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**High-level political forum on sustainable development**  
Convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council  
10–19 July 2023  
**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease  
(COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda  
for Sustainable Development at all levels**

## **Report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its ninth session**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

The Secretariat hereby transmits, as input to the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its ninth session, which was organized by the Economic Commission for Africa and held from 28 February to 2 March 2023.



## Report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its ninth session: summary and key messages

### Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), together with the Government of the Niger and in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and entities of the United Nations system,<sup>1</sup> convened the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development at the Mahatma Gandhi International Conference Centre and the Congressional Palace (Palais des Congrès), in Niamey, in a hybrid format featuring both in-person and online participation, from 28 February to 2 March 2023.
2. The Forum was attended by more than 900 participants in person and over 1,000 online, comprising ministers and high-level representatives of the Governments of 44 members of ECA, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders.
3. The Forum was held as the world remained caught up in economic uncertainty caused by multiple crises, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change, biodiversity loss and the war in Ukraine. The convergence of those crises had amplified economic hardship, reduced prosperity and hampered progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The ninth session of the Forum was held in preparation for the 2023 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in July 2023, and the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in September 2023. The Forum offered an opportunity to exchange good practices and devise solutions to accelerate and expand the scale of implementation.
5. The ninth session of the Forum was held on the theme “Accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union”. The Forum carried out an in-depth review of progress and identified measures to accelerate efforts to attain the five selected Sustainable Development Goals (Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17) and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063.

### I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

6. The session was moderated by the Commissioner for the Organization of Major Events of the Niger, Imirane Maïga. It was officially opened by the President of the Niger, Mohamed Bazoum. Welcoming remarks were delivered by the Governor of

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<sup>1</sup> The following entities of the United Nations system were involved as partners in that process: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Coordination Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office to the African Union, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteers, World Food Programme and World Trade Organization.

Niamey, Oudou Ambouca. Opening statements were delivered by the Secretary of State for Business Development of Cabo Verde, Adalgisa Vaz, representing the Chair of the Bureau of the eighth session of the Forum; the Acting Executive Secretary of ECA, Antonio Pedro; the President of the Economic and Social Council, Lachezara Stoeva; the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Monique Nsanzabaganwa; youth representatives, Anita Hamidou and Moustapha Djafare; and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed.

7. Mr. Ambouca emphasized that African countries faced multiple development challenges and that the Forum offered an opportunity to reflect on the Sustainable Development Goals and reaffirm the resolve of African countries to achieve them. He reaffirmed the commitment of the Niger to the full attainment of the Goals and encouraged development partners to continue their efforts in that regard and their provision of support to his country.

8. Ms. Vaz stressed that African natural capital and the demographic dividend could help to address sustainable development challenges and make the continent more inclusive and resilient. She said that the Bureau had supported the efforts of African countries to obtain climate financing and the development of a carbon registry within the Congo Basin Climate Commission. She outlined priorities on which the incoming Bureau should focus: innovative finance for green and inclusive development; the Great Blue Wall initiative and investment in biodiversity; and capacity-building to enable African young people and women to take advantage of science, technology and innovation to engage in green entrepreneurship.

9. The Acting Executive Secretary said that ECA had joined forces with the African Union Commission and United Nations entities in pursuing the full attainment of the Goals. The outcome of the African Union Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification provided a road map for the realization of Goal 9 in Africa. The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area also provided a framework for ensuring an African-owned transformation. He highlighted ECA initiatives to green the minerals value chain, mainstream support for African nationally determined contributions to climate action in the work of United Nations country teams, develop e-commerce solutions to eliminate the digital divide while maintaining a gender focus and increase financing for investment linked with the Goals.

10. The President of the Economic and Social Council noted that 40 countries would present their voluntary national reviews at the 2023 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and indicated that such reviews had been instrumental in making progress towards achievement of the Goals. Notable successes had been achieved in relation to cleaner energy. She appealed for more action to create jobs and plug African infrastructure gaps, underlined the importance that the proposed Sustainable Development Goals stimulus would have in accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals and urged members of ECA to come to the high-level political forum ready to commit themselves to increased ambition to achieve the Goals.

