



# 10<sup>th</sup> ARFSD

Tenth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development



## Africa has the resources to create its own success story

The 10th Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development ended on a hopeful note, with speakers highlighting the continent's potential as well as gains made.

Addressing the closing sessions remotely, Paula Narváez, President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN, Paula Narváez, acknowledged that the continent faces multi-faceted challenges, requiring tailored and inclusive approaches to address.

In spite of this, however, Narváez noted that Africa is also a source of innovative solutions and experiences.

“The continent is a hub of creativity and resilience where communities have developed original approaches to address pressing issues such

as food security, health care access, renewable energy, and environmental conservation,” she observed.

Narváez pointed to the establishment of the African Trade Exchange Platform, intended to pool procurement of scarce supplies, and the Pharma Initiative, which leverages the African Continental Free Trade Area to access pharmaceutical products and boost local production, as examples of creative solutions to pressing problems.

In her closing remarks, Hanan Morsy, Deputy Executive Secretary and Chief Economist at ECA, expressed confidence

that the drive and engagement on display at the conference indicated Africa's will to utilise the wealth of opportunities on the continent.

“We must really leverage and build on these assets by placing education, the use of technology and high quality data and statistics at the core of our efforts,” she emphasised.

Morsy said the conference had brought to the fore Africa's capability to reverse the trend and accelerate actions towards realising the SDGs.

This will require investing in building resilience in a range of areas and committing to transformative initiatives such as

common agro-industrial parks.

Africa, she said, must also build partnerships and explore innovative financing mechanisms.

The continent must also assert itself on the world stage in the search for solutions to its challenges. “We welcome Africa's permanent seat at the G20 and the General Assembly vote to adopt a Convention on International Tax Cooperation,” she said.

Ramiz Alakbarov, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ethiopia, thanked the participants and called for more global resources to be applied to development, rather than war, and for Africa to invest in solutions of the future.



# Africa's challenges must not deter us

Delegates at the opening of the 10th session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-10) discussed the need to find innovative solutions to poverty eradication amid multiple crises.

These include climate change, economic challenges, peace and security challenges, and health crises.

Speakers emphasised the fact that the ARFSD-10 provided a golden opportunity to review progress, challenges, and opportunities in implementing both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

AU Member States are past the halfway mark to the implementation of Agenda 2030, yet progress on most Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains off track.

In the opening session, Maizama Abdoulaye, Chair of the outgoing Bureau and Niger's Minister of Hydraulics, Sanitation and the Environment,

said African governments need to speed up measures to combat climate change and promote the green transition.

The continent also needs to adopt innovative approaches to mobilizing both domestic and external financial resources, he said.

The speakers in the opening session unanimously decried the inadequacy of the global financial architecture for its failure to meet Africa's evolving needs.

Claver Gatete, UN Under-Secretary-General and ECA Executive Secretary, noted that financing options for Africa are currently limited both in domestic and global markets.

"Borrowing internally crowds out the private sector while borrowing externally exposes countries to exchange rate

fluctuations," he remarked.

"Innovative financing mechanisms coupled with reforms in the global financial architecture can unlock new avenues for sustainable investment and inclusive growth."

Gatete noted that Africa has an opportunity to reframe the debate on climate change from one of disaster to one of opportunity by focusing on attracting new climate-related investment.

Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy AU Commission Chairperson, appealed to delegates to treat the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 not just as a policy objective, but a moral duty.

"We find ourselves faced with the formidable challenge of eradicating poverty and reinforcing the 2030 agenda

and Agenda 2063, This is not just a goal; it's a moral imperative, it's a duty to uplift the millions of our brothers and sisters who live in poverty and deprivation," she said.

Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, representing the Secretary-General, noted that the high cost of borrowing in Africa was a major impediment to sustainable development.

Debt servicing is at an all-time high due to external shocks and is squeezing economies dry, leaving little or nothing to invest in sustainable development.

"Total debt service accounted for a staggering 47.5% of government revenue in Sub-



Saharan Africa last year, crowding out expenditure on essential services as well as investments in the continent's future," she said.

She identified the African Continental Free Trade Area and the single African air transport market as game changers.

Robinah Nabbanja, Prime Minister of Uganda, welcomed the expanded role that Africa is now playing in global policymaking following the AU's recent inclusion into the G20.

"We must stop being followers in global discussions, but rather innovators and solution providers for many of the African challenges."

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# Africa needs to push harder

African countries must redouble their efforts in pursuit of the Social Development Goals in light of the fact that the gains of the last decade have been reversed by the pandemic, geopolitical tensions, conflict, climate related disasters and other adverse events.

