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Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Parallel meetings for an in-depth review of progress made, peer learning**and acceleration actions regarding the sub-themes of the Regional****Forum: no poverty**

Background report on the sub-theme of no poverty

I. Introduction

1. Sustainable Development Goal 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere) comprises seven targets and 14 indicators. With fewer than seven years to go until the deadline for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Africa is falling short of meeting most of the Goal 1 targets by 2030. Although progress has been made in certain areas, either the progress towards achieving many targets is too slow or gains are being lost. In the present report, an overview is provided of the progress that has been made with regard to selected indicators, on the basis of the latest available data. There have been both successes and challenges, and many areas require urgent attention to speed up progress in the remaining years before 2030.

2. Goal 1 is closely aligned with other Goals, and progress in attaining the other Goals facilitates the achievement of various targets of Goal 1. The eradication of poverty is supported, in particular, by Goals 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages); 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all); 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls); and 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). Poverty reduction is also the subject of various goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, including aspiration 1, a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; goal 1, a high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all; and goal 4, on transformed economies and jobs.

3. The most important challenge in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 in Africa is that the overall slow pace of poverty reduction since 1990 has been exacerbated in recent years by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which slowed, disrupted or temporarily reversed progress across various targets. The recovery from the pandemic has been uneven and incomplete, and its effects continue to linger, against a backdrop of various ongoing global crises that are hindering economic growth on the continent.

* ECA/RFSD/2024/1/Rev.3.



High indebtedness in many countries has prevented a swift recovery, putting Africa even further off course from achieving Goal 1.

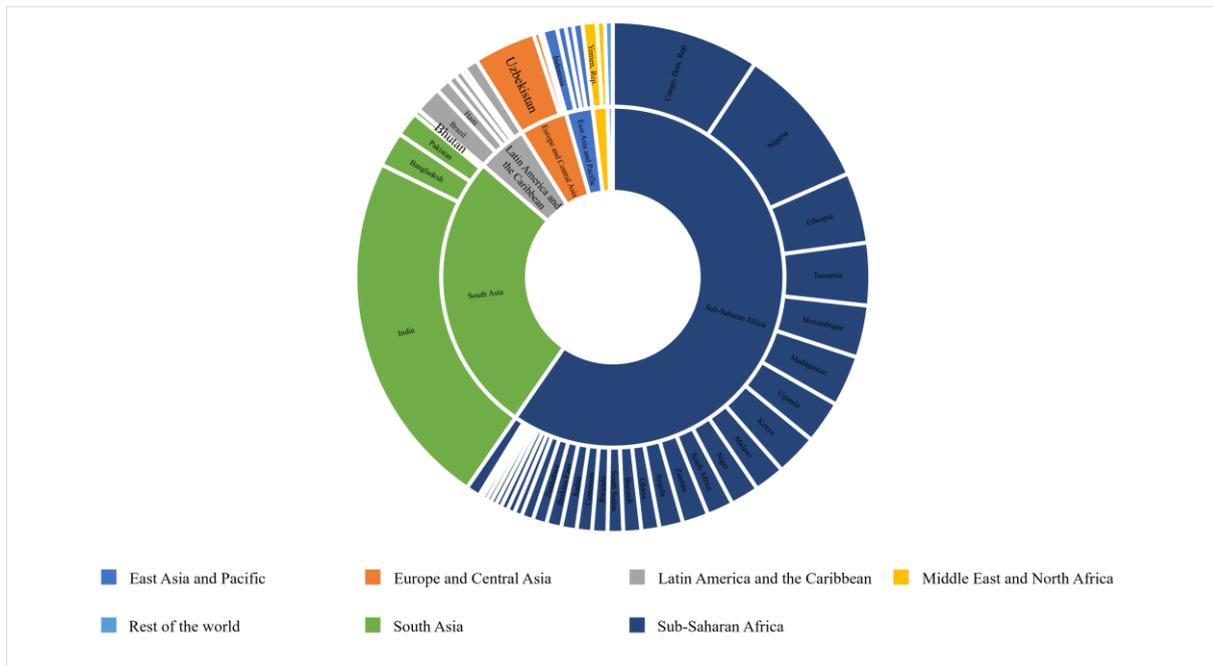
II. Progress in implementation

A. Indicator 1.1.1: proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)

4. Africa had made significant progress in reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty¹ from 2000 to 2019, when the share of the continent’s population living in extreme poverty decreased from 49.8 per cent to 31.4 per cent.² Despite the robust economic growth in Africa in the early 2000s, the pace of poverty reduction was considerably slower on the continent than that in other regions. Since 2015, the pace has further slowed, and, even though the reduction of poverty recommenced in 2021, the pandemic and other crises have reversed the gains made in previous years.