11. Ms. Nsanzabaganwa called upon participants to identify and articulate concrete proposals concerning six factors that would be essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in the coming decade: well-costed implementation plans designed and owned at all levels; intensified efforts to mobilize financial resources, including for the Green Recovery Action Plan of the African Union; acceleration of the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; the building of resilience into delivery of the goals of the two agendas; the implementation of the two agendas with and for young people; and the intensification of partnerships.

12. Ms. Hamidou and Mr. Djafare, in their jointly delivered statement on behalf of young people, called for all stakeholders across the continent to work to achieve a green recovery and integrated, inclusive and sustainable development, to end famine and poverty and to protect nature.

13. Ms. Mohammed observed that, while progress had been made, the world was far from where it ought to be at the midpoint of the implementation period for the 2030 Agenda. She called for solidarity, leadership, commitment and ambition in actions to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. She stressed the need for the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit to reenergize national actions and increase ambition to reduce poverty and achieve the Goals, deliver on the financing for the Goals and reinvigorate a spirit of partnership.

14. Mr. Bazoum underscored that climate change, compounded by demographic dynamics, had generated challenges to achievement of the Goals in many African countries. He called upon developed countries to play their part in ensuring access to climate finance, for example with regard to the proposed Sahel climate fund. While Africa contributed very little to the underlying factors of climate change, related disasters were exacting a heavy toll on the continent. It was therefore critical to equip the region with tools to create more resilience, develop human capital, in particular for young people, and promote sustainable water management. He urged participants to draw up key messages that would help Africa to strengthen its contribution to the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

## II. Summary and key messages

15. The following sections contain a summary of the main issues, trends and key messages, including policy recommendations arising from the presentations at and deliberations of the Forum during its ninth session. The key messages comprise priorities, policy options and recommendations for Africa, to accelerate implementation at multiple levels, and the region's collective input to the 2023 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

### A. High-level panel 1: From Africa to the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals Summit: priorities to address multiple crises and accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union [agenda item 2]

#### 1. Discussion and trends

16. Participants noted the limited and uneven progress made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the urgent need for African countries to build climate resilience and called for strengthened global efforts to promote access to water and sanitation, and energy access for all.

#### 2. Key messages

17. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed that members of ECA should:

(a) Broaden the involvement of the private sector in innovation and resource mobilization initiatives, including by enhancing the efficiency of tax regimes and curbing illicit financial flows;

(b) Increase investment in irrigation systems in order to reduce the overreliance of many African countries on rain-fed agriculture;

(c) Develop innovative strategies to promote the involvement of young people in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and ensure that young people make up at least 30 per cent of the delegations of African States attending international meetings related to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Integrate climate change into national development planning and invest in innovative technologies and systems, including early warning and action systems, to build resilience to and reduce shocks from climate change impacts;

(e) Strengthen institutions so that they are better able to anchor initiatives to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(f) Enhance investment in projects to exploit African energy resources, including new and renewable clean sources of energy;

(g) Invest in projects to promote industrialization and the export of finished goods so as to exploit fully the opportunities stemming from the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

**B. High-level panel 2: From the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and beyond: financing to achieve inclusive recovery and just transitions and to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union [agenda item 4]**

**1. Discussion and trends**

18. Participants noted that the limited availability and inadequate quality of data continued to impede the capacity of African countries to make decisions on adaptation and to build resilience to climate change. The current global financing architecture was fragmented and did not adequately respond to the needs and priorities of the continent.

19. Debt sustainability remained a key obstacle to financing and sustainable development in Africa.

**2. Key messages**

20. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Advocate strongly the operationalization of the loss and damage fund that was announced at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and pay particular attention to adaptation financing;

(ii) Create the enabling environment needed to engage the private sector and to incentivize it to mobilize additional sources of financing for nationally determined contributions;

(iii) Integrate climate change into national development planning and budgeting;

(b) Entities of the United Nations system and development partners should provide technical support to their members to strengthen institutional capacity to generate data, disaggregated by age, gender, disability and location.

**C. Plenary round-table panels on national and subnational actions and reviews to speed up and scale up implementation in Africa**  
[agenda item 5]

**1. Voluntary national reviews and peer learning to strengthen country-level interventions** [agenda item 5 (a)]

**(a) Discussion and trends**

21. Participants noted that, while voluntary national reviews were becoming more inclusive, integrated and gender-sensitive and that they encompassed child protection approaches, a number of constraints remained. In particular, young people were rarely involved in voluntary national reviews and needed to be fully engaged in the process.

