



# Economic and Social Council

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

**Regional preparatory workshop**  
**for African voluntary national reviews**  
**and voluntary local reviews**  
Addis Ababa, 27 April 2026

## Concept note

### I. Background

1. With less than five years remaining until the deadline for the implementation 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. At present, progress in the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, remains inadequate in Africa. An examination of the continent's performance since 2015, projected to 2030, shows that Africa is making progress on 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The current pace of progress is, however, insufficient for the achievement of those Goals by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, African States need to take bold, ambitious and accelerated transformative measures to improve development outcomes.

2. At the same time, States members of the African Union have started to execute the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063.<sup>2</sup> Through its engagements with its members, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has determined that they need to make greater efforts to link the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 with their national development plans. The steps taken to that end should also 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

<sup>1</sup> African Union, African Development Bank, ECA and United Nations Development Programme, *Africa Sustainable Development Report, 2025* (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. Nineteen States are currently engaged in the review process in preparation for the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which is scheduled to be held in July 2026: six States are conducting their second review,<sup>4</sup> eleven are conducting their third review,<sup>5</sup> one is conducting its fourth review<sup>6</sup> and one is conducting its fifth.<sup>7</sup> The twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which is scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa in April 2026, 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 voluntary local reviews are being pursued in 2026, including in countries that are also conducting national reviews.

6. The twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will be held under the theme “Turning the tide: transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”. The theme is directly related to the theme of the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum: “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all”.

## II. Scope of the workshop

7. As a part of its ongoing support for voluntary national and local reviews, ECA, with inputs from other entities of the United Nations system and organs of the African Union, holds an annual preparatory and capacity-building workshop on the margins of the annual Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable

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<sup>4</sup> Algeria, Burundi, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Somalia.

<sup>5</sup> Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Tunisia and United Republic of Tanzania.

<sup>6</sup> Egypt.

<sup>7</sup> Togo.

Development. The purpose of the annual workshop is to strengthen the integration of and reporting on 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 2026 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 2026 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 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum, and on linkages with priorities, progress and reviews at the local level.

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

(a) To reflect on the development trajectory of the region regarding the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063;

(b) To share best practices in engaging with stakeholders in the preparation of voluntary national reviews, discuss common challenges and review potential solutions;

(c) To share experiences of subnational implementation through the preparation of voluntary local reviews, deepen the understanding of the links between national development plans and local and national reviews, in particular in countries that are undertaking both levels of review in 2026, 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 institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms and 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>8</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 that 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>9</sup>

(h) To contribute to the peer-learning series on localized approaches to voluntary national review preparation and enhanced connection between national and local reviews as a means to prepare the ground for national Sustainable Development Goal localization frameworks, facilitated by the Partnership Platform on Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals and convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of Italy, in close collaboration with the Local2030 coalition and with the participation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, ECA,

<sup>8</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>9</sup> The Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations (General Assembly resolution 79/1).

United Cities and Local Governments and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

(i) To contribute to the “Road to Baku: The Local Way”, a global initiative led by the Local2030 coalition that is aimed at capturing and elevating concrete local actions led by States members of the United Nations, local and subnational governments, civil society and other stakeholders to advance sustainable urban development and housing.

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. 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 twelfth 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 2026;

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

(c) 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;

(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. Contacts

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

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