In an opening address, HE Fitsum Assefa, Ethiopia's Minister of Planning and Development, speaking on behalf of President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia, noted that these have worsened existing vulnerabilities, requiring more resolute action from African countries.

Countries, Assefa advised, must pay attention to three key areas. Eradicating poverty is the top priority. Investment is needed to tackle not just the symptoms of poverty, but also its causes.

Secondly, youth-driven innovation must be encouraged to help catalyse transformative change.

Lastly, African countries must be more committed to mobilising resources for development even as they fight for the reform of multilateral financial institutions.

Ethiopia, she said, had increased resources by finding innovative ways to support investments in housing, tourism, and education, among others.

The Summit of the Future, she said, provides an opportunity to refocus attention on the implementation of global compacts such as the 2030 Agenda; the Paris Climate Agreement; and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

# Innovation must drive energy transition - report

The energy transition in Africa must be gradual, inclusive and suited to the continent's unique circumstances, according the 2024 Economic Report on Africa launched this week.

The continent will also need to better leverage its vast natural resources to mobilise the funds it needs to finance the transition, it says.

The report, titled Investing in a Just and Sustainable Transition in Africa, was produced by the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Claver Gatete, UN Under-Secretary-General and ECA Executive Secretary, who delivered the opening remarks, stressed the need for an urgent response as crises become more frequent and African countries contend with rising debt and low investment.

The report, he said, "will help us better understand the scale of the challenges and what we need to do and what the ECA is doing".

Presenting the highlights, Zuzana Schwidrowski, Director

of ECA's Macroeconomics and Governance Division, said a just and sustainable transition can only be achieved with structural and fundamental changes in how the continent approaches development.

Being at a relatively early stage of development, however, means that the continent has the potential to leapfrog and build low-carbon, resource-efficient economies.

The report singles out renewable energy, the battery and electric value chain, carbon markets, sustainable infrastructure and circular economies as areas that African countries must invest in as they approach the transition.

To close the funding gap, the report recommends enhanced private sector participation, a greater role for multilateral development banks, innovative national and regional funding



## A just and sustainable transition is an ambitious and inspirational vision

mechanisms, reforms to the global financial architecture and responsible investment by countries.

Mothae Anthony Maruping, Chairman of the African Risk Capacity Group's governing board and former AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, said while there is no shortage of good ideas in Africa, implementation is critical to the delivery of solutions.

He charged policymakers to devise innovative financing strategies, make use of data and employ rigorous monitoring and

evaluation systems.

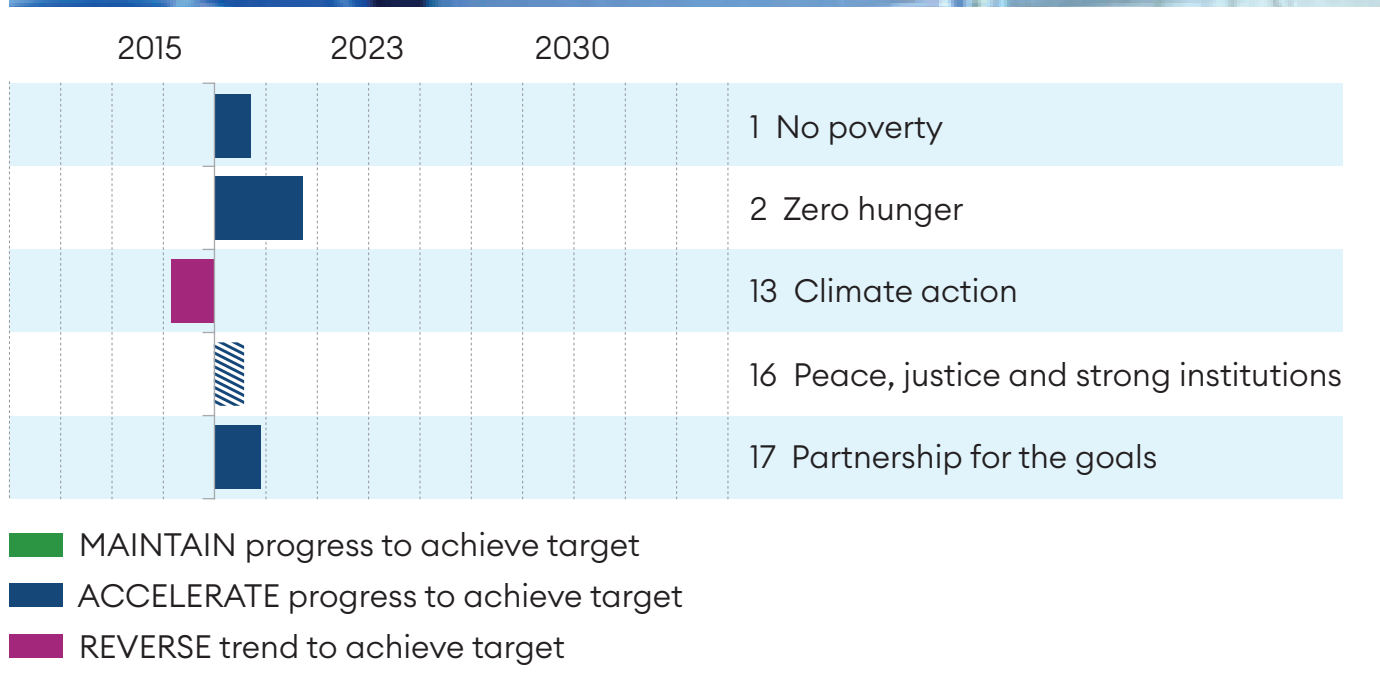
Rebekah Shirley, Deputy Director for Africa at the World Resources Institute, said Africa has a chance to show climate leadership and leverage its vast resources to build thriving sustainable economies while helping the rest of the world to decarbonise.