**(b) Key messages**

22. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed that members of ECA should:

(a) Ensure that voluntary national reviews and all actions taken to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 are fully inclusive and involve meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, including young people, women, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities, at all stages;

(b) Employ innovative and effective approaches and collaborate with partners, including the United Nations and other development entities, to address data gaps, the limited capacity of many stakeholders and other key challenges;

(c) Scale up successful initiatives by young people on the review of and reporting on progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and invite young people to take part in the 2023 African Youth Sustainable Development Goals Summit;

(d) Ensure that inclusion, capacity-building, and resource mobilization efforts are better synchronized so as to facilitate the effective implementation of the two agendas.

**2. Voluntary subnational reviews and peer learning to bolster local action**  
[agenda item 5 (b)]

**(a) Discussion and trends**

23. Participants noted that local communities and governments were essential in getting the region back on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

**(b) Key messages**

24. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Establish and maintain strong links between national and local reviews to strengthen stakeholder engagement, human rights-based approaches, data collection, policymaking and achievement of the Goals;

- (ii) Recognize that local communities and governments, as holders of information on the ground, are key to overcoming data-collection and data-disaggregation challenges;
  - (iii) Include civil society and stakeholders in the voluntary local review process to ensure local and communal ownership of the sustainable development agenda;
  - (iv) Ensure private sector engagement in the voluntary local review process and create an enabling environment for the ideas of young people to feed into the policymaking process;
  - (v) Promote innovative local and community-led solutions to problems related to the environment, health, education and other sectors to spur peer learning;
  - (vi) Support communities and civil society in promoting and defending human rights and ensure that the voluntary local review process is integrated into national reporting obligations on human rights;
  - (vii) Use voluntary local reviews as a tool to engage with communities, ensure that no one is left behind, bring global and regional agendas to communities and enable local action to be taken to achieve the goals of the two agendas;
- (b) Entities of the United Nations system should:
- (i) Continue to support local communities and governments in undertaking voluntary local reviews and in localizing the sustainable development agenda, through technical assistance, implementation of specialized guidelines and funding, and raising awareness of emerging success stories at various levels;
  - (ii) Continue to embed a human rights-based approach within the support provided in the voluntary local review process and in reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - (iii) Help to strengthen capacity to collect, synthesize and analyse data as part of voluntary local reviews and link that capacity with data activities carried out as part of voluntary national reviews.

**D. Plenary round-table panel on rethinking data availability and data systems in Africa to address multiple shocks and accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union**  
[agenda item 6]

**1. Discussion and trends**

25. Participants noted that adequate financing, private sector engagement and digitalization, along with new and alternative data sources, including big data sources, provided opportunities that countries should leverage to fill gaps in official data systems.

**2. Key messages**

26. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed that members of ECA should:

- (a) Increase national financing for the sustainable production of data and strengthen digitalization efforts and new and innovative data technologies to help create real-time data systems, in particular in times of crisis;
- (b) Develop comprehensive frameworks for the alignment of administrative data with national statistics and citizen-generated data;

(c) Invest in building the capacity of data professionals and creating a strong data culture among young people, so as to ensure their involvement in all steps of the statistical value chain;

(d) Use data science hackathons as a tool to help young people improve their data skills and use their creativity in support of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) Support the establishment and strengthening of statistical associations to deepen partnerships for the achievement of the Goals;

(f) Avoid creating data graveyards resulting from the proliferation of unintegrated data portals, and instead start building data systems that communicate with one another so as to create a single data space for Africa.

## **E. Parallel meetings for an in-depth review of progress made and peer learning on the sub-themes of the Regional Forum** [agenda item 7]

### **1. Clean water and sanitation** [agenda item 7 (a)]

#### **(a) Discussion and trends**

27. Participants noted that the continent's water resources were threatened in the long term by climate change, urbanization and rapid population growth and that a dramatic acceleration in current rates of progress was therefore required.