5. Global poverty is now concentrated in Africa: as shown in figure I, approximately 55 per cent of people globally who lived below the poverty line of \$2.15 in 2019 lived on the continent, where the poverty rate is about twice that of the second-poorest region in the world.³

Figure I
Distribution of people living in extreme poverty



Source: Compiled using data from the World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform. Available at <https://pip.worldbank.org/home> (accessed on 12 February 2024).

¹ Extreme poverty is defined as below the international poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day (at 2017 purchasing-power parity).

² ECA estimates.

³ World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform. Available at <https://pip.worldbank.org/home> (accessed on 12 February 2024).

6. In 2019, 31.4 per cent (407 million people) of the population in Africa lived below the international poverty line.⁴ The poverty rate is estimated to increase slightly in 2024 to 32.6 per cent, and the number of people living in poverty will increase by nearly 70 million.

7. Poverty reduction in Africa has been uneven across subregions and groups, with many countries lagging. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 55 million people were pushed into poverty in just one year.⁵ Of the 28 countries worldwide where the rates of extreme poverty are above 30 per cent, 23 are African.⁶

8. Only Algeria, Mauritius and Tunisia are fully on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1. Benin and Côte d'Ivoire are on track but face challenges.⁷ Malawi and Mozambique face a high risk of poverty because of various crises that have lowered agricultural productivity and displaced populations, pushing many more people into poverty in less than a year.

B. Indicator 1.2.2: proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

9. Despite considerable progress made in the decline of the proportion of children living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, from 45 per cent in 2013 to 40 per cent in 2022, as shown in figure II, the likelihood of a child in Africa experiencing poverty is 25 per cent greater than that for an adult.⁸ Extreme child poverty is increasingly an African phenomenon, with 71 per cent of the world's children in extreme poverty concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022.⁹ There is, therefore, an immediate need for targeted strategies to combat child poverty on the continent, in particular given that two thirds of the individuals in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa are under 10 years old.¹⁰

⁴ See E/ECA/COE/42/4/Rev.1, sect. III.

⁵ United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2021: Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability in Africa During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Addis Ababa, 2022).

⁶ Enoch Randy Aikins and Jacobus Du Toit Mclachlan, "Africa is losing the battle against extreme poverty", Institute for Security Studies, 13 July 2022.

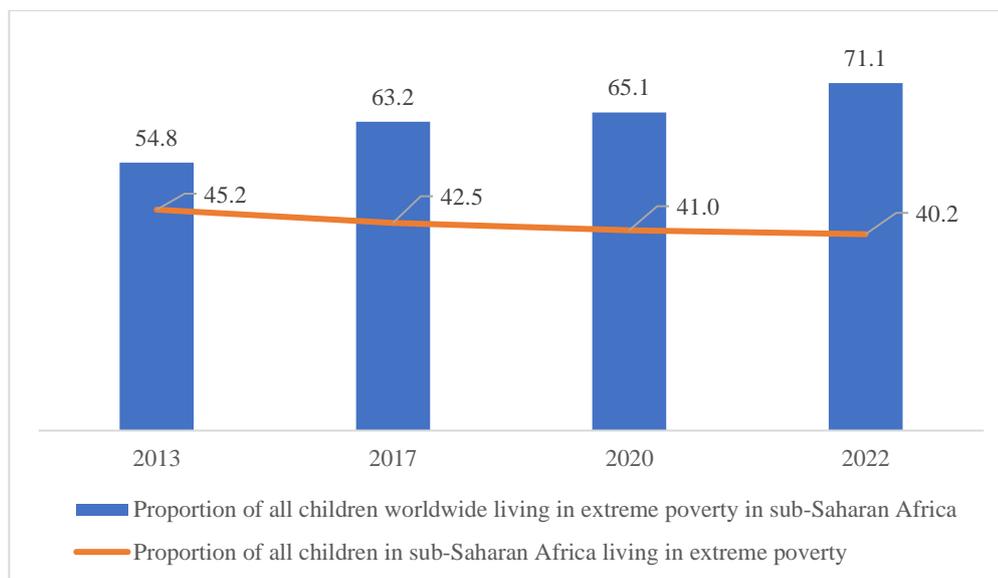
⁷ Jeffrey D. Sachs and others, *Sustainable Development Report 2023: Implementing the SDG Stimulus* (Paris, Sustainable Development Solutions Network; Dublin, Dublin University Press, 2023).