"A just and sustainable transition is an ambitious and inspirational vision but it will require tectonic change in the structures of governance to enable us achieve it," she noted.

### The main policy recommendations of the ERA 2024 are:

- Strengthen strategies and policies for JSTs in Africa with national development plans that integrate national priorities with SDGs and Agenda 2063.
- Facilitate the key role of the private sector.
- Balance supporting growth and scaling up of strategic public investments with fiscal sustainability.
- Establish a dedicated national mechanism for financing the JST backed by the national bank or treasury. Mobilise new and innovative financing and make smarter use of available resources.
- Support multi-level collaborative governance, human capital development and leapfrogging technologies.
- Build effective multi-stakeholder partnerships and coalitions at national, regional and global levels.

# SNAPSHOT: AFRICA'S PROGRESS ON THE SDGs



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## Moonshots for the next decade

Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, outlined the seven 'moonshots' that will drive Agenda 2063 for the next decade to 2033.

In an address on the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063, she said these set the tone for the journey to the second 10-year period in the 50-year journey to 2063.

The first is about creating prosperity through programmes focused on inclusion and equality but also economic progress. The aim is for every AU member to attain at least middle-income status.

The second is using innovation to improve connectivity, while the third is about creating responsive,

efficient and transparent public institutions underpinned by good governance.

The fourth is about building the capacity to resolve conflicts and ensure both the resolution and prevention of conflict.

The fifth moonshot is to promote Africa's unique values and culture, with the sixth focused on investing in human capital. The seventh is about creating a continent that is a strong and influential player in the global environment.

"When we go to international conferences, we are not just there to shop. We need to create new branding for us to be taken seriously when we participate on the global stage."



## Africa needs to interrogate its realities

A panel discussion on the SDGs analysed some of the issues that have caused a lag in implementation and effectiveness.

These include a failure to implement existing policies and misdirecting policymaking priorities and focus by not clearly understanding the true situation of wealth creation and resource mobilisation in African

economies. Cristina Duarte, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Africa, pointed out that Africa's current debt distress is an outcome of its lack of economic and financial independence.

Duarte, examining the causes of Africa's policymaking weakness, said Africa has not built resilience to deal with SDGs and without this, it will not get on top of the problem.

Nemera Gebeyehu, Minister of State for Planning and Development in Ethiopia, said SDG programmes need to be aligned at different levels, allowing for continental and country approaches.

He said that in dealing with financing issues, the peculiar nature of African economies needed to be considered. Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Secretary General and Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for

## How do we apply the SDGs to real life situations?

Africa, asked what value was being added for Africa in the race for its minerals to drive the energy transition.

Few Africans understand the implications of agreements signed by their governments and fewer understand what it means to attain the SDGs.

She said nearly 8,000 primary schools had closed in the Sahel because of the Islamic insurgency.

"By 2063 those children will be in late 40s and 50s – they will be the leaders of those countries. How are they preparing today for tomorrow?"

"How do we apply the SDGs to real life situations? What are the different pathways for countries to 2030 and 2063?"

"We are looking at this continent as if it were one entity on the same track. We need to disaggregate.

She said once the lens had been applied to contextual realities, countries could begin to construct plans in real time. Mitihika Mwenda, Pan Africa Climate Justice Alliance Executive Director, said Africa needed to build a different narrative to gain

more credibility in global affairs.

"As Africans we need to ask the question about whether we are at the table in setting the global agenda or are we part of the meal?"