#### **(b) Key messages**

28. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Fast-track the endorsement of the Dakar Declaration of the ninth World Water Forum, as well as the Dushanbe Declaration of the Second High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028, and the Abidjan Declaration of the twenty-first Congress of the African Water Association and the seventh International Faecal Sludge Management Conference, and invite the international community and all stakeholders to support their implementation;

(ii) Increase domestic resource allocation to, and facilitate private sector investment in, improving and developing water and sanitation infrastructure and managing water resources, in particular transboundary groundwater resources;

(iii) Engage in evidence-based and timely decision-making at all levels by prioritizing investment in monitoring, evaluation, knowledge and information management and learning, as well as fostering research and the application of knowledge, innovation and technology to inform sector interventions and policymaking;

(iv) Revitalize UN-Water/Africa so that it can efficiently and effectively deliver in response to requests by countries and regions for technical support;

(b) Members of ECA and development partners should:

(i) Raise the profile and value attached to water and sanitation; focus on groundwater resources and the management thereof within an integrated water resources management- and nexus-based approach that also incorporates such novel concepts as virtual water, which could be used in agricultural production



and trade between water-abundant and water-stressed regions to ensure food security and water-use efficiency;

(ii) Use nature-based solutions in the protection of natural resources to further improve water quality as the backbone of the framework for action in follow-up to the Africa Water Vision 2025;

(iii) Apply a human rights-based approach to the development of water resources and the provision of related services to ensure the full engagement of women, young people, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups;

(iv) Promote and support the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into plans and policies to manage water resources.

## **2. Affordable and clean energy [agenda item 7 (b)]**

### **(a) Discussion and trends**

29. Participants noted that Africa was not on track to achieve the Goal 7 targets and that the financing of energy access was one of the most pressing issues that the continent was facing.

### **(b) Key messages**

30. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA and development partners should:

(i) Collaborate to ensure investment in strong grids, digitalization, innovative technologies, system flexibility and cross-border power systems, which are essential for addressing energy-access challenges, building resilience, ensuring energy security and responding to climate change in Africa;

(ii) Prioritize access to clean cooking solutions and provide price incentives to attract private sector investment in that area;

(iii) Ensure that partnerships truly support Africa in achieving a just, equitable and inclusive energy transition and transformation that leaves no one behind, and enable the full and effective implementation of nationally determined contributions of African countries and the achievement of resilient sustainable development;

(iv) Work together to find innovative ways to mobilize the investment required for a just energy transition;

(v) Promote and support access to and better use of data at various levels, addressing energy potential, energy use and investments;

(vi) Unleash the potential of innovation and entrepreneurship among young people to address the energy, climate and sustainable development challenges in Africa;

(b) Development partners, in particular multilateral development banks, should support investment in natural gas as a transition fuel in Africa, in line with the Kigali Communiqué of the Sustainable Energy for All Forum and the African Common Position on Energy Access and Just Transition, to spur the faster and at-scale integration of variable renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar energy and green hydrogen;

(c) African Governments should:

- (i) Urgently strengthen their policies and create an enabling environment to use limited public resources to leverage foreign direct investment and investment by the African private sector in the energy transition;
- (ii) Strengthen regional integration and leverage the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area so as to use the continent's abundant clean energy resources to transform its critical minerals, to industrialize and to drive the global energy transition agenda.

**3. Industry, innovation and infrastructure [agenda item 7 (c)]**

**(a) Discussion and trends**

31. Participants stressed the need for countries to establish legal and regulatory frameworks that were conducive to the creation of universal service and access funds; pursue industrial development in Africa through export manufacturing, industrial clustering and the funding of industrialization research and innovation; and increase investment in the technological skills required to transform their vast natural resources locally, to export value added products and to build inclusive industries.

**(b) Key messages**

32. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Accelerate the evolution of an African-driven science and technology education in universities that includes indigenous knowledge and innovative approaches;

(ii) Build resilient regional value chains to develop productive and competitive economies that can take full advantage of the opportunities to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in order to accelerate the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Governments and the private sector should:

(i) Implement policies and strategies to scale up innovation, support small and medium-sized enterprises, create jobs and boost productivity in Africa;

(ii) Increase investment in hard and soft infrastructure and in the development of skills related to information and communications technology and science, technology and innovation;

(iii) Help firms to increase exports;

(iv) Attract foreign direct investment to forge links between countries in Africa and other regions of the world, facilitate technology transfer and build capacity;

(v) Promote special economic zones and favourable business investment that facilitate information-sharing among participating firms and greater investment in science, technology and innovation;

(c) Entities of the United Nations and regional development organizations should support members of ECA in gaining access to blended financing instruments, including concessional capital, climate and green funds and risk mitigation tools, to encourage private investors.