⁸ Sarah Hague, Paul Quarles van Ufford and Bob Muchabaiwa, "Good news or bad news for Africa: recent trends in monetary child poverty in sub-Saharan Africa" (Nairobi, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2023).

⁹ Daylan Salmeron-Gomez and others, "Global trends in child monetary poverty according to international poverty lines", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 10525 (Washington, D.C., World Bank and UNICEF, 2023).

¹⁰ Hague, Quarles van Ufford and Muchabaiwa, "Good news or bad news for Africa".

Figure II
Child poverty in sub-Saharan Africa
 (Percentage)



Source: ECA, based on Sarah Hague, Paul Quarles van Ufford and Bob Muchabaiwa, “Good news or bad news for Africa: recent trends in monetary child poverty in sub-Saharan Africa” (Nairobi, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2023).

10. People experience poverty not just through low levels of income but in many aspects of daily life. The Multidimensional Poverty Index is used to measure deprivations faced by households in health, education and living standards. In 2022, globally 1.2 billion people were estimated to be living in multidimensional poverty.¹¹ Most poor households suffer deprivation with regard to access to modern fuel, and there is much deprivation associated with housing, sanitation, drinking water, school attendance and child mortality. Early indications on the global impact of the pandemic are striking and show a significant deterioration among those living in poverty in all 10 types of deprivation that are considered in the Index.

11. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Index score had declined in Algeria, Burundi and Mauritania, from 2.1 per cent (2012) to 1.4 per cent (2019), from 82.3 per cent (2010) to 75.1 per cent (2017), and from 62.7 per cent (2011) to 56.2 per cent (2015), respectively.¹² The pandemic reversed a decade of effort to end poverty, however. The Index score in Mauritania increased from 56.2 per cent in 2015 to 57.4 per cent in 2021. In Africa, the pandemic had a disproportionately large impact on the health and education sectors and on the economy. The repercussions of the pandemic have been exacerbated by the ongoing effects of climate change, the crises in Ukraine and Gaza and domestic conflict.

12. During the pandemic, more than 50 million students in 40 countries missed out on one or more daily nutritious meals,¹³ which is likely to have increased the Index score of the continent through the effects on child nutrition

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022: unpacking deprivation bundles to reduce multidimensional poverty” (New York and Oxford, 2022).

¹² UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023: unstacking global poverty – data for high impact action” (New York and Oxford, 2023).

¹³ UNICEF, Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa Regional Offices, *COVID-19: A Catastrophe for Children in Sub-Saharan Africa – Cash Transfers and a Marshall Plan Can Help* (Nairobi and Dakar, 2020).

and child mortality. Estimates for Madagascar indicate that child mortality increased in 2021 compared with pre-pandemic levels and, in Mauritania, the percentage of households that were directly affected by child mortality rose marginally from 5.0 to 5.3 per cent in the period 2015–2021.¹⁴

13. Extended school closures during the pandemic led to permanent dropouts, adversely affecting future earnings and economic growth. Millions of students were forced to miss classes in the early stages of the pandemic, because nearly all African schools were closed, many of them for more than a year. In addition, the pandemic caused a massive drop in education expenditure across Africa. In 2020, per capita spending on the education section declined by 8 per cent on average, and by as much as 25 per cent in some places, compared with 2019.¹⁵ Owing to the loss of income that resulted from the pandemic, household expenditure decreased drastically, which contributed to the rise in dropouts and the fall in the average number of years of schooling.

14. The pandemic has created a global economic crisis and has plunged many families into extreme poverty. Economic growth in Africa in 2020 was expected to fall to –3.3 per cent, pushing the region into its first recession in 25 years, costing at least \$115 billion in output losses¹⁶ and greatly impeding government efforts to provide basic services, such as electricity, clean water and housing, to the public.

