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Ninth session

Niamey (hybrid), 28 February–2 March 2023

Agenda item 10*

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

Ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: 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,¹ 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 **XXX** participants, comprising ministers and high-level representatives of the Governments of **XX** ECA member States, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders.

*ECA/RFSD/2023/1.

¹ 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 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 Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, United Nations Office to the African Union, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteers, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), World Food Programme and World Trade Organization [*amend as appropriate*].



3. The Forum was held as the world continues to be caught up in economic uncertainty caused by a vicious cycle of crises on multiple fronts. Multilateralism is being contested by geopolitics and inflationary pressures as the war in Ukraine persists with no end in sight. The long tail of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic persists relentlessly, as numerous countries have scarcely recovered over the past two years. Furthermore, the adverse impacts of climate change on African economies and communities have become more severe and more frequent, while biodiversity decline and terrestrial ecosystem degradation continue at alarming rates. Notably, the convergence of these geopolitical, financial, climate and biodiversity crises has only served to amplify economic hardship, reducing prosperity and societal progress throughout the world by exacerbating poverty, food insecurity and access to affordable energy, which, in turn, aggravate existing inequality and hamper progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The ninth session of the Forum offered an opportunity to exchange good practices and devise solutions to accelerate and expand the scale of implementation within the narrow window of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

4. 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 theme is closely aligned with that of the 2023 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, namely: “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”.

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

5. 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 Niamey, Oudou Ambouca. Opening statements were delivered by the Secretary of State for Business Development of Cabo Verde, representing the Chair of the Bureau of eighth session of the Forum, Adalgisa Vaz; 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 Nsanabaganwa; youth representatives, Anita Hamidou and Moustapha Djafare; and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed.

6. Mr. Ambouca, reflecting on the theme of the Forum, emphasized that African countries, in particular those in sub-Saharan Africa, faced multiple development challenges. The Forum offered an opportunity to reflect on the Sustainable Development Goals and reaffirm the resolve of African countries to achieve them. In that regard, the Niger was committed to the full implementation of the Goals, and development partners were invited to continue their efforts and provision of support to the country.

7. Ms. Vaz recalled the many challenges that the Sahel region faced, including the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic inequality, the public debt burden, insecurity, climate change and food insecurity. She stressed, however, that African natural capital and the demographic dividend could help to address those challenges and make the continent more inclusive and resilient. 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. Priorities on which the Bureau should focus included 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.

8. Mr. Pedro said that, against the background of the challenges faced by African countries, ECA had joined forces with the African Union Commission and United Nations entities to deliver on the full implementation of the Sustainable Development 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; to mainstream support for African nationally determined contributions to climate action in the work of United Nations country teams; to develop e-commerce solutions for eliminating the digital divide while maintaining a gender focus; and to increase financing for investment linked to the Goals.

9. Ms. Stoeva noted that 40 countries would present their voluntary national reviews at the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, and indicated that such reviews had been instrumental in the implementation of the Goals. Although progress had been mixed, notable successes related to cleaner energy had been achieved. She appealed for more action to create jobs and plug African infrastructure gaps, underlined the importance that the proposed SDG stimulus would have in accelerating progress towards the Goals and urged member States to come to the high-level political forum ready to commit to increased ambition and transformative initiatives to achieve the Goals.

10. 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 the continental, subregional, national and local levels; intensified efforts to mobilize both domestic and international 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 and related programmes and action plans; the building of resilience into the delivery of the goals of the two agendas; the implementation of the two agendas with and for young people; and the intensification of partnerships.

11. Ms. Hamidou and Mr. Djafare, in their jointly delivered statement on behalf of young people, called for all countries, institutions and 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.

12. 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. Focusing on the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, she stressed the need for the Summit to reenergize national actions and increase ambition to reduce poverty and achieve the Goals; deliver on the financing of the Goals; and reinvigorate a spirit of partnership.