#### 4. Sustainable cities and communities [agenda item 7 (d)]

##### (a) Discussion and trends

33. It was noted that rapid urbanization in Africa continued to be driven by demographics, conflict, rural-urban migration and cross-border mobility, resulting in increased inequality and inadequate and overburdened infrastructure and services, and worsening air pollution and unplanned urban settlements.

##### (b) Key messages

34. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Strengthen the capacity of local governments to play a critical role in economic planning in order to drive urban development;

(ii) Create an enabling environment for an inclusive governance architecture for urban planning, in particular for the inclusion of such marginalized groups as migrants, refugees and persons living with disabilities;

(iii) Adopt a human rights-based approach to, and mainstream gender and migration into, urban development planning;

(b) Members of ECA, entities of the United Nations system and development partners should:

(i) Invest in data systems to strengthen evidence-based urban planning and development;

(ii) Develop stronger linkages in the implementation and review of such global processes as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, recognizing that voluntary national reviews serve as a useful entry point for ensuring such synergy;

(iii) Build the resilience of cities to climate-induced disasters, including by strengthening governance capacities and multi-hazard early warning and early action systems, and leveraging the programmatic partnership approach of the “Making Cities Resilient 2030” initiative across the continent.

#### 5. Partnerships [agenda item 7 (e)]

##### (a) Discussion and trends

35. Participants noted the need to prioritize predictable financing for African countries through domestic resource mobilization, with a view to mitigating the shocks brought on by multiple crises and the long-term risk of reduced official development assistance.

##### (b) Key messages

36. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Implement a road map for the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(ii) Enhance the digitalization and efficiency of revenue collection and expenditure mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability on both the revenue and expenditure sides of public budgets;

- (iii) Enhance policy on taxation and spending, institutions and human capacity, green financing, monitoring and evaluation interventions, and regulations to accelerate a green recovery and safeguard human rights for all;
- (iv) Strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises in relation to financial, health and agribusiness technology and innovation, and improve their access to markets to enhance their competitiveness and earnings;
- (v) Commit themselves to the incorporation in their legal frameworks of such key international agreements and protocols as the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and its protocols and step up efforts to implement those instruments;
- (b) Development partners should:
  - (i) Improve access to finance for African countries, including new sources of climate-related finance, at affordable rates based on fair and transparent criteria and a realistic classification of African countries by income categories;
  - (ii) Deploy a range of novel and existing financial instruments, including new and increased special drawing rights, to provide additional liquidity and fiscal policy space for African countries to invest in green recovery and sustainable development;
  - (iii) Collaborate with ECA in scaling up support for its members in debt management;
- (c) Members of ECA, entities of the United Nations system and development partners should:
  - (i) Ensure that the voices of Africans are heard and facilitate their participation in efforts to advocate reform of the global financial architecture, to ensure that financing systems work for Africa, including for young people and small and medium-sized enterprises;
  - (ii) Intensify efforts as a matter of urgency to curb illicit financial flows, recover assets lost through all illicit outflows and establish a United Nations tax convention to enhance the revenue collection capacity of African countries;
  - (iii) Recognize the role played by volunteers in, and their contribution to, social inclusion and cohesion and promote their engagement in that process and in the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

**F. Plenary round-table panel on leveraging science, technology, innovation and digital transformation for accelerated recovery and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union [agenda item 8]**

**1. Discussion and trends**

37. Participants noted the low level of digitalization on the continent and underscored the importance of human capital in such processes as facilitating the digital transition, sharing best practices on digitalization among African countries and strengthening national systems for innovation.