Admassu Tadesse, Admassu Tadesse

Group President and Managing Director of the Trade and Development Bank, said Africa needs to learn to live with storms and their associated shocks and crises. "We need to learn how to move the needle within our own space."



"There are a lot of opportunities around impact and blended finance and public-private partnerships. These are how to get more traction in implementing the agenda of sustainable poverty reduction. Otherwise, we are just papering over the cracks."



## New Bureau chair for ARFSD-10 elected

Mauritania has been elected as the chair of the 10th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-10).

The post will be occupied by Niang Mamadou, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the West African nation.

He takes the place of Niger's Minister of Hydraulics, Sanitation and the Environment, Maizama Abdoulaye, who has assumed the position as Rapporteur for the period.

The new chair said his election to the role paid respect to the president of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, and he expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing chair from Niger for all the tasks undertaken in the role.

He said in an unstable world, the efforts to eradicate poverty and ensure a fair distribution of resources and the development of all Africans were necessary.

Mamadou underlined the need to share resources and experience among African countries in their quest to develop a sustainable continent.

He said Mauritania was willing to share its experiences and success stories with other members of the AU in pursuit of the broader objective of creating greater social, industrial, technological and scientific sovereignty for the continent.

# The data-policy gap must be closed

Africa's national statistical systems are in dire need of modernisation, with capacity building and skills development critical to successful reform, speakers at a plenary panel on statistics asserted.

As the world moves towards greater use of big data, as part of a digital revolution taking place across the world, Africa lags behind, despite the importance of national statistics to policymaking and development.

"Every statistician should be prepared for change as we automate the way we do things," said Samuel Annim, Government Statistician from the Ghana Statistical Service.

He said it was also important for policymakers to understand the context and reality behind the numbers produced by their national offices.

But he also asked to what extent governments are actually using the data produced by their own national offices to drive evidence-based policymaking. "Are national statistics offices pushing for this?" he asked.

He suggested that



## We tend to talk about AI as if it exists in a vacuum

governments need to be more proactive about asking for specific data that enables them to improve policy.

Officials need to think beyond the scope of what they produce to understand how numbers can transform lives. "We need to give numbers a human face."

Nemera Gebeyehu, Ethiopia's Minister of State for Planning and Development, said government agencies are limited by capacity and skills issues.

"What kind of technology

capability is in place across different government bodies in data collection, production and dissemination? What are the skills sets required and infrastructure to be able to harness tech innovations?" he asked.

He also asked how comprehensive existing systems are. "On the SDGs, our model is not to leave anyone behind. So we require statistics to be done at a very micro level. But is this happening?"

Measuring the SDGs requires a new set of indicators and requires producing information for many different users in different contexts.

Stephen Chacha, Director of the Africa Hub, Development Initiatives, said current systems



only provide 50% of what is needed to support and measure the SDGs, highlighting broader data gaps in most countries.

Unless Africa's systems are modernised, it will be hard to take advantage of the technology revolution. "We tend to talk about AI as if it exists in a vacuum. But you cannot just plug frontier technology into an outdated system."

Chacha said only one percent of data centres globally are in Africa and most are concentrated in just a few countries.

Speakers also raised concerns about fragmentation of information, and problems with the interoperability of systems.

Concerns were also expressed about data sovereignty and skills gaps, both technical and analytical. Most skills exist in the private sector and national offices cannot afford them.

## Future summit gives continent a voice

The Summit of the Future is a unique opportunity for Africa to make its voice heard on the global stage, speakers at a session on The Race to 2023 and Beyond said this week.

The opportunity comes at a time when the global community seeks to reset relations in the most robust reforms since the establishment of the UN in the wake of the Second World War.

Setting the tone for the discussions, Guy Ryder, UN Undersecretary General for Policy, said the conference, first proposed by the Secretary General, Antonio Guterres in 2021 in his Our Common Agenda report, recognises the need to modernise the body, make it fit for purpose and able to pursue the 2030 and 2053 agendas.

Ryder said the world is now at a crossroads where "we must either break down or break through".

The outcome of the New York meeting is going to be a new global compact that focuses on five key areas. These include the financing of sustainable development; international peace and security; science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation; youth and future generations; and the transformation of global governance.



Ryder said the conference marks a pivotal moment for the world, declaring that "the Summit of the Future is a people-centred process that must have a people-centred outcome".

Neville Gertze, Namibia's permanent representative to the UN and co-facilitator of the summit, noted that currently, there is a huge deficit of trust between members and it is necessary to find new ways to strengthen cooperation.

"We need better communication, better coordination and better cooperation among member states," he observed. He said the continent must ensure that the blueprint for Agenda 2063 is incorporated in the pact of the future.