13. Mr. Bazoum underscored that climate change compounded with demographic dynamics had generated challenges in many African countries that would need to be addressed if Africa were to make progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The President called upon developed nations to play their part in ensuring access to climate finance, for example with regard to the Sahel Climate Fund. While Africa contributed very little to the underlying factors of climate change, natural disasters exacerbated by climate change were taking a heavy toll on the continent. It was therefore critical to

equip the region with tools to create more resilience. He stressed the importance of human capital development, in particular for young people. Moreover, sustainable water management was essential, given the intense international competition for water resources. He urged participants to draw up key messages that would help Africa to strengthen its contribution to the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

II. Summary and key messages

14. The following sections contain a summary of the main issues, trends and key messages, including policy recommendations arising from the presentations and deliberations during the ninth session of the Forum. 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

15. The panellists noted the limited progress made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the significant development challenges faced by Africa. Progress by member States towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda had been uneven, and it was therefore crucial to promote the sharing of experiences and best practices.

16. The panellists also noted the urgent need for African countries to build resilience with a view to reducing their vulnerability to climate shocks. States needed to leverage the power of science and innovative technologies to strengthen their capacity to adapt to climate change. It was also important to adopt domestic solutions that were focused on drivers, such as the energy sector, and on enablers, such as strong institutions, in order to anchor progress towards the achievement of the Goals.

17. The panellists called for strengthened global efforts to promote sustainable and fair access to water and sanitation for all; accelerated progress on access to energy, including clean energy, on energy intensity and on renewable electricity generating capacity; support for initiatives to promote innovation, economic growth, job creation and connectivity; and strengthened domestic resource mobilization and strategic development cooperation.

2. Key messages

18. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed that member States 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, as they could play an essential role as valuable partners of Government and should comprise at least 30 per cent of the delegations of African States attending international meetings related to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Strengthen institutions so that they are better able to anchor initiatives to promote implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

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

(f) 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

19. The panellists noted that challenges with the availability and quality of data continued to impede the capacity of African countries to make decisions on adaptation and to build resilience to climate change.

20. For the majority of African countries, an inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic meant going beyond domestic financing. The current global financing structure was fragmented and did not adequately respond to the needs and priorities of the continent. South-South and triangular cooperation were critical approaches for financing efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

21. Debt sustainability remained a key obstacle to financing and sustainable development in Africa. Debt repayment was hindering the capabilities of some Governments to fund efforts to attain the Goals.

22. Integrated approaches involving multiple levels of government and the localization of the Goals in decentralized planning were useful entry points for ensuring that financing reached the populations that were at the greatest risk of being left behind, in particular those in rural areas.

23. Participants noted that internal conflict and terrorism were affecting the mobilization of financing and the achievement of sustainable development at the national and regional levels in some countries, in particular those in the Sahel region.

24. Climate-induced disasters, including more frequent and intense droughts, floods, heatwaves and erratic seasons, were increasingly affecting the continent, and people in vulnerable situations, including women and girls, were being adversely affected disproportionately.

2. Key messages

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

(a) Member States 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, in view of the fact that only 14 per cent of financing for climate change in Africa comes from the private sector;

(iii) Integrate climate change into national development planning and budgeting in order to increase national adaptation capacities;

(b) Entities of the United Nations system and development partners should provide technical support to member States to strengthen institutional capacity to generate population data, disaggregated by age, gender and location, to measure collectively progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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

26. The panellists noted that, over time, voluntary national reviews were becoming more inclusive and integrated, and that, increasingly, they were being conducted in the context of a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. Efforts were, moreover, being made to develop gender-sensitive and child protection approaches within the voluntary national review process. In that connection, numerous reforms enacted by States had improved access to education, health care and health insurance and ensured that the interests of children were addressed effectively. Furthermore, a number of African countries, including Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Liberia, Mali and Togo, had developed climate financing frameworks for children.

27. A number of challenges remained, however, including as a result of the limited capacities of many African countries, a lack of reliable and updated data, and the absence of accountability and monitoring mechanisms. The voluntary national review process should be seen as an opportunity to invest additional resources in national and local child protection mechanisms and systems in multiple areas, such as health, including reproductive and mental health, justice and social protection.

28. The panellists noted with concern that young people were rarely involved in voluntary national reviews in many African countries and stressed the importance of their full engagement in that process, in particular because young people, who were renowned for their innovative approaches to problem-solving, now comprised some 37 per cent of the population of Africa. Member States should adopt an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach that explicitly provided for youth engagement. The panellists called on States to mobilize adequate financial resources to support that objective, including through domestic resource mobilization, innovative finance, and strategic partnerships with private sector stakeholders. It was, moreover, important to highlight best practices across countries in that area and to build on peer learning activities.

