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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**  
Eleventh session

**Regional preparatory workshop for African voluntary national reviews  
and voluntary local reviews**  
Kampala, 7 and 8 April 2025

## Concept note

### I. Background

1. With less than five years remaining until the deadline for completion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is clear that the whole world, including Africa, is falling short and that far greater concerted efforts are required if the Sustainable Development Goals and their associated targets are to be achieved. In Africa, less than 6 per cent of the measurable targets under the Goals are on track to be achieved, while negative trends need to be reversed in relation to a number of other targets.<sup>1</sup> As such, African States need to take bold, ambitious and accelerated transformative measures to improve development outcomes.

2. At the same time, the continent is entering the second 10-year implementation period of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The ambitions, known as moonshots, that are set out in the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) include the attainment, by every State member of the African Union, of at least middle-income status and the amicable resolution of conflicts in Africa.<sup>2</sup> As the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has identified while supporting the application of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit and carrying out its other work programmes, members of ECA need to make greater efforts to link their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 to their national development plans, and the steps that are taken need to be consistently reviewed, with a view to the advancement of the two agendas.

3. African States are encouraged to conduct regular formal reviews of 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. The reviews should be country-led and country-driven. The process of undertaking a review is expected to be rigorous and based on evidence derived from high-quality, up-to-date and disaggregated data, with the close involvement of national and local stakeholders, including local governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, young people, children and other relevant groups.<sup>3</sup> Progress and advancement in implementation should also be

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<sup>1</sup> African Union, African Development Bank, ECA and United Nations Development Programme, *Africa Sustainable Development Report, 2024* (Addis Ababa; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; New York; 2024).

<sup>2</sup> African Union, *Decade of Accelerated Implementation: Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan, 2024–2033* (Addis Ababa, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews, 2025* (2024).



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 annually under the auspices of the Council. In addition, as the deadline for completion of the Sustainable Development Goals draws closer, each State is encouraged to develop a national road map, in which a schedule is set out of voluntary national reviews for presentation until 2030.

4. All 54 African States have undertaken at least one review. Ten 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 2025: three are conducting their second review<sup>4</sup> and seven are conducting their third review.<sup>5</sup> Taking place in Kampala, in April 2025, the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will provide an opportunity to engage in peer-to-peer learning and share best practices and success stories in addressing common challenges that are specific to the region, and to achieve greater stakeholder involvement in order to enrich the national reviews and accelerate progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in these challenging times.

5. 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 the efforts of African States to report equally on the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Participants in past sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development have underscored the importance of local reviews for meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement, and have committed themselves to integrating voluntary local reviews into their national reviews and to increasing the 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 in a more inclusive manner. A number of new voluntary local reviews will be finalized and published in the region in 2025.

6. The eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will be held under the theme “Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science-based and evidence-based solutions for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union”. The theme is directly related to the theme of the 2025 meeting of the high-level political forum: “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind”.

## II. Scope of the workshop

7. As a part of its ongoing support for voluntary national and local reviews, ECA, 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 secretariat, holds an annual preparatory and capacity-building workshop on the margins of the annual Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The purpose of the annual workshop is to strengthen the integration of and reporting

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<sup>4</sup> Angola, Seychelles and South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria and Sudan.

on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The specific objectives of the 2025 workshop are to strengthen the capacity of members of ECA to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, to link local and national processes, to support preparations for the submission of national reviews to the high-level political forum at its 2025 meeting and to identify African priorities for the high-level political forum.

8. The workshop, therefore, will offer States that are preparing to submit voluntary national reviews in 2025 the chance to report on the status of their preparations, identify challenges faced in those preparations and share information on the deadlines, on the format and on the scope of voluntary national review presentations at the 2025 meeting of the high-level political forum.

9. In addition, the workshop will provide an opportunity:

(a) To reflect on the development trajectory of the region, with the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063 having come into effect;

(b) To share best practices in engaging with stakeholders who have previously been involved in the preparation of voluntary national reviews, discuss common challenges and review potential solutions, among participants both from within Africa and, through South-South cooperation, from other regions;

(c) 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;

(d) To share experiences of ways in which national and subnational implementation of the 2030 Agenda can help with the realization of the six transformative transitions to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;<sup>6</sup>

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

(f) 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 national and subnational governments have at their disposal in this regard;

(g) To highlight the role of young people in the sustainable development process and discuss ways to strengthen their meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, as called for in the Pact for the Future and Declaration on Future Generations.<sup>7</sup>

10. 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 and local reviews will be introduced.

11. The workshop will conclude with a joint session, co-hosted by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and the United

<sup>6</sup> The six transitions are: food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection; and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. For more information, see: United Nations, “Six transitions: investment pathways to deliver the SDGs” (2023).

<sup>7</sup> The Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations (General Assembly resolution 79/1).

Nations Foundation, that will facilitate dialogue and experience-sharing among former and current voluntary national review States and other stakeholders from the region. In addition to building national capacities regarding the linkages between national development plans, on the one hand, and voluntary national and local reviews, on the other, the outputs of the workshop will directly inform the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

### III. Expected outcomes

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

(a) Strengthened capacity of States conducting voluntary national reviews in 2025;

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

(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) Increased awareness of the tools, capacity-building support and advisory services available to enable States to conduct voluntary national and local reviews;

(f) Concrete proposals on means of redoubling efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, with emphasis given to examples from the region.

### IV. Guidance for participants

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

14. 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.

### V. Contact

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

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