth.¹ A total of 57 per cent of African countries spend more on external debt interest payments than they invest in health care,² and almost all spend more on interest than they invest in climate action. Furthermore, the prolonging of the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine remains a major global risk that heightens uncertainty and could aggravate food insecurity and living costs in Africa. Notably, climate change, which threatens lives, livelihoods and economic activities, continues unabated. In addition, weakened multilateralism and geopolitical fragmentation continue to erode the social fabric of societies, intensifying polarization as nations face increased crises of governance and political instability. Hence, the convergence of these geopolitical, socioeconomic, financial and climate crises have served only to amplify economic hardship, reducing prosperity and societal progress by exacerbating poverty and inequality.

8. In the midst of such strong headwinds, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals is acutely off track. Crucially, the international financial architecture is failing to channel global savings to Goal-related investments at the required pace and scale.³ In its *World Investment Report 2023: Investing in Sustainable Energy for All*, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development highlights an increasing annual investment shortfall; the current disparity stands at over \$4 trillion annually, a significant increase from the \$2.5 trillion recorded in 2015, when the Goals were launched as part of the 2030 Agenda.⁴ The annual cost from 2023 to 2030 for developing countries to achieve the Goals varies between \$6.9 trillion and \$7.6 trillion, depending on

¹ *Crisis-Resilient Development Finance: The Least Developed Countries Report* (United Nations publication, 2023).

² Secretary-General, António Guterres, in remarks for the high-level policy dialogue of the Africa Dialogue Series titled “Market and scale: unlocking industrialization through intra-African trade”, New York, 24 May 2023.

³ In the five years leading up to 2020, progress on the Goals had already been very slow.

⁴ United Nations publication, 2023.

the chosen pathway.⁵ According to the annual Sustainable Development Goals Index, global achievement of the Goals rose only slightly, from 64 per cent in 2015 to 66 per cent in 2019 – far too slowly to meet the Goals by 2030, and with highly uneven progress within and between countries.

9. In Africa in particular, progress on the Goals and on Agenda 2063 has been uneven, with significant differences among subregions, countries and rural and urban areas. There has been steady progress on key targets of the Goals, in particular on 4G mobile network coverage, access to safe drinking water and electrification rates.⁶ At current trends, there is a risk that the gap in Goal-related outcomes between high-income and low-income countries will be wider in 2030 (29 points) than in 2015 (28 points).⁷ This means that the chances of losing a decade of progress towards global convergence are high. It is concerning that not a single Goal is projected to be met globally. Undoubtedly, the multiple geopolitical crises that the world is currently facing will further hamper progress towards 2030. Thus, this calls for accelerated efforts to ensure that Africa achieves the Goals by the 2030 deadline.

10. Similarly, the world is seriously off track with regard to the Paris Agreement and the targets of Goal 13. At present, global warming stands at 1.2°C, with warming continuing at more than 0.3°C per decade.⁸ At this rate, the likelihood of overshooting 1.5°C, even within a decade, is high. According to the *Emissions Gap Report 2022* of the United Nations Environment Programme, current policies put the world on track to reach warming of 2.8°C by 2100.⁹ Attaining the current nationally determined contribution targets would still lead to approximately 2.4°C warming by 2100, which would wreak havoc across the globe and have far-reaching adverse effects, in particular for African economies, given their heightened vulnerability and low adaptive capacity. Of the 68 vulnerable countries that make up the Vulnerable Twenty Group, 28 are found in Africa.¹⁰ Thus, it is pivotal that the world urgently reinforce its climate commitments, in particular by scaling up climate finance, which persistently remains woefully inadequate.

11. Despite such perturbing news, it is still possible to double down and attain the Sustainable Development Goals. At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, all African countries must urgently fast-track climate action and green transitions to drive the continent's resilient, inclusive and sustainable development. African nations can redefine their socioeconomic development models through a strategic focus on investing in green transitions with the potential to create better jobs, advance gender equality, tackle growing poverty, reduce carbon emissions, conserve natural resources and tackle inequality in a sustainable way. Accordingly, several African countries have become increasingly active in investing in green transitions; yet climate-related finance

⁵ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, “UNCTAD counts the costs of achieving sustainable development goals”, 18 September 2023.

⁶ African Union, ECA, African Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme, *2023 Africa Sustainable Development Report: Accelerating the Recovery from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and African Union Agenda 2063 at All Levels* (Addis Ababa, 2023).