C. Indicator 1.3.1: proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable

15. The importance of social protection in supporting individuals and communities facing economic hardship and ensuring that they have access to essential services, resources and opportunities is underscored by Sustainable Development Goal 1. Owing to fragmented and inadequate social protection, however, many people are vulnerable to shocks and remain in poverty. In Africa, only an estimated 17.4 per cent of the population is covered by at least one social protection benefit.^{17,18} Formal social protection coverage remains limited and is characterized by underinvestment. The average rate of social protection coverage for children on the continent is low, at 12.6 per cent, and that rate is even lower in sub-Saharan Africa, at 10.5 per cent.^{19, 20} The rates of benefit coverage in Africa for maternity, at 14.9 per cent, employment injury, at 18.4 per cent, and disability, at 9.3 per cent, are also low.²¹

¹⁴ UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023”.

¹⁵ Matthew Cummins and others, “The impacts of COVID-19 on education spending in Africa and possible recovery pathways”, Education and Social Policy Working Paper (UNICEF, Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, and Middle East and North Africa Regional Offices, 2022).

¹⁶ World Bank, “World Bank confirms economic downturn in sub-Saharan Africa, outlines key policies needed for recovery”, 8 October 2020.

¹⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – In Pursuit of a Better Future* (Geneva, 2021).

¹⁸ It should be noted that the amount of assistance provided is often insufficient to make an impact on poverty. For more information, see United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2021: Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability in Africa During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Addis Ababa, 2022).

¹⁹ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22*.

²⁰ Further disparities are evident across the subregions. For more information, see ILO, *Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy, 2021–2025: Towards 40% – a Social Protection Coverage Acceleration Framework to Achieve the SDGs* (Geneva, 2021).

²¹ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22*.

16. Significant improvements have been made in extending the coverage and in enhancing the adequacy of national social protection systems in 14 countries. National employment policies were developed and employment services were strengthened in nine and six members of ECA, respectively. Assessments of the employment potential of investment in infrastructure in the transport and energy sectors were made in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Senegal and Zambia.²²

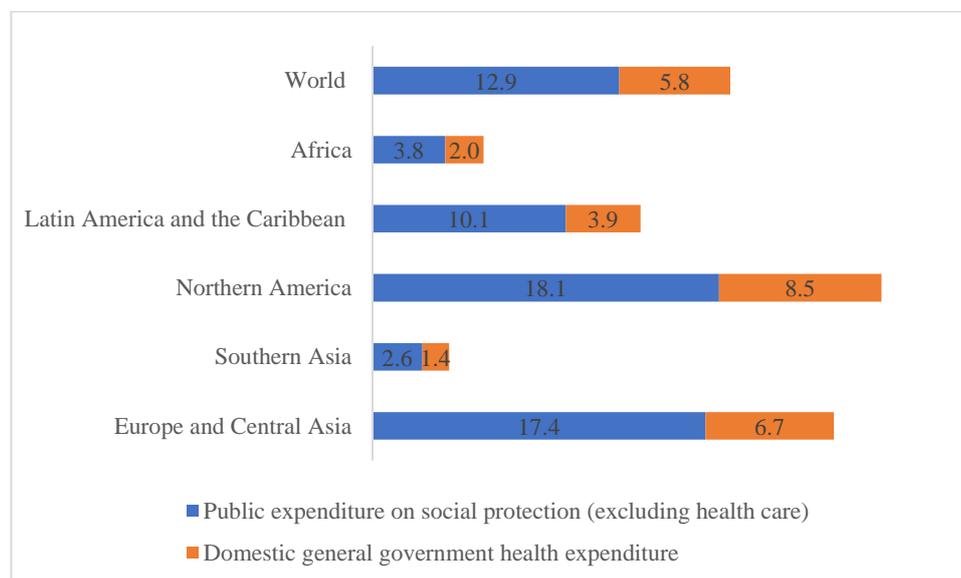
17. The expansion of the social protection system has strong political support and is widely recognized as being crucial to socioeconomic development in Africa. As part of Agenda 2063, countries are encouraged to increase spending on social protection from the current level of 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 5 per cent by 2063 and to extend coverage to informal workers and to rural areas.²³ At the fourteenth African Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO), held in 2019, the representatives of African countries committed themselves to the progressive extension of social protection coverage.²⁴

18. Despite the political will to extend social protection, African countries continue to lag behind the rest of the world. African spending on social protection as a share of GDP is 3.8 per cent and is among the lowest of all regions in the world, as shown in figure III.²⁵ Average public health expenditure is only 2 per cent of GDP, or around one third of the global average. On average, the world spends about 12.9 per cent of GDP on social protection. Despite its importance for poverty reduction, there has been a significant underinvestment in that area by most African Governments.