**2. Key messages**

38. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Put science, technology, and innovation policies and strategies at the heart of national development visions and fully implement them as priorities of national and regional plans;

(ii) Ensure that research, development, innovation and digital skills and literacy development initiatives are enhanced, that they are focused on addressing national and regional challenges and that they provide solutions originating in Africa that should be supported by political will at the highest level;

(iii) Invest massively in science, technology and innovation and ensure that funding mechanisms are aligned with African development priorities and that endogenous and local knowledge is taken into account in developing economic models and research on the continent;

(iv) Foster innovation for inclusive and sustainable societies by applying system-wide values and a rights-based approach in the context of a science and technology framework in the implementation and monitoring of the standards and norms outlined in the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(b) Members of ECA and development partners should promote and develop distance learning programmes, accelerate the development of digital transformation infrastructure in schools and enhance the capacity of teachers to transform national education systems.

## **G. Presentations and discussions on acceleration actions and partnerships for the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union [agenda item 9]**

### **1. Discussion and trends**

39. Participants noted that the entities of the United Nations system were working together through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, with a view to delivering as one at the regional level.

### **2. Key messages**

40. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Members of ECA should:

(i) Examine the structural dimension of conflict prevention and recognize the interface between governance, peace, security and inclusive development;

(ii) Deploy peace and security operations under a regional mandate, backed by the United Nations system, to address new security threats in the region;

(iii) Engage and incorporate the perspectives of non-State entities and women leaders in the domestic policymaking process and reinforce the role of social dialogue to further implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Entities of the United Nations system should:

- (i) Deliver demand-driven support to their African members through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and the opportunity and issue-based coalitions across priority areas, including data and statistics, follow-up to key summits, digital transformation, implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, the interlinkages between humanitarian work and peace and security, and the leveraging of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for resource mobilization and peer learning;
- (ii) Continue to engage with their members and with the African Union Commission on issues of regional and global security and ensure increased and more predictable funding for operations in the context of global solidarity and collective action;
- (iii) Widen the space for the enhanced participation of civil society and non-State entities at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and take on board the recommendations of the major groups and other stakeholders on the Sustainable Development Goals that are selected as areas of focus of the Forum;
- (iv) Ensure that, at its tenth session, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development takes careful stock of the progress achieved since the ninth session and that members of parliament and implementers of policy have a central role in the Forum.

## **H. Consideration and adoption of key messages and the Niamey declaration on accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union [agenda item 10]**

41. The Forum considered and unanimously adopted, as amended, the summary and key messages outlined in previous sections of the present report and the Niamey Declaration on accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union (ECA/RFSD/2023/11, and annex of the present report).

## **I. Appreciation**

42. The ministers, high-level officials and participants expressed their appreciation to the President of the Niger and to the Government and people of the Niger for hosting the ninth session of the Forum and for the warm hospitality extended to them. They also conveyed their gratitude for the arrangements made to enable both in-person and online participation in the session and for ensuring that persons with disabilities were able to fully participate. In addition, they expressed their appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Acting Executive Secretary of ECA, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the representative of the President of the African Development Bank for their attendance and contributions to the Forum.

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**Annex****Niamey Declaration on accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union**

*We, African ministers, and senior officials responsible for the environment and sustainable development, finance, planning, economic and social development, water, energy, industry, infrastructure, urban planning and land management, education, statistics, the digital economy, science and technology, heads and members of delegations of parliaments and experts representing Governments and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society,*

*Gathered online and in person in Niamey from 28 February to 2 March 2023 at the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held under the theme “Accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union” and placed under the high patronage of the President of the Niger, Mohamed Bazoum,*

*Expressing our gratitude to the Government of the Niger for having hosted the Forum and having ensured that all the necessary conditions were in place for the successful completion of its work, which was marked by fruitful and high-quality discussions on the monitoring and evaluation of the progress achieved, the exchange of experiences in the area of sustainable development in Africa, and the formulation of key messages aimed at accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,*

*Concerned about the convergence of geopolitical, financial, climate and biodiversity crises that have served only to amplify economic hardship, reducing prosperity and societal progress in Africa by exacerbating poverty, land degradation, food insecurity and the lack of access to affordable energy, which, in turn, has deepened existing inequalities and hampered progress in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals,*

*Mindful that the repercussions of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) persist, as numerous countries, battered by a significant rise in their debt distress and dramatic decreases in foreign direct investment and trade, stand on the brink of financial crisis and have scarcely recovered over the past two years,*

*Underlining that addressing security challenges and committing to lasting peace across the continent is a prerequisite for accelerating efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals,*