⁷ Jeffrey D. Sachs and others, *Implementing the SDG Stimulus: Sustainable Development Report 2023* (Dublin, Dublin University Press, 2023).

⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Summary for policymakers”, in *Global Warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty*, Valérie Masson-Delmotte and others, eds. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Emissions Gap Report 2022: The Closing Window – Climate Crisis Calls for Rapid Transformation of Societies* (Nairobi, 2022).

¹⁰ See www.v-20.org/members.

flows to Africa fall far short of the requirements.¹¹ Notably, the African Continental Free Trade Area will be an important lever for a resilient future in enhancing value addition and eradicating poverty. With the right investment in a sustainable value chain, intra-African trade can flourish on the basis of green investments – with no better example than the value chain for batteries linked to critical minerals. Investment in sustainable technology and innovation, climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy and transport, biodiversity and human capital development will all be crucial in accelerating the drive towards an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future.

12. Inherently, the 2030 Agenda is an investment agenda. It is imperative that the world shift its present investment patterns by increasing funding towards sustainability to attain the future that we want. The cost of and access to development financing remain a daunting challenge, with debt overhangs hindering most African countries from accessing capital at affordable rates from international markets. By 2050, \$150 trillion will be required for energy transition technologies and infrastructure, with \$5.3 trillion required per annum to transform the global energy sector alone.¹² Therefore, closing the financing gap for the Goals will require a disruptive approach that promotes domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing and long-term investment. Notably, addressing the global financial architecture and debt sustainability issues is pivotal to achieving the Goals, easing financial constraints, reducing debt distress and increasing the volume of finance flowing to developing economies. In this vein, United Nations Member States should adopt the Sustainable Development Goal stimulus of \$500 billion per year called for by the Secretary-General. Furthermore, the effective operationalization of the loss and damage fund, formally adopted at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the scaling up of financing commitments made in connection with the fund, will be critical to dealing with the impacts of climate disasters. Moreover, it is imperative to adopt long-term sustainable development pathways that provide a stepwise and medium-to-long-term approach to guide sustainable development policies, not only to 2030 but also to 2050, with a particular focus on gender equality, social inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind. Crucially, committing to peaceful cooperation in the service of the 2030 Agenda and all other multilateral agreements will be vital, as current geopolitical tensions are hindering the achievement of the Goals and diverting financial and human resources away from sustainable development.

13. Indeed, attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by the set deadline of 2030 will require a transformative global approach. For Africa, integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 is essential, and action and solutions to fulfil both are needed.

14. An integral success factor is the need to double down on rebuilding trust in multilateralism and safeguarding planet Earth and its people. In the light of the interconnected nature of the world economy, a shared global response is required to ensure that all countries, and developing countries in particular, can effectively put in place equitable, just and transparent processes and systems to manage and rapidly implement innovative solutions. In this effort, action and participation from all sectors of society, including government at all levels, the private sector, academic institutions, civil society and individuals – young people and women in particular – will be essential. Above all, African agency and ownership of its development paradigm and of the solutions that it develops with global partners will underpin the generation of positive spillovers and the

¹¹ The estimated annual financing gap is about \$120 billion, yet the continent receives only 2 per cent of global clean-energy finance flows (*World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024*, United Nations publication, 2024).

¹² *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024*.

achievement of common goals that will benefit Africa as well as the rest of the world.

15. The tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum is a timely opportunity to address shortcomings and capitalize on emerging opportunities to ensure robust, accelerated and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, with a special focus on the second 10-year implementation plan of the latter.

16. The Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024, is a unique opportunity to identify and promote effective interventions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and chart the path of sustainable development beyond 2030. The tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum is well placed to mobilize the effective engagement of Africa in the Summit and assist African countries in determining their priorities for and their contributions to the Summit.

17. Governments need to seize the moment and use the second half of the 2030 Agenda period as a window to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals through bold, innovative and transformational action that is aligned with the ambition and timelines of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, the Paris Agreement and other global and regional frameworks.

18. Within that context, the objective, sub-themes and format of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will be as set out sections III, IV and V, respectively.

III. Objectives

19. The overall objective of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum is to conduct a regional follow-up and review of progress made, facilitate peer learning and advance transformative and innovative solutions and action to accelerate attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations, goals and targets of Agenda 2063.