Figure III

Public social protection and health expenditure at the global and regional levels, 2018

(Percentage of gross domestic product)



Source: Adapted from ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – In Pursuit of a Better Future* (Geneva, 2021).

²² For more information, see the reports on the employment impact assessments at the following website: www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Projects/strengthen2/whatsnew/lang--en/nextRow--0/index.htm?facetcriteria=TYP=Publication.

²³ African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want – Framework Document* (Addis Ababa, 2015).

²⁴ ILO, Abidjan Declaration: Advancing Social Justice – Shaping the Future of Work in Africa (AFRM.14/D.4(Rev.).

²⁵ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22*.

19. In response to the pandemic and its impact on poverty, Governments across the world quickly ramped up social protection, often through digital means. In Togo, the Government made quick and efficient digital payments to almost 600,000 urban residents.²⁶ The pandemic exposed, however, vast shortfalls in digital and non-digital coverage and difficulties in reaching informal workers, women and young people.

D. Indicator 1.4.1: proportion of population living in households with access to basic services

20. From 2015 to 2022, 185 million people in sub-Saharan Africa gained access to water, with the average coverage reaching 65 per cent.²⁷ The rate of progress varies substantially across countries. Mauritius has already achieved total coverage, and Botswana, Cabo Verde, Seychelles and South Africa are close to reaching the 2030 target of universal access to water services with relatively minor effort. In contrast, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe have regressed and need concerted efforts to reverse their trends and accelerate progress to reach the 2030 target.

21. Coverage of basic sanitation services has grown at a sluggish pace, from 30 per cent in 2015 to 35 per cent in 2022. The progress has varied among African countries: Seychelles is on track to achieve universal basic sanitation coverage by 2030; Botswana, Cabo Verde, Rwanda and South Africa have relatively high coverage but still need to accelerate progress to reach the 2030 target; and in some countries, including Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe, progress has been undone and coverage rates are now among the lowest on the continent.²⁸

22. Some 56 per cent of the African population had access to electricity in 2023.²⁹ Although that rate is encouraging, it highlights the need to increase coverage.

III. Challenges, emerging trends and opportunities for the acceleration of progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1

A. Challenges

23. African countries face challenges beyond inadequate incomes, including a lack of access to education, health care and sanitation. Many Governments have failed to create enough productive jobs in recent years that could promote the structural transformation that leads to higher value addition and more productive economic activities.

²⁶ World Bank, “Prioritizing the poorest and most vulnerable in West Africa: Togo’s Novissi platform for social protection uses machine learning, geospatial analytics, and mobile phone metadata for the pandemic response”, 13 April 2021.

²⁷ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, Data. Available at <https://washdata.org/> (accessed on 29 January 2024).

²⁸ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, Data. Available at <https://washdata.org/> (accessed on 29 January 2024).

²⁹ United Nations, “Advancing SDG7 on Africa”, Policy Briefs in Support of the UN High-level Political Forum 2023 (New York, 2023).

24. Social protection coverage often does not reach those who need it the most, such as informal workers, in particular women.³⁰ For instance, only 28 per cent of persons with significant disabilities have access to disability benefits globally, and only 1 per cent have access in low-income countries.³¹ The low coverage of effective social protection for children requires urgent attention. Comprehensive and inclusive social protection strategies that are aimed at increasing the percentage of children covered and ensuring that support is provided throughout their lives are vital.

25. Many of the social protection benefits that Governments introduced during the pandemic were one-time payments or short-term solutions. Governments now face the prospect of having to rollback those measures in response to compounding fiscal pressures.

26. The current global economic slowdown is likely to force workers to accept lower quality and poorly paid jobs that lack job security and social protection. The need for universal social protection and decent job opportunities will only grow as the transition to green and digital economic systems accelerates, and as demographic transitions unfold.