(b) Key messages

29. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed that member States should:

(a) Ensure that voluntary national reviews were fully inclusive and that all relevant stakeholders, including young people, women, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities, were involved at all stages of the voluntary national review process;

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

(c) Scale up successful initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goal Youth Reporters (Jeunes rapporteurs des Objectifs du Développement Durable) initiative, which supported voluntary data collection by young people at the local level in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the use of those data to support the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the achievement of the Goals, and invite young people to take part in the African Youth Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in Lusaka in June 2023, to further promote that approach;

(d) Emphasize inclusiveness in all actions to accelerate progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(e) Ensure that inclusion, capacity-building and resource mobilization efforts were 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

30. Participants noted that localities were essential in getting the region back on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They introduced and presented in detail partnerships and stakeholder involvement across many localities and stressed that strong linkages between local and national processes and stakeholders were crucial, as they would enable local progress to spur national progress, leverage commitments to data collection and financing, and embed a human rights-based approach in reporting on the Goals.

(b) Key messages

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

(a) Member States should:

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

(ii) Recognize that localities, as holders of information on the ground, were key to overcoming data-collection and data-disaggregation challenges;

(iii) Bring civil society and stakeholders into the voluntary local review process in an inclusive manner to ensure local and communal ownership of the sustainable development agenda;

(iv) Ensure that the private sector is brought into the voluntary local review process and create an enabling environment for the ideas of young people to feed into the policymaking process;

(v) Identify and encourage 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, bring global and regional agendas to communities, and enable local action to be taken to help achieve the goals of these agendas and ensure that no one is left behind.

(b) The United Nations should:

(i) Continue supporting localities in undertaking voluntary local reviews and in localizing the sustainable development agenda, through technical assistance, implementation of specialized guidelines and funding;

(ii) Elevate the promotion of local reviews, the localization of the sustainable development agenda, and the stories and voices that have emerged at the local level to national, regional and global forums;

(iii) 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;

(iv) Help to strengthen capacity to collect, synthesize and analyse data as part of voluntary local reviews, and help to 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

32. Panellists noted that, while official statistics were the most trusted source of statistical information, they did not meet the timeliness, the periodicity or the disaggregation levels required for effective decision-making in the pursuit of national and international development goals. Digitalization, along with new and alternative data sources, including big data sources and the new methodologies emanating from machine learning and artificial intelligence, provided opportunities that countries should leverage to fill the gap. Doing so would require boosting investments in human capacity, with a specific focus on young people.

33. Panellists also noted the challenge posed by a lack of financing for data relating to the Sustainable Development Goals as one of the main obstacles hindering the production of timely data in support of both national and international development plans. Crucially, partnerships were essential for creating data space that could support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and the monitoring thereof. In relation to that effort, the private sector would be a key partner in ensuring the needed investments for the data system.

3. Key messages

34. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed that member States should:

(a) Increase national financing for the sustainable production of data, strengthening digitalization efforts and new and innovative data technologies to help create real-time data systems, with a view to providing timely information for responsive policy decision-making, in particular in times of crisis;

(b) Develop comprehensive frameworks for the alignment of administrative data with national statistics;

(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 with a view to deepening 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 “speak” to each other 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

35. Participants noted that the continent’s water resources were threatened in the long term by climate change, urbanization and rapid population growth. The anticipated doubling of the continent’s population to 2.4 billion by 2050 would exacerbate the difficulty of achieving Goal 6 targets. Achieving those targets in Africa would, therefore, require a dramatic acceleration in current rates of progress.

36. Transboundary waters had untapped potential to contribute to African economic development and cooperation. However, transboundary agreements were operational for only 22 per cent of the continent’s surface water bodies and for only 3 of its 106 groundwater aquifers.

37. Although data availability was improving, many African countries still lacked the data needed to measure progress towards Goal 6 targets and indicators.

38. While vulnerable groups, including women in rural areas and persons with disabilities, were the most acutely affected by water, sanitation and hygiene issues, their representation in the design and implementation of relevant policies and programmes was very limited.