20. The specific objectives of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum are as follows:

(a) To review progress, challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and, in line with the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, to conduct an in-depth review of the attainment in Africa of Sustainable Development Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals) and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063, with a special focus on its second 10-year implementation plan;

(b) To strengthen learning and advocate effective policy measures and action at the national, regional and global levels, to advance the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063;

(c) To deliberate on transformative, innovative and ambitious interventions, including policies and practical action to drive integrated and accelerated implementation at scale of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, with a view to achieving the goals of the two agendas;

(d) To reach consensus on and adopt outcomes, namely:

(i) Summary and key messages of the Forum, comprising African countries' priorities and key policy options and recommendations to inform and spur action at the subnational, national, regional and global levels to accelerate the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

- (ii) Declaration on the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises.

21. The key messages and the declaration will also serve as the collective input of the African continent to the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York from 8 to 17 July 2024, and to the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024.

IV. Sub-themes

22. The activities of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will be conducted on the basis of the following sub-themes, which have been crafted around the five Sustainable Development Goals to be considered at the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development:

- (a) No poverty;
- (b) Zero hunger;
- (c) Climate action;
- (d) Peace, justice and strong institutions;
- (e) Partnerships for the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

23. The Africa Regional Forum will emphasize the critical importance of efforts to ensure the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in the light of their synergistic and mutually reinforcing nature, through which they provide a framework for transformative and sustainable development on the continent. Overall, and in considering each of the sub-themes, participants in the Forum will identify specific measures to mitigate the impact of multiple crises and to accelerate implementation of the two agendas, consider the linkages among all the Sustainable Development Goals, and identify and promote integrated action to meet multiple objectives in a coherent manner that ensures that no one is left behind.

24. A concise analytical report on each of the sub-themes will inform the deliberations. The analysis will encompass the corresponding goals of the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. Among the critical issues to be covered under each sub-theme are:

- (a) Major trends and progress in achieving the selected targets of the given cluster of Sustainable Development Goals. Under each sub-theme, participants will consider and highlight links among the selected Goals and other goals and targets, taking into account the impact of multiple crises as outlined above;
- (b) Challenges, constraints and emerging issues, including, in particular, the implications of multiple crises and fiscal challenges for countries as they endeavour to implement the two agendas;
- (c) Opportunities and transformative, innovative and ambitious interventions, including policies and practical action to drive integrated and accelerated implementation at scale of the two agendas, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and related goals of Agenda 2063.

V. Format

25. The tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will be held in a hybrid format that will provide for both in-person and online participation. The Forum will encompass the pre-session meetings and events and main segments that are described in detail below.

A. Pre-session meetings and events

26. The session will be preceded by meetings that will be aimed at bringing together and synthesizing diverse stakeholder perspectives and exchanging cutting-edge ideas, tools, experiences, good practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In addition, related meetings will be organized on the margins of the Africa Regional Forum. The outcomes of those meetings will inform the deliberations of the Forum. It is anticipated that the pre-session meetings and events will include the following:

- (a) Science, technology and innovation bootcamp for young people (youth forum);
- (b) 2024 annual meeting of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa;
- (c) Review of progress in transforming food systems;
- (d) Sixth African Regional Science, Technology and Innovation Forum;
- (e) Regional preparatory workshop on voluntary national and local reviews;
- (f) Workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in Africa;
- (g) Coding camp for African girls;
- (h) Session of Africa Climate Talks for the North African subregion;
- (i) Digital transformation hackathon.

B. Main segments

27. The tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will comprise the following main segments:

- (a) The opening of the session, at which the President of Ethiopia will officiate and addresses will be delivered by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the African Development Bank, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Chair of the outgoing Bureau;
- (b) Two high-level panel dialogues:
 - (i) The first panel will set the tone for the Forum and provide high-level guidance on priorities and action to eradicate poverty and rescue the Sustainable Development Goals, including by accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda alongside the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063;
 - (ii) The second panel will be focused on leveraging the Summit of the Future to get back on track to achieve the Goals;
- (c) Four plenary round-table panels, which will be focused on:
 - (i) Mobilizing and engendering dedicated and stronger engagement by young people to articulate their specific perspectives to be shared at the Summit of the Future and their priorities for reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
 - (ii) Voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews and action necessary to speed up and scale up implementation of the two agendas;