27. The vast informal sector in Africa, which lacks decent work conditions and social protection, traps millions in poverty. A mismatch of skills with jobs, a lack of decent employment opportunities and high youth unemployment rates, which are often 3–5 times the rates for older age brackets, could fuel social unrest. Gender inequality in the labour market, including wage gaps, limited access to formal employment and unequal burdens of unpaid care work, hinder poverty reduction.

28. Progress towards poverty reduction is hampered by the impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect poor and vulnerable communities and include job losses, displacement and resource scarcity, exacerbating poverty and inequality within and across countries. Countries are also affected by natural disasters, such as, in Mozambique, cyclones and floods.

29. Many countries are in debt distress following the pandemic. Interest rates in developing countries are up to eight times higher than those of developed countries. Debt servicing in developing countries often takes precedence over social spending, which makes it difficult for those countries to invest sufficiently in human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. The unsustainable and unprecedented levels of global debt have evolved into a human rights crisis: many Governments spend more on servicing their debt than on investing in human capital, economic and social rights and efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, including with regard to ensuring social protection, the education of children and access to affordable health care.

30. Globally, an estimated \$480 billion is lost each year in tax evasion and avoidance.³² In countries where fiscal space is already constrained, the equivalent of half of their public health budgets is thus being drained, robbing them of the capacity to invest in what they need.

³⁰ For further information, see Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, “Long economic COVID for informal workers”, July 2022.

³¹ United Nations, “Policy brief: a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19” (2020).

³² Tax Justice Network, *State of Tax Justice 2023* (Bristol, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2023).

B. Emerging trends

31. Emerging trends, including growing automation, digitalization and new forms of work, which are transforming the world of work and creating new opportunities, pose risks in terms of job displacement and skills mismatches, adversely affecting vulnerable populations. Those trends require attention and proactive responses, including skills development and adaptation strategies.

32. Rapid urbanization in Africa presents opportunities for job creation, but poses challenges related to growing informality, inadequate housing and infrastructure.

33. Although the expansion of social protection in Africa has been limited to formal social protection, there has been limited recognition of the traditional, informal social protection schemes that are an essential part of everyday life for most Africans. Indigenous, informal social protection mechanisms, which are founded on traditional values and based on kinship or self-organized mutual aid, and which predate colonization, have long been an important tool for welfare protection and social cohesion³³ and can help to mitigate collective risks, such as floods and droughts.³⁴

C. Opportunities

34. There is a strong case for investing in the expansion of social protection and in efforts to support job creation. Expanding social protection, including by extending coverage to informal workers and vulnerable groups, can build resilience and reduce poverty. It is estimated that investing in the care economy could generate 280 million jobs globally,³⁵ and investing in the green transition could create 100 million jobs, both by 2030.³⁶ The revenue from job creation could fuel a virtuous cycle that could help to accelerate just transitions and create more resilient, inclusive and equitable societies.

35. Through the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, which launched in September 2021 to fast-track the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1 in Africa by tackling the root causes of poverty, investments in green, digital and care economies are being mobilized to create millions of decent jobs for vulnerable groups, boost incomes, extend social protection and build resilience against shocks. The Accelerator is aimed at establishing national financing frameworks and mobilizing public and private domestic and international resources to expand social protection to 4 billion people and create 400 million new, decent jobs by 2030.

36. Through the Job Open to the Youth (JOY) programme, young people in the agricultural sector in Cameroon and Kenya are provided with skills, and agribusiness enterprises receive innovative financial and non-financial services to help them establish themselves. At the regional level, an initiative to promote decent work in forestry is being implemented in countries in East Africa, including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

³³ *Indigenous Social Protection Schemes as Building Blocks for Extending Social Protection Coverage in Africa* (United Nations publication, 2024).

³⁴ Marius Olivier, Edwell Kaseke and Letlhokwa George Mpedi, "Formulating an integrated social security response: perspectives on developing links between informal and formal social security in the SADC region", paper presented at the Expert Group on Development Issues and the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research Conference on Unlocking Human Potential Linking the Informal and Formal Sectors, Helsinki, September 2004.

³⁵ ILO, "The benefits of investing in transformative childcare policy packages towards gender equality and social justice", ILO Brief (Geneva, 2023).

³⁶ ILO, "The just ecological transition: an ILO solution for creating 100 million Jobs by 2030", 24 May 2022.

