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Economic Commission for Africa
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Tenth session

**Preparatory regional workshop on
voluntary national and local reviews:
strengthening integration and reporting
on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

Addis Ababa (hybrid), 22 April 2024

Concept note

I. Background

1. Having adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, African 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 peace and prosperity for people and the planet. As part of the mechanisms to follow up on and review implementation of the 2030 Agenda, States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress that are country-led and country-driven. The process of undertaking a review is expected to be rigorous and based on evidence, high-quality, up-to-date and disaggregated data and the close involvement and input of national and local stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, young people, children and other relevant groups.¹ Progress and advancement in implementation should also be supported by monitoring and evaluation tools and adequate systems. States are invited by the President of the Economic and Social Council to formally present their voluntary national reviews during the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which is held on an annual basis under the auspices of the Council.

2. Fifteen African States are currently engaged in the review process in preparation for the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in July 2024: one is conducting its first review;² nine are conducting their second review;³ five are conducting their third review;⁴ and one is conducting its fourth review.⁵ Once the current cycle

¹ See United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews 2024*, October 2023.

² South Sudan.

³ Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius and South Africa.

⁴ Chad, Kenya, Namibia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

⁵ Sierra Leone.



of voluntary national reviews is complete, all 54 African States will have conducted at least one review. Taking place in Addis Ababa in April 2024, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to share best practices, peer learning, success stories and common challenges that are specific to the region, and to achieve greater stakeholder involvement in order to enrich the national reviews and accelerate progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in these challenging times.

3. States have noted the particular benefits of conducting sustainable development reviews at the subnational level, in particular at the provincial, district and municipal levels, which complement the national review process. This process has also been aligned with African countries' efforts to report equally on the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Participants at the past four sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development underscored the importance of local reviews for meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement and committed themselves to integrating voluntary local reviews into their national reviews and to increasing accountability, transparency and public ownership of the implementation of the two agendas. Through engagement with numerous stakeholders on the ground, voluntary local reviews reach a grass-roots audience, which can, in turn, inform the sustainable development process and move it forward.

4. The theme of the 2024 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 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". This theme is directly related to the theme of the 2024 meeting of the high-level political forum: "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions".⁶ The goals to be reviewed by the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum resonate directly with the aspirations of Agenda 2063. Furthermore, the Forum will also serve to mobilize effective African engagement in the Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024, and to generate African priorities and inputs to the Summit.

II. Scope of the preparatory workshop

5. 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, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the African Union and the African Peer Review Mechanism, holds an annual preparatory workshop on the margins of the annual Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The objectives of the 2024 preparatory workshop are to strengthen the capacity of members to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, link local and national processes, support preparations for the submission of national reviews to the high-level political forum at its 2024 meeting and identify African priorities for the high-level political forum.

1. The preparatory workshop, therefore, will provide an opportunity:

(a) To countries that are preparing to submit voluntary national reviews in 2024 to report on the status of their preparations and identify challenges faced in those preparations;

⁶ General Assembly decision 77/553.

(b) To follow up on the commitment set forth in the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly “to using the review of the high-level political forum at the 78th session of the General Assembly to further strengthen the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, harnessing data to track progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, strengthening analysis of the interlinkages across the Goals and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs.”;⁷

(c) To reflect on the development trajectory of the region, having passed the midway point of the 2030 Agenda and moved into the period of the second 10-year plan for the implementation of Agenda 2063;

(d) To share information on the format and scope of voluntary national review presentations for the 2024 meeting of the high-level political forum, including relevant deadlines;

(e) To brainstorm on African priorities for the Summit of the Future and the global digital compact, and also on how African countries can leverage the six transitions, or investment pathways, to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, namely, food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection; and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution;

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

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

(h) To clarify the vital role of United Nations entities in the voluntary national and local review processes and in ensuring a participatory and inclusive process, including the Development Coordination Office, resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams;

(i) To explore the use of digital platforms to enhance voluntary local and national reviews;

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

6. The preparatory 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 and local reviews will be introduced.

⁷ General Assembly resolution 78/1.

7. The preparatory 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 stakeholders from the region. In addition to building national capacities regarding the linkages between national development plans and voluntary national and local reviews, the outputs of the preparatory workshop will directly inform the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

III. Major questions

8. The preparatory workshop will be guided by the following major questions:

(a) What are the successes, challenges, gaps and lessons learned from voluntary national and local review preparation processes?

(b) 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 multi-stakeholder engagement?

(c) What are the principal guidelines and tools for reporting at the national and subnational levels, and how can they be harnessed to assist reviews being undertaken in 2024?

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

(e) How can the review process help to have a snapshot of developmental progress amidst crises and identify priorities in overcoming the challenges resulting from such crises?

(f) How can future voluntary national reviews build on their predecessors?

(g) How can stakeholder engagement be made more inclusive, strengthened and institutionalized?

(h) How can African countries use national and local review processes to accelerate progress in the second half of the period of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and beyond and in the period of the second 10-year plan for the implementation of Agenda 2063?

(i) How can volunteerism further contribute to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063?

(j) What further support is needed to effectively complete and follow up on the findings of African voluntary national and local reviews?

IV. Expected outcomes

9. The preparatory workshop is expected to produce the following outcomes:

(a) Strengthened capacity of countries conducting voluntary national reviews in 2024;

(b) Enhanced consideration and awareness of the specific characteristics of the region, including in relation to Agenda 2063 and to human rights and governance imperatives, in national and local review processes;

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

(d) Closer alignment of voluntary national and local reviews with national development frameworks and with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(e) Enhanced integration of volunteerism in the national and local review processes;

(f) Concrete proposals on actions, plans and policies to close the Sustainable Development Goals gap and to identify African priorities at the 2024 Summit of the Future, and on how the six transitions can be accelerated in Africa through deliberate accelerated and coordinated action from Governments and all civil society stakeholders.

V. Guidance for participants

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

11. 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

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

- **John Robert Sloan**
Economic Affairs Officer
Economic Commission for Africa
Email: sloan@un.org
 - **Tonya Vaturi**
Sustainable Development Officer
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Email: yaturi@un.org
 - **Juliet Wasswa-Mugambwa**
Senior Programme Management Officer
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
Email: wasswa-mugambwa@un.org
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