Niang Mamoudou, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Mauritania, stressed that the future belongs to the youth and called for them to be meaningfully engaged in policy discussions to build trust.



# Delegates at Work



# Summit offers a chance for a bold Africa position

The Summit of the Future offers Africa a chance to redefine its development path and speak with a collective voice on the international stage.

This was a view expressed in the third dialogue during the Race to 2023 and Beyond panel discussion.

Isabelle Durant, Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, Human Rights Council, highlighted the pressing need for a comprehensive overhaul of the multilateral system.

“The multilateral system is in a difficult position and we need reconstruction, not just reform,” she stated, noting that there was a growing consensus that the SDGs adopted in 2015 did not

take into account some African voices “which are becoming louder”.

According to her, the forthcoming Summit of the Future is set to redress this imbalance, offering a platform for Africa to redefine its development path and speak with one voice on the international stage.

She urged African countries to take a common stand in negotiations, even while acknowledging the continent’s diversity and rich cultural heritage. “Even if each country has its own bilateral discussions, we need a united voice for Africa.”

She said the UN has long recognized the link between human rights and development, culminating in the Declaration

on the Right to Development in 1986.

If adopted, it would provide a binding framework for the right to development.

“However, a text is not sufficient to build a right. You need a law, you need to have concrete and tangible political action.”

Martin Tsounkeu, Co-Chair, Steering Committee, Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, noted that the Summit of the Future has reignited the hope that the African voice will be heard. “We need to stop business as usual, including rethinking our mindsets”.

Tsounkeu called for African negotiators to take cognizance

of their bargaining power to deliver a meaningful pact for Africa.

“We need to enhance our self-determination. This seems to be lacking when we go to negotiations.”

In his concluding remarks, Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy, noted that Africa



should be operating at a high level of ambition.

“The gravity of the challenges that we face, the extent of the changes that many of us believe are required, demand high levels of ambition,” he stated.

He urged the youth to take advantage of the fact that the UN has taken concrete steps to be more inclusive to younger generations. “We have an assistant secretary general specifically for youth for the first time in the history. This is not decorative, but consequential.”

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## We must dare the future

The Summit of the Future needs to reimagine the future, not just tinker with it, maintains Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel.

Speaking at a dialogue on the Race to 2030 and Beyond, Mar Dieye said that disruptions usually occur when there is great change, as the world has seen recently. The timing of the event in New York suggests this is an opportunity for positive disruption.

Observing that governments have been hijacked by the elite and no longer represent the people, Mar Dieye called for bold solutions.

“We must find pathways to the future. It does not exist in a void.”  
“We must dare the future,” he said. “It won’t be enough, for example, to merely reform the global financial architecture, it must be reinvented to make more funds available to those who need it most.”

He asserted that a blind spot in discussions about the Summit of the Future is that of culture.

“Culture has been a powerful vector for peace, security and development. It needs a greater role in the Summit of the Future pact.”



After parallel meetings to review progress made on the 5 Social Development Goals that are the focus of the 2024 ARFSD, rapporteurs from the subgroups shared their findings with the plenary session.

## Deep dive into progress on SDGs

### **SDG 1: Poverty**

The group proposed a comprehensive reform of the global financial architecture to facilitate foreign investment, providing assistance to African nations in managing their debt burdens to unlock resources that can be applied to poverty reduction programmes.

Poverty reduction must be placed at the top of national development agendas with adequate resources allocated to it. Enhancing domestic governance and empowering the youth will also help to reduce poverty.

Participants also called for special attention to the needs of women, youth, people living with disability and other vulnerable groups and the expansion of social protection programmes.

### **SDG 2: Zero hunger**

In response to the pressing need for agricultural transformation in Africa to reduce hunger, the group advocated for the adoption of policies that prioritise food security and equitable access to resources for all.

Augmenting financial resources for infrastructure and support services was identified as a critical component of agricultural development, while investing in climate-smart technologies, promoting diversification, and strengthening social safety nets will help to build resilience against crisis.

The group called for the engagement of governments, private sector entities, civil society organisations, and local communities in shaping



agricultural systems that are inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

### **SDG 13: Climate action**

The group observed that Africa needs to mobilise more climate finance through innovative instruments such as debt swaps, carbon markets, blue bonds, and green bonds.

More contextual data must be collected and made available to support decision making and early warning systems must be strengthened to ensure timely

response to climate threats.

While increasing funding is essential, it is equally important that countries are capacitated to access and properly utilise these funds. Collaboration and integration must be encouraged to build regional responses to crises.

