Statement by Her Excellency Ms. Ester Anna Nghipondoka, Minister of Education, Arts and Culture, Namibia and First Vice-Chair of the Tenth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

Session: Messages from Regions (The session will showcase regional challenges, innovative pathways and opportunities for accelerating progress towards the SDGs and present transformative policies and actions for the remaining six years until the established deadline for the SDGs in 2030.)

Date and time: Tuesday, 16 July 2024, 10:15 -11:45 AM

Venue: Conference Room 4 (CR4)

Time allocated: 4 minutes.
Your Excellency, Madam President of the Economic and Social Council,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

I have the honour to present the priorities and key messages from the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

The Regional Forum was held against the backdrop starkly depicting that Africa is far off track from meeting most targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and has even regressed on some.

Africa remains home to 55 per cent of the world’s population living below the poverty line.

Moreover, the prevalence of chronic hunger in Africa has increased from 15.1 per cent in 2010 to 19.7 per cent in 2022.

Climate change is disproportionately impacting Africa while raising climate finance remains a struggle.

This lack of access to climate by African countries is happening amidst the many global climate funds.

Investment in SDGs is severely constrained by the limited revenue base, the high cost of capital and the growing sovereign debt burden which is weighing down on many African countries.

Evidently, more needs to be done urgently with speed and at scale to place Africa back on track towards achieving the SDGs.

The adoption of the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan for Africa’s Agenda 2063, the upcoming Summit of the Future and this Forum are cause for optimism.

These are timely opportunities, and they signal hope for invigorated efforts to realize the ideals of both the 2030 Agenda and Africa’s Agenda 2063.

Madam President,

Allow me to highlight some of Africa’s priorities to this Forum and the Summit of the Future.

First: Africa calls for the Summit of the Future to be inclusive and ensure that Africa and the global South participate effectively and with a stronger voice in international governance and decision-making.

The summit of the Future should also ensure the accelerated implementation of the Global Digital Compact to bridge the digital divide across Africa, construct secure and trusted digital ecosystems and ensure good global digital governance for emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

Second: The global financial architecture should be urgently reformed to make it fit for purpose and serve the interests of Africa and developing countries in the world.

Third: It is crucial to redouble efforts to revitalize national frameworks and channel finance to accelerate integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063.
In this connection, it is essential to advance the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to close the Sustainable Development Goal financing gap through his proposed SDG stimulus.

At the same time the policy environment for sustainable finance should be enhanced and innovations in climate finance should be fostered including through carbon markets, debt swaps and green and blue bonds.

Countries should pursue just transitions and scale up investments in early warning systems, and climate literacy to enhance resilience.

Moreover, substantial budget should be allocated for poverty reduction and to address gender inequalities and the poverty-climate nexus with special attention to women and youth.

**Fourth:** Concrete actions are needed to reap a demographic dividend from the youth bulge in Africa.

Key to this is to dramatically increase investments and expanding programmes and services in education, nutrition and health to empower all children and young people.

**Fifth:** The vast market provided by the African Continental Free Trade Area and the global climate agenda should be leveraged to sustainably harness the continent’s natural resources, transform agriculture, boost food security, and drive sustainable industrialisation.

**Sixth:** Africa urges global solidarity and scaled up effort to ensure peace as a foundation for security, guaranteeing human dignity and rights, good governance, and development.

This should be coupled with strengthened governance and legal frameworks to uphold human rights, enhance transparency and combat illicit financial flows and small arms trafficking.

**And Seventh:** Quality data and statistics are indispensable for evidence based and timely action on SDGs.

Statistical systems should therefore be transformed and modernized to enhance access to quality disaggregated data by leveraging the digital revolution, artificial intelligence, and the high-impact initiative on the power of data.

To conclude, I wish to extend appreciation to the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Other organizations of the United Nations and development partners for the support in the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

We call for increased and coordinated support to enable member states timely deliver on these two Agendas.

I thank you for your kind attention.