37. The private sector can support social protection by providing the financing that is needed for the roll-out of social protection coverage. Governments can partner with the private sector to design cost-effective funding schemes for social protection programmes. In 2020, Babyl embarked on a 10-year partnership with the Government of Rwanda to provide access to digital health care to every person over 12 years of age.³⁷ Patients can gain access to telehealth services via text or voice, including booking appointments, conducting consultations with doctors or nurses, and receiving prescriptions and information to arrange laboratory tests, thus making services available to those without a smartphone or data plan. KT Rwanda Networks, a telecommunications infrastructure company, partnered with Babyl during the COVID-19 pandemic to donate smartphones to Babyl and health-care centres that use Babyl, thus helping to expand digital health care across the country through a government initiative entitled “Connect Rwanda”.

38. Members of ECA can effectively address poverty by developing coordinated and comprehensive policies and programmes, such as the “Advancing decent work and inclusive industrialization” programme in Ethiopia, which will help to stimulate employment for women and young people, promote industrial productivity and competitiveness in the textiles and garment sector, enhance safety, and ensure workers are treated equally, are heard and have representation.

39. Initiatives to promote small and medium-sized enterprises and ensure the transition from the informal to the formal economy, including through skills development, are critical for poverty reduction. In Southern Africa, efforts are under way through targeted policies and programmes to empower small and medium-sized enterprises and support the growth of such enterprises that are led by women and young people and that aim to empower historically disadvantaged populations, including women and young people.

40. Given that climate-induced shocks continue to recur, and job losses disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, investing in green jobs in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and climate-resilient infrastructure has the potential to create decent work and tackle climate change simultaneously.

41. There are numerous opportunities to help to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1. Several countries have implemented policy frameworks to help accelerate poverty reduction. South Africa uses six important assets to achieve that objective: a federal governance structure; good financial, technological and physical infrastructure; cultural diversity; a strong and sophisticated private sector; financial resources; and South-South cooperation. In Mozambique, five main avenues have been identified to finance the Goals, including domestic resource mobilization, debt financing, equity finance, domestic capital markets and the reduction of corruption, waste and illicit financial flows. In Mauritius, efforts to accelerate green and blue economic investment, public-private partnerships and the issuance of bonds to support poverty eradication are noteworthy.

42. Africa should use its growing workforce to stimulate economic growth by maximizing the benefits of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area – the largest free trade area in the world. Enhancing regional cooperation and trade can boost economic growth, create jobs and improve living standards across the continent.

43. Other initiatives to support members of ECA in addressing ongoing challenges and building resilience include the surge initiative of the United

³⁷ For more information, see Leontina Postelnicu, “Babylon inks 10-year partnership with Rwandan government”, *MobiHealthNews*, 4 March 2020; and STL Partners, “Telehealth in emerging markets: Babyl closes the gap in Rwandan healthcare inequality”.

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, within which specialized analytical support is provided to States for the operationalization of economic, social and cultural rights, which helps to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1. As part of that initiative, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe have received human rights-based budget analysis aimed at supporting efforts to expand the fiscal space for social spending in order to address poverty effectively.

44. Many efforts to build the resilience of vulnerable populations have been focused on ensuring the rights to food and education in a context of debt distress, including by advocating the provision of minimal safety nets.

45. The growing population of African young people, which is expected to reach 0.5 billion by 2050, provides an opportunity to reap a demographic dividend, but it also presents challenges with regard to education and training and the creation of decent work. Harnessing the digital economy by developing skills, expanding digital infrastructure and promoting platforms for decent work can unlock new opportunities, in particular for African young people.

IV. Recommendations for the integrated and accelerated achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1 and the implementation of Agenda 2063

46. A well-developed social protection system is an integral component of any agenda that is aimed at combating poverty and promoting growth in Africa. The expansion and integration of more comprehensive social protection systems on the continent must remain a high-level priority. Supporting countries with the design and implementation of effective social security systems, including child grants, unemployment benefits, pensions and health-care coverage, which are anchored in the standards of ILO, such as the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), underpin efforts to ensure comprehensive and adequate social protection throughout individuals' lives.

47. The objective of reaching a social protection coverage rate of 40 per cent by 2025, in accordance with the strategy of ILO for Africa, must be supported. Reducing informal work, developing strategies to expand social protection, implementing national social protection floors for all and improving the coverage and financial sustainability of social protection schemes are crucial measures for achieving that objective.