### **SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions**

The group recommended strengthening government and legal institutions to protect human rights. Decision-making processes must also include

wide stakeholder participation, including marginalised groups and the private sector.

To monitor progress towards the SDGs, the group recommended strengthening data collection efforts to improve decision-making and effective policy implementation.

Governments must also design effective policies to combat illicit financial flows and small arms trafficking, while post-conflict management must be emphasised to sustain peace and stability. They also called for the integration of human rights into policymaking.

### **SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**

The group underscored the importance of structured multi-stakeholder partnerships in

cont.



addressing crises and advancing the SDGs.

Collaboration between governments, civil society, business, academia, and international organisations is essential for leveraging resources, expertise, and innovation to tackle complex challenges effectively.

It noted that strategic initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area and the establishment of a climate-related Loss and Damage fund are critical to address systemic issues and build resilience to crises.

Increased investment in research and development is also essential for fostering innovation, it said. It also called for the integration of new technologies into policymaking, strengthening institutional capacity and collaboration with volunteer organisations to drive change at the local level.



## Youth must be at the centre of governance in Africa

Former Malawian President, Joyce Banda, delivered a powerful message during the panel discussion, emphasising the critical role of youth in shaping our collective future.

**H**er insights shed light on pressing issues and underscored the need for inclusive policies. In her address, Banda she stressed that young people must be at the centre of discussions about global challenges as their perspectives, energy, and creativity are essential for finding effective solutions.

The former president urged young people to be more productive and better prepared. She emphasized

the importance of education, skills development, and active engagement in societal matters.

Banda rejected confrontational approaches to advocacy by the youth. Instead, she advocated for fruitful and respectful engagement between generations, even when addressing difficult issues. Naming and shaming alone won't suffice; genuine dialogue is crucial, she argued.



**“We need young people to be at the forefront of conversations.”**

“There will be nothing that will be decided about you without you.” She emphasised that decisions affecting young people should involve them directly. Their voices matter, and their futures are at stake, she argued.

Banda also underscored the urgency of climate change. She called for youth representation at policy-setting tables. Rather than a top-down approach, she favored a bottom-up strategy to tackle environmental challenges.

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Banda said efforts must be made to stem youth migration to Europe. She also cautioned against using the youth solely for political gain and rather to properly realise their potential.

Dr Felipe Paullier, Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, noted that the issues raised by Banda resonated with millions of young Africans and pledged his continued support for youths' interests on the global stage.

In a compelling address, Chido Cleopatra Mpemba, the African Union Youth envoy, emphasized the pivotal role of young people in shaping critical conversations and decisions.

Her insights underscored the urgency of youth representation and active participation in governance and policy-making. “We need young people not just as tokenism but to be at the forefront of conversations.”

Mpemba rejected the notion of tokenism. She asserted that young people should not merely be part of the process and consultations; they must occupy a central position in discussions about our collective future.

She commended the United Nations for establishing a dedicated role for youth.



# ARC offers a new way to manage climate disasters

It is common cause that Africa accounts for just 4% of global emissions but carries the burden of the impact of climate change.

African Risk Capacity is using innovation and data to support governments to tackle climate-related disasters as climate change begins to bite, says Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, Director General of ARC and UN Assistant Secretary General.

It is important, he says, to give the problem a human face as the scale of suffering rises in the wake of increasingly severe impacts.

Key is the rapid deployment of assistance. Humanitarian organisations, which have been at the forefront of such efforts, only respond once disaster strikes and often the intervention comes too late.

ARC uses advance technology for innovative modelling that enables it to provide solutions that can save people. Among these is improving early warning

“The severity of climate impacts is increasing.”

systems, which allow more rapid responses.

“Our modelling allows governments to have better visibility and awareness of their risk to disasters and using the power of data and technology can allow them to make informed decisions.”

Governments have two main choices. They can absorb the cost of responding to disasters themselves or they can transfer their risk to the insurance market. Paying a premium enables them to access a contingency fund when extreme weather events trigger natural disasters.

If the risk is high, the premium to be paid may be too high for the country to absorb. In this case, countries in a region that is similarly affected by floods or drought, for example, can pool their resources to make it affordable, and share the payout.

He cited the example of Southern Africa where four countries – Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique – are about to receive a \$60m payout from ARC, covering about six million people.

The ARC also calls on donors to assist with premiums in the



face of visible need. “This is part of the global solidarity for climate actions.”

The ARC is a specialised agency of the African Union

Since its inception in 2012, it has provided cover of up to \$1bn in sub-Saharan Africa and paid \$160m in claims to date, protecting 100 million people in the process.

There is strong oversight on the disbursement of funds, including engagement with governments on a possible operational plan to deal with the emergency, payment into a dedicated account for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation and documenting beneficiary impacts.