*Recognizing the extreme vulnerability and special circumstances of African countries in the face of climate change and, in particular, underlining the challenges faced by the Sahel region, landlocked countries and African small island developing States,*

*Concerned about the serious challenges that African countries are facing in managing their public debt, which are exacerbated by prohibitive borrowing costs, and highlighting the need for significant sustainable financing to ensure an inclusive, green and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and the accelerated delivery of sustainable development in Africa,*

*Welcoming* the convening of the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the opportunity it offers for reinforcing high-level political commitments and providing much-needed momentum to address the impact of cascading crises throughout the world and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030,

*Recognizing* the potential of the natural and human resources on the continent and the real and plentiful opportunities that are available for Africa to take on the challenges that are arising, but also of the need to form ambitious, fair and equitable internal and external partnerships to guarantee firmly the transformation of the continent,

*Reaffirming* the right to development as an inalienable human right that underpins the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and underlining the interconnected nature of all the Sustainable Development Goals and the centrality of integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

*Convinced that* maintaining the status quo presents a threat to the implementation of the two agendas and that only innovative integrated solutions, incorporated vertically and horizontally into an institutionally coherent framework, will enable the successful implementation of the agendas,

*Welcoming* the launch, at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, of the sustainable debt coalition initiative, and the outcomes adopted at the twenty-seventh session, in particular the Sharm el-Sheikh implementation plan and the decision to create a fund to respond to loss and damage,

*Welcoming also* the adoption, at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which will serve as a strategic guide for the implementation of the Convention and its protocols for the period from 2022 to 2030,

*Welcoming further* the discussions at the thirty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held on 18 and 19 February 2023, in particular those relating to the sustainable development agenda, efforts to combat climate change and other related challenges,

*Welcoming* the successful operationalization of regional initiatives to combat climate change and to promote sustainable development, in particular the African climate commissions,

*Welcoming also* the discussions at the second Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Climate Commission for the Sahel Region, held in Addis Ababa on 17 February 2023, in particular those concerning the creation of an executive secretariat for the Climate Commission and a climate fund for the Sahel region,

*Recalling* the urgent need to implement meaningful, integrated and constructive projects and programmes, as part of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030),

*Noting* the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” (2018–2028) and the midterm review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in 2023, as well as the continental mechanism of civil capacity for disaster preparedness and response and the African forest landscape restoration initiative, in particular the development and universal coverage of multi-hazard early warning and early action systems and programmes, the building of urban resilience and the expansion of disaster risk financing and insurance, and the urgent need for transformative initiatives to achieve the objectives of those frameworks,



*Recognizing* the work of the United Nations resident coordinators in integrating development assistance with the organization and coordination of partnerships for the delivery of sustainable development at the national level,

*Welcoming* multiple initiatives implemented by the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations system and other partners, such as the voluntary national and local reviews, debt-for-nature swaps, the regional digital carbon registry, the harmonization of the greenhouse gas accounting and reporting protocols, capacity-building in relation to green, blue and sustainable bonds, the great blue wall initiative, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and the liquidity and sustainability facility, to overcome financing challenges and to bolster positive action in support of the climate and nature and to accelerate significantly the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

*Acknowledging* the critical importance of official statistics as a trusted reference and benchmark for estimations and projections, the current challenges that traditional methods for the production of official statistics pose for the achievement of the timeliness and disaggregation levels required to effectively monitor the progress made by Africa towards the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and national development agendas, and the unique opportunities to fill the gap that are presented by new technologies and data sources, such as big data and artificial intelligence,

*Recalling* the strategic directions of the African summit on industrialization and economic diversification, held in Niamey in November 2022 in support of inclusive and sustainable industrialization and economic diversification,

*Reaffirming* the principle of full participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the need to ensure inclusion in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and gender equality, and the full participation of young people so as to harness the African demographic dividend,

*Welcoming* the emphasis placed on industrialization and structural transformation as essential priorities for Africa, in particular by using the global green energy transition and the associated high demand for the natural resources of the continent to meet it, and by prioritizing value creation and links with regional and global value chains for manufactured products and services connected with those resources,

*Recognizing* the efforts of member States and other stakeholders in implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and considering the critical role played by young people and women in the transformation of the continent,