48. An integrated approach to social protection, aimed at eradicating poverty and promoting African traditional social protection models, should be considered, with a view to facilitating the expansion of coverage. Governments should work with relevant development partners to assess the role of traditional systems in the main areas of social protection. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for instance, helps Governments to develop or update national social protection policies, strategies and programmes to ensure that they include consideration of the rights and needs of children.³⁸

49. Conflict, fragility and rising vulnerability to climate change present serious challenges to the reduction of poverty. Those threats, however, can be viewed as an opportunity for stakeholders to identify new ways to prevent children falling into poverty or to help them escape it. To address child poverty, equitable policy solutions, based on accountability and good governance, are needed and must ensure the effective, efficient and equitable generation, allocation and use of national resources in programmes and sectors that directly

³⁸ See, for example, UNICEF, *UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework* (New York, 2019).

benefit children, including in such critical areas as early childhood development and social protection. Further research and analysis are required to understand the diverse policy portfolios that countries need in order to address child poverty and to expand the portfolios to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1.

50. To support poverty reduction, it is important to maximize the available resources for economic, social and cultural rights at a time of growing debt distress, ring-fence investment in social services, social security and protection and safeguard human rights. Anchoring economic policymaking in human rights can help Governments to navigate difficult trade-offs amid the pressures of debt and austerity and pave the way for a departure from the policies that have fuelled inequality and undermined social cohesion.

51. In the long term, the skills of the available labour force must be upgraded to avoid the underemployment and unemployment that keep people in poverty.

52. Addressing the underlying governance factors that contribute to poverty and inequality is critical. It is important to understand the reasons for the slow progress made by most countries in Southern Africa towards meeting the target set out in the Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa of allocating 10 per cent of national budgets to agriculture in order to reduce poverty. In addition, efforts should be made to understand the role of environmental factors, such as cyclones, floods and droughts, and their impact on affected populations, including their contribution to food insecurity, in countries in Southern Africa.

53. Applying a human rights lens to the reform of the international financial architecture is vital for reducing poverty, advancing human rights and implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. To make progress in the reduction of poverty, it is important to: tackle the high cost of debt, reduce interest rates and address the high levels of debt servicing that crowd out investment in the Sustainable Development Goals; undertake debt sustainability analyses informed by the need for fiscal space to secure rights to health, education and social protection; and restructure debt with a view to prioritizing human rights obligations.

V. Main messages

54. The following main messages have emerged from the integrated analysis of the efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063:

(a) The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent crises present challenges to achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1 in Africa, in particular in conflict-affected areas;

(b) Owing to the interconnected nature of poverty, a holistic approach to poverty reduction is needed that takes into consideration income disparities, social inequality and exclusion;

(c) Poverty reduction demands non-traditional poverty alleviation strategies that empower vulnerable groups, reduce vulnerability to poverty and strengthen resilience against future shocks, and efforts to ensure a more equitable distribution of income and assets;

(d) Policies and programmes that support inclusive economic growth by creating decent jobs and promoting access to resources and markets that contribute to the equitable distribution of benefits for marginalized communities are vital;

(e) Policies that empower women and other vulnerable groups through equal access to quality education and access to health care are essential for poverty reduction;

(f) Robust social protection systems, including cash transfer programmes, unemployment benefits and health-care services, are vital for the lifelong protection of vulnerable populations from economic shocks and other crises;

(g) Child poverty can be reduced by ensuring that national resources are effectively, efficiently and equitably generated, allocated and spent on programmes and sectors that benefit children, including in early childhood development and social protection;

(h) Integrating human rights into the international financial, debt and tax architecture to secure the maximum resources for economic and social rights, including the right to social protection, can help to ensure that no one – and no country – is left behind;

(i) Enhancing resource mobilization, curbing illicit financial flows, fostering structural transformation and adopting innovative mechanisms to boost investment and industrialization through the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area are vital for poverty reduction;

(j) Promoting economic diversification in such sectors as manufacturing, technology and innovation can catalyse the development of a more inclusive and resilient economy that generates more employment opportunities and reduces inequality;

(k) Disaggregated data and analysis are needed to measure multidimensional poverty, inequality and vulnerability appropriately.