The ARC is hosting a two-day African Climate Roundtable in Johannesburg on 7-8 May to unify African voices on climate resilience and adaptation.



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## VOICES

We are ignoring young people as if they are a marginal force. They are an ally for the development we are looking for. They are the architects of the development of the future.

**AHUNNA EZIAKONWA**  
Assistant Secretary General;  
Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa

We have to learn that storms will continue to rage with shocks and crisis. We must learn to live with this and find out how to move the needle within our own space.

**ADMASU TADESSE**  
Group President and Managing Director  
of the Trade and Development Bank

As Africans we need to ask the question about whether we are at the table in setting the global agenda or are we part of the meal?

**MITHIKA MWENDA**  
Pan Africa Climate Justice Alliance Executive Director

We need to understand why we are not implementing. Solutions are on the shelf. What is the disconnect?

**CRISTINA DUARTE**  
UN Under-Secretary-General and  
Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Africa

Multilateralism is failing to satisfy everyone, and Africa loses a lot by it.

**MARTIN TSOUNKEU**  
Co-chair of the Steering Committee for the Africa Regional  
Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders,



## SDG Knowledge Fair

On the sidelines of the ARFSD, ECA organised a knowledge fair to share information on SDGs 1 (Poverty); 2 (Zero hunger); 13 (Climate action); 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions); and 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

Apart from the ECA itself, exhibitors included Oxfam, which focused on SDG 13; UNDP, which focused on 16; IFAD, which focused on 2; and UNESCO, which focused on 17.

Visitors got the chance to learn about the actions being taken to meet the SDGs and what still needs to be done. Some filmed their own calls to action, which are expected to be shared on social media to inspire others to take action on their own.



# Digital economy key to solving Africa's problems

While digital transformation can fast-track poverty reduction and wealth creation, a lot remains to be done to realise its full potential.



This was the consensus among panellists at a session on leveraging science and technology to advance Africa's development goals and in particular, Agendas 2030 and 2063.

Kamalidini Souef, Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Digital Economy, Comoros, said access and affordability are key to realising the full benefits of digitalisation and called for more to be done to improve digital access and tools.

He pointed out that countries are moving at varying speeds and some will have advanced more than others. In light of this, there must be more regional cooperation and knowledge sharing "so we can make this a win-win situation for all".



Education and training were highlighted as essential to Africa's digital aspirations.

Prof Martiale Zebaze Kana, Head of Science for UNESCO's Regional Office for Southern Africa, said the organisation is helping African countries build capacity, setting up centres of excellence in some countries to make training widely available.

Prof Ndirangu Kioni, Head of Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education Office, Kenya, argued that technological skills must be linked to problem solving in local communities.

"Academia must not just be about formal education but must be linked to communities and to industry," he stressed.

His institution, he said, embeds students in communities where they can assess problems and co-create solutions with locals,

bringing down barriers and contributing to solutions.

Dr Joy Kategekwa, Strategy Adviser on Africa at the UN Development Program, observed that a fragmented ecosystem, lack of early-stage risk capital and an education system that does not foster innovation and enterprise are holding back young people from participating fully in the digital revolution.

The UNDP is backing Timbooktu, a project that seeks to mobilise \$10bn over 10 years to invest in startups across the continent. It includes investing in centres of engineering excellence, innovation hubs and



derisking capital to crowd in more investment.

She charged African governments and investors to support the initiative.

Dr Semeneh Kekis, Technology Advisor to Ethiopia's Minister of Innovation and Technology, emphasised the need to engage constructively with the African diaspora and encourage them to invest in local entrepreneurs.

Alex Nyingi, Emerging Markets Public Affairs Manager at Google, called for deeper cooperation between the public and private sectors as well as investments in infrastructure and training to build the workforce of the future.

## Key takeaways

- Education and skills training must be linked to communities and industries.
- African governments must pursue partnerships of impact with the private sector, academia and the diaspora to accelerate digital transformation.
- African countries must localise the ownership of digital platforms and infrastructure.
- Africa must employ data-driven approaches to development.

## Let's control our digital resources

Mohamed El-Amine Ould Abi Cheikh El-Hadrami, Minister of Higher Education and Research, Mauritania, and ARFSD-10 2024 Bureau Chair emphasised the crucial role of incubators in nurturing innovation within the continent, providing a vital platform for aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their ideas.

He also stressed the importance of protecting intellectual property rights to incentivize innovation and ensure that African creators receive due recognition and reward for their contributions.

However, he noted a concerning lack of effective supervision in the digital sphere, which could potentially hinder progress and leave room for exploitation.