(b) Key messages

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

(a) Member States should:

(i) Fast track the endorsement of the Dakar Declaration of the

ninth World Water Forum, as well as the Dushanbe Declaration of the International Conference on Water-Related Disaster Reduction, and the Abidjan Declaration of the twenty-first Congress of the African Water Association and the seventh International Conference on Sludge Management, 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 assistance, support and expertise;

(b) Member States 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; and 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 Africa Water Vision 2025;

(ii) 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;

(iii) Promote and support the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into plans and policies to manage water resources using a human rights-based approach.

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

(a) Discussion and trends

40. Panellists noted that Africa was not on track to achieve the Goal 7 targets, despite some significant improvements in energy access in a few countries, such as Ghana and Kenya.

41. Of the 23 countries that together accounted for 80 per cent of the global population without access to electricity, 19 were in Africa. The continent also remained home to 80 per cent of the 733 million people globally without access to electricity, many of whom lived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. Moreover, Africa accounted for 36 per cent of the 2.4 billion people globally without access to clean-cooking fuel and technology.

42. Although the deployment of renewable energy on the continent was increasing, the African share of modern renewable energy sources in final energy consumption remained very low, and improving energy efficiency remained a challenge.

43. Financing energy access was one of the most pressing issues in Africa,

with less than 2 per cent of global clean energy investment flowing to Africa. A vicious circle was in effect, whereby investors worried about a viable energy market, yet such a market could not emerge owing to the lack of sufficient investment. Africa was also unfairly seen as a risky investment destination. The availability of blended finance with partial guarantees could help to address that situation. African financial institutions should also invest more in energy on the continent, and regulatory frameworks should be transparent.

44. Lastly, the panellists stressed the need for a global solution to combat climate change and reduce emissions while also allowing space for African countries to utilize their natural endowments to fuel economic transformation and close chronic development gaps.

(b) Key messages

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

(a) Member States 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 such partnerships truly support Africa in achieving a just, equitable and inclusive energy transition that leaves no one behind while concomitantly addressing the paramount objective of sustainable development as well as enhancing the means of implementation of the nationally determined contributions of African countries, since just energy transition partnerships are potentially catalytic instruments for decarbonization and the push towards net-zero emissions in Africa;

(b) Development partners, in particular multilateral development banks, are requested to 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, as doing so would support the integration of variable renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy, faster and at scale, while supporting the continent's development and use of green hydrogen, which must benefit the continent first and foremost, avoiding a merely extractive and export-oriented arrangement;

(c) African countries and development partners are urged to work together to find innovative ways to mobilize the investment required for a just transition, and the international financial architecture should be urgently reformed so that it becomes more supportive of transition financing;

(d) African Governments should:

(i) Urgently strengthen policy and create an enabling environment to attract foreign direct investment and investment by the African private sector in the energy transition, as mechanisms that leverage limited public resources to increase such investment are pivotal;

(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;

(e) Member States and partners should promote and support access to and better use of data at various levels, addressing energy potential, energy use and investments, so as to better inform efforts to address the energy challenges in Africa;

(f) Governments and development partners are encouraged to unleash the potential of innovation and entrepreneurship among young people to address the energy and climate challenges in Africa and to encourage sustainable development solutions.

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

(a) Discussion and trends

46. The panellists and participants noted that the establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks that were conducive to the creation of universal service and access funds was necessary to attract private sector investment and ensure meaningful Internet connectivity for unserved and underserved areas. Particular attention should be given to the establishment of fundamental regulations for cybersecurity, data protection and digital identity, which were crucial for meaningful connectivity and the adoption of emerging technologies.

47. Industrial development in Africa should be based on three core strategies: export manufacturing, industrial clustering and the funding of industrialization research and innovation.

48. Countries needed to increase investment in the technological skills required to transform their vast natural resources locally, export value added products and build inclusive industries that supported development plans.

49. Weak industrial and technological capabilities had reduced the ability of African countries to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. The lack of such capabilities had restricted the scope for African small and medium-sized enterprises to industrialize and was preventing firms from fully participating in global value chains.

(b) Key messages

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

(a) Member States should accelerate the evolution of science and technology education in universities to make their curricula more practical by combining theory with practice, as such an approach would help engineers and technicians who are inventors and producers of technological products to enter the labour market;

(b) Governments and the private sector should:

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

(ii) Increase investment in hard and soft infrastructure, including transport, 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) Countries should 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 achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;

(d) Entities of the United Nations and regional development organizations should support States in accessing blended financing instruments, including concessional capital, climate and green funds and risk mitigation tools, to encourage private investors who are interested in infrastructure development projects.