1. *Call upon* the participants in the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to adopt transformative and accelerated actions to realize tangible results relating to all the Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure that such actions recognize the unique circumstances faced by African countries, including the need to address the growing debt crisis in the region; deliver on financing for efforts to achieve the Goals, including through concrete actions to reform the global financial architecture; promote investments to sustainably exploit African renewable energy and mineral resources and the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; and encompass clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms at various levels and for different stakeholders;

2. *Request* the United Nations resident coordinators to boost their support for the revitalization of national institutions and development plans that are aimed at transformational initiatives to facilitate the recovery from multiple crises and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Request* the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations system and other partners to continue to support African member States in the pursuit of resource-based industrialization, including the promotion of a mineral value chain for lithium ion batteries in Africa;

4. *Invite* development partners to support African countries in gaining access to sources of innovative finance;

5. *Call upon* the Commission and its partners to devise and implement an action plan to seek and mobilize global support for the development and operationalization of regional initiatives and the sustainable debt coalition in Africa and elsewhere;

6. *Request* the entities of the United Nations system, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the African Export-Import Bank and other partners to continue and to expand their support to scale up and deliver initiatives, such as voluntary national and local reviews, debt-for-nature swaps, the regional digital carbon registry, the harmonization of greenhouse gas accounting and reporting protocols, capacity-building in relation to green, blue and sustainable bonds, the great blue wall initiative and the liquidity and sustainability facility, to overcome financing challenges, to bolster positive action in support of the climate and nature and to accelerate significantly the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;

7. *Call upon* the entities of the United Nations system, the African Union Commission and other partners to devise and implement capacity-development programmes and other initiatives to assist member States and regional economic communities in effectively implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

8. *Invite* member States to acknowledge the successful organization by Egypt of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to support the country during its presidency of the Conference of the Parties by ensuring, among other things, that the efforts made to create the loss and damage fund bear fruit through the mobilization of resources to compensate for the mounting losses of infrastructure, ecosystems and livelihoods as a result of the extreme climate phenomena that are badly affecting the continent, and to support the goals of the sustainable debt coalition that was launched during the session;

9. *Call upon* the international community to respect its obligations under the Paris Agreement and to redouble its efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in order that humanity may continue to enjoy a stable climate system;

10. *Invite* member States and their partners to make greater efforts to implement the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in Africa and the African forest landscape restoration initiative, in particular by placing an emphasis on the development and universal coverage of multi-hazard early warning and rapid action systems and programmes, the enhancement of urban resilience, the expansion of catastrophe risk insurance and financing, and the urgent implementation of large-scale African-owned adaptation initiatives, such as the great blue wall initiative and the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative;

11. *Call upon* all African countries to redefine and develop their economic models, integrating the protection of natural resources, including water and land, the promotion of renewable energy and a just transition, the implementation of green and resilient infrastructure that supports sustainable industrialization, and the development of urbanization that enables inclusive growth, addressing the

accessibility needs of persons with disabilities, while foregrounding a recognition of the value of human capital;

12. *Call upon* member countries to improve national financing for the production of data, to increase the use of new and alternative data sources, including big data, to fill the gaps in the data required for the effective monitoring of progress made towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and national agendas, and to train more data professionals, including at the subnational level, in the generation, sharing and utilization of data;

13. *Call upon* the entities of the United Nations system, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other partners to strengthen digitalization efforts and the use of new and innovative technologies to help create real-time data systems that are modern, flexible, broad and adaptive to shocks, to mobilize the resources needed to help member States to build their capacity to use big data and artificial intelligence to produce timely and disaggregated data in order to monitor progress towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and national agendas, and to invest in building the capacity of data professionals to generate, share and utilize data, with a focus on young people;

14. *Encourage* all African countries to harness science, innovation and state-of-the-art emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and the potential of young people to drive the necessary transformative change over the coming 10 years and achieve the objectives of sustainable development, and to increase national investment in digital meteorological and climate observation systems to help to provide early warning systems for all the citizens of the continent;

15. *Urge* member States to promote open science, as defined in the recommendation on open science of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as an essential framework for transformative international scientific cooperation;

16. *Request* the Government of the Niger to present the key messages on behalf of Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council at its meeting to be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2023, at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit on 19 and 20 September 2023, during the high-level week of the General Assembly, at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and at other relevant global, regional and subregional forums in order to advocate accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.