(iii) Leveraging science, technology, innovation and digital transformation;

(iv) Innovation and tools for high-quality data and statistics;

(d) Parallel meetings in which participants will conduct an in-depth review of progress made and peer learning on the five sub-themes of the Forum. Panellists and participants in each meeting will identify, articulate and agree on a set of key messages that address policy options and other measures to accelerate recovery from crises and the implementation of the two agendas;

(e) Presentations and discussions on transformative pathways and ambitious action for accelerated implementation of the two agendas, including presentations drawing from the annual meeting of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and from insights emerging from national experiences and efforts to accelerate implementation, to be presented by members of ECA, United Nations resident coordinators and major groups and other stakeholders.

VI. Expected outputs

28. The session will generate the following outputs, which will be disseminated widely:

(a) Policy reports on the sub-themes of the Africa Regional Forum;

(b) Outcome document of the tenth session of the Forum, which will set out the consensus priorities, policy options and recommendations of African countries in the form of key messages aimed at accelerating the implementation of the two agendas and which will serve as the region's collective input to the 2024 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Summit of the Future;

(c) Report on the proceedings of the Forum, which will cover the salient issues, priorities and recommendations pertaining to the theme and sub-themes of the tenth session.

VII. Expected outcomes

29. The tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum is expected:

(a) To achieve consensus on the urgent priorities for action at the subnational, national, regional and global levels to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises. These priorities will be captured in the form of key messages and a declaration, which will be adopted at the Forum, the outcome of which will be presented by the Chair of the Bureau of the tenth session of the Forum at the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York in July 2024;

(b) To strengthen the capacity of the countries conducting voluntary national reviews in 2024 to undertake their reviews and present the review reports at the 2024 high-level political forum;

(c) To equip members of ECA, civil society, the private sector, academic institutions and development partners with the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to act upon and widen the reach of the Forum's outcomes;

(d) To enhance commitments and momentum and to expand partnerships to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises by effectively delivering sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.

VIII. Documentation

30. The documents for the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will include:

- (a) Pre-session documentation:
 - (i) Concept note;
 - (ii) Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in Africa;
 - (iii) Report on the support provided by ECA and the African Union for the implementation, follow-up and review of the two agendas;
 - (iv) Concise analytical reports covering the sub-themes of the session;
 - (v) Reports and outcome documents of relevant past meetings and events;
- (b) Post-session documentation:
 - (i) Consensus key messages for presentation to the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development;
 - (ii) Final report on the deliberations of the tenth session of the Forum that sets out the salient issues raised, the priorities identified and the recommendations made during the session;
 - (iii) Report on the sixth African Regional Science, Technology and Innovation Forum;
 - (iv) Report on the regional workshop for countries conducting voluntary national reviews;
 - (v) Report on the regional workshop for major groups and other stakeholders.

IX. Participants

31. The meeting will be attended by representatives of:

- (a) All members of ECA;¹³
- (b) African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency and African Peer Review Mechanism;
- (c) African Development Bank;
- (d) Regional economic communities;
- (e) Entities of the United Nations system and other international agencies and organizations;
- (f) Major groups and other stakeholders, including civil society, business and industry organizations and academic and research institutions;
- (g) Development partners.

¹³ Invitations will be extended to ministers and high-level policymakers, and experts from ministries and agencies in charge of economic planning, finance, environment, natural resources and mineral resources, justice and governance, social affairs, energy, industry, infrastructure, trade, statistics, and science and technology.

X. Working languages

32. The working languages of the meeting will be Arabic, English and French, with simultaneous interpretation available in all three languages.

XI. Dates and venue

33. The tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum will be held in a hybrid format in Addis Ababa from 23 to 25 April 2024.

XII. Contacts

34. Enquiries relating to the organization of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum should be directed to:

Nassim Oulmane
Acting Director
Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management
Division
Economic Commission for Africa
Email: oulmane@un.org

Charles Akol
Environmental Affairs Officer
Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management
Division
Economic Commission for Africa
Email: akol@un.org

Charles Muraya
Information Management Officer
Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management
Division
Economic Commission for Africa
Email: murayac@un.org

Amanuel Gebremariam
Information Technology Officer
Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management
Division
Economic Commission for Africa
Email: gebremariama@un.org