He urged Africa to assert greater control over its digital resources and for stakeholders to push for and implement policies and initiatives that empower the continent's technological advancement.



## Events and meetings on the margins of the ARFSD 2024

### 15-17 April

- Science, technology and innovation boot camp for young people

### 19-20 April 24

- Expert group meeting on the 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report

### 21 April

- Sixth African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum
- Youth workshop on voluntary national and local reviews

### Monday, 22 April

- Africa climate talks
- Preparatory regional workshop on voluntary national and local reviews
- Dialogue on carbon markets
- Preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in Africa
- Review of progress in the transformation of food systems
- Sixth African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

### 24 April

- Event on the Power of data: unlocking the data dividend for the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063

### 25 April

- Annual meeting of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa with the Resident Coordinators

### 26 April

- Retreat of the Resident Coordinators

### 26 and 27 April

- Youth Forum on the Summit of the Future

## IN CONVERSATION

### Speaking for people with disabilities

Africans face many challenges, but people with disabilities face even more challenges than most.

They have a tough battle in a world where their cause is not prioritised by those in a position to help them, says Woré Ndiaye, Senior Global Advocacy Adviser of Sightsavers, an international NGO dealing with blindness.

The issue of disability being marginalised in top-level discussions was raised from the floor during discussions at ARFSD-10, prompting speakers to agree that the issue should be included in submissions towards the Summit of the Future.

Ndiaye, from Senegal, says the organisation works on disability inclusion and ensures this is integrated into all 17 SDGs.

“The issue doesn’t have the right exposure and our goal is to change that through advocacy and awareness.”

“When countries report on the SDGs, they need to prove what they have done so on all issues and this is where you usually find a gap,” she says.

“We talk about leaving no one behind but in all these conversations, people tend to forget about people with disabilities.”

Even if the issue is raised, the data is often not there, she says. “In any case, where there are indicators, they are not fairly represented.”

# The state of Africa

In this excerpt from her address on the first day of the summit, Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the UN and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group outlines some areas in which the continent is making progress and where action must be scaled up.

It is essential that we scale up action on key transitions and investment pathways to accelerate progress.

Both regionally and nationally, we are seeing opportunities for critical transitions that can turbocharge progress.

I will highlight four areas in particular.

First, inclusive and sustainable energy. African countries are making tangible progress in securing access to sustainable energy.

Access to electricity rose by nearly 10% in the last six years. But although Africa is home to 60 per cent of the world's most coveted solar resources, the continent only attracted 2% of global investments in renewable energy over the last two decades.

We are also home to a significant proportion of the minerals critical to the global renewables revolution. The electric vehicles value chain is

estimated to be worth nearly \$60 trillion by 2050. A huge potential market for African renewables.

But resource extraction must not undermine the livelihoods of the vulnerable. The Secretary-General's panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals is critical to ensure that we do not repeat past patterns of exploitation.

## **Sustainable food systems**

Second, sustainable food systems. After a long period of improvement, hunger has worsened substantially in Africa.

About 280 million people are undernourished, an increase of 57 million since the COVID-19 pandemic. Small farmers are under pressure from climate change.

But significant progress has been made in advancing food system transformation across Africa.

Various African initiatives

are embedding food systems transformation across sustainable development strategies and plans.

Positive examples are the African Union Commission's Regional Nutrition Strategy and the African Common Position on food sovereignty and resilience.

42 African countries have developed national pathways to implement the UN's vision under the Food Systems Summit and the recent Call to Action resulting from the Food Systems Stock Take +2.

## **Digital trailblazers**

Third, digital connectivity. There are trailblazers but the divide between and within African countries remains significant.

National digital strategies in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Rwanda are great examples of how we can shape investment pathways at scale across the region.

Fourth, education. The AU's decision to make 2024 the African Year of Education and its comprehensive ten-year Continental Education Strategy for Africa speaks to the strong recognition of this fact by African leaders.

So too does the progress being made in the area of education by several countries – from Sierra Leone to Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Namibia.

And at the heart of all of this, like so much else, is finance.

## **Rethinking global architecture**

Now is the time to rethink austerity-oriented international policies, reduce debt-servicing costs and ensure a more equitable global taxation system so that African countries can do what we know that want to do: to invest more, more efficiently and more equitably.

Across this work, the UN development system is your trusted partner.

The inclusion of the African Union in the G20 and the addition of an extra seat for sub-Saharan Africa at the IMF are also of major importance – for the voice of Africa and for that of the Global South.

Our voice will be essential in the lead up to the Summit of the Future, and at the fourth international Conference on Financing for Development and the second World Summit on Social Development in 2025.