4. Sub-theme of sustainable cities and communities [agenda item 7 (d)]

(a) Discussion and trends

51. It was noted that rapid urbanization in Africa continued to be driven by demographics, conflict, rural-urban migration and cross-border mobility.

52. Unmanaged urbanization was resulting in increased inequality, inadequate and overburdened infrastructure and services, worsening air pollution and unplanned urban settlements.

53. Africa was one of the continents most vulnerable to climate change, and urban settlements had been adversely affected by extreme weather events and natural disasters, which had resulted in the displacement of people in cities, in particular the poor and vulnerable population.

54. Financing and human resource limitations were among the main challenges constraining progress towards sustainable cities and communities.

55. Communities and local knowledge had proven to be critical for building smart cities.

(b) Key messages

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

(a) Member States 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 plans.

(b) Member States and development partners are urged to invest in data systems to strengthen evidence-based urban planning and development;

(c) Member States and entities of the United Nations system should 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 served as a useful entry point for ensuring such synergy;

5. Partnerships [agenda item 7 (e)]**(a) Discussion and trends**

57. Panellists noted the need to prioritize predictable financing for African countries through domestic resource mobilization to mitigate the shocks brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the war in Ukraine and the long-term risk of reduced official development assistance. Africa needed to boost its recovery and green growth by accelerating its implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, thereby creating much-needed stimulus and driving the region's long-term inclusive and green transformation. For trade to thrive, however, investment in critical sectors and a concerted effort by policymakers were necessary.

58. Panellists also emphasized the importance of revitalizing international cooperation and partnerships; establishing global, local and national institutions to deal sustainably with universal risks relating to data, trade facilitation, technology innovation and technology transfer; the closing of the digital divide; capacity-building; sustainable finance; debt management; and crisis preparedness.

(b) Key messages

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

(a) Member States should:

(i) Implement a road map for the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems, thereby enhancing countries' ability to withstand shocks and facilitating the production of disaggregated data for reporting on the two agendas;

(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, human capacity, green financing, monitoring and evaluation interventions, and regulations that positively influence behaviour, accelerate a green recovery and safeguard human rights for all;

(iv) Strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises in relation to financial technology, health technology, agribusiness technology and other innovations and improve their access to markets so that they can enhance their competitiveness and earnings and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

(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 (not based solely on the business models of credit rating agencies), and without the so-called "African premium";

(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 address emergency fiscal space constraints;

(c) Member States and development partners should urgently curb illicit financial flows, redouble efforts to recover assets lost through all illicit financial outflows, and establish a United Nations tax convention to enhance

the revenue collection capacity of African countries.

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. Background

60. Under this agenda item, the Forum considered the leveraging of science, technology, innovation and digital transformation ...*[amend and complete as appropriate]*.

1. Discussion and trends

61. *[complete as appropriate: outline issues only, one issue per paragraph]*

2. Key messages

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

- (a) *[complete as appropriate];*
- (b) *[complete as appropriate].*

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. Background

63. Under this agenda item, the Forum engaged in a dialogue on support provided by the United Nations development system to tackle multiple crises and accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; major groups and other stakeholders offered their perspectives on tackling multiple shocks and accelerating implementation; a presentation was made on the implementation of the outcomes of previous sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development; and commitments and actions to accelerate the delivery of sustainable development were presented *[amend and complete as appropriate]*.

2. Discussion and trends

64. *[complete as appropriate: outline issues only, one issue per paragraph]*

3. Key messages

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

- (a) *[complete as appropriate];*
- (b) *[complete as appropriate];*
- (c) *[complete as appropriate];*
- (d) *[complete as appropriate].*

H. Appreciation

66. 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 Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the President of the African Development Bank for their attendance and contributions to the Forum.

I. 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]

67. The Forum requested the secretariat to submit its key messages to the high-level political forum on sustainable development through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs by **XX Xxxx** 2023. The Forum requested the Chair to make a presentation on its key messages to the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council at its meeting, to be held in New York from 10 to 14 July 2023, during the session on the reports of the regional forums on sustainable development.
