Reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa

Engagement of major groups and other stakeholders

Report on the capacity development workshop organized

by theTechnology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management

Division of the Economic Commission for Africa

Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Sixth session

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Contents

Acknowledgements

I. Introduction

1.   Major groups and other stakeholders play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development. Their involvement is vital to enhancing inclusion by representing voiceless, marginalized and vulnerable populations; engaging in capacity-building activities; and strengthening the participation in and ownership of development processes by diverse communities, in particular at the national, subnational and local levels. They bring to bear critical inputs that are essential to enhancing the reach, effectiveness and durability of development initiatives and outcomes in Africa. More specifically, they are essential to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

2.   In its resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", the General Assembly recognized the need for major groups and other relevant stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the follow-up and review processes. In that regard, governments, the private sector, civil society, United Nations entities and other actors were called upon in the context of an enhanced global partnership to deliver on the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals and targets, which are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. Pursuant to resolution 70/1, a high-level political forum on sustainable development was established under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to carry out regular reviews in line with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The goal of those reviews has been to provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. Major groups and other relevant stakeholders have been called upon to report on their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is also important to note that citizens of African countries, civil society organizations and all other identifiable groups are to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation under Agenda 2063, which is being implemented in concert with the 2030 Agenda.

3.   Accordingly, the effective implementation of the two agendas requires various actors to work with major groups and other stakeholders to strengthen collaboration. For the contributions of major groups and other stakeholders to be fully utilized towards the successful implementation of the agendas, their knowledge of the processes and procedures for engagement must be enhanced through capacity development. They need access to information and platforms in order to engage more effectively with each other, governments and other development actors. In that regard, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, has been organizing workshops since 2015 to strengthen the capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to participate in and articulate inputs to the follow-up and review of progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional and global levels.

4.   Through the capacity development workshops, African major groups and other stakeholders have actively contributed to the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The Regional Forum is one of the mechanisms for providing input to the follow-up and review process of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

5.   In a consolidated statement presented at the fifth session of the Regional Forum, African major groups and other stakeholders highlighted their essential roles in ensuring the effective, inclusive and integrated implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

6.   Against this backdrop, ECA, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, organized a preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in Africa to help African countries prepare for the 2020 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.[1] The workshop took place during the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held from 24 to 27 February 2020 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, under the theme "2020–2030: A decade to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063".

7.   The workshop aimed to achieve the following objectives:

(a)   To brief major groups and other stakeholders on the follow-up and review process related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in the light of the approach to selected Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2017–2020;

(b)   To promote mutual learning through the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and promising approaches and practices in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and to track progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the aspirations of Agenda 2063, with an emphasis on the Goals that were particularly relevant to the 2020 session of the high-level political forum;

(c)   To promote dialogue and consensus among major groups and other stakeholders on advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

II.   Attendance

8.   More than 200 representatives of a wide-range of major groups and other stakeholders from all over the continent attended the workshop. The following categories of major groups and other stakeholders were represented:

(a)   Children and youth

(b)   Farmers

(c)   Indigenous peoples

(d)   Education and academics

(e)   Local authorities

(f)   Older persons

(g)   Persons with disabilities

(h)   Scientific and technological community

(i)   Sendai stakeholder mechanism

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[1] See the programme of work for the capacity-development workshop (ECA/RFSD/2020/WG/2), available at https://www.uneca.org/arfsd2020/pages/pre-event-major-groups-and-other-stakeholders-mgos-workshop.

(j)   Women

(k)   Workers and trade unions

(l)   Volunteers

III.   Opening and introductory sessions

9.   The capacity-building workshop for major groups and other stakeholders kicked off with opening and introductory sessions facilitated by Laetitia Montero (Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, ECA). She explained how the workshop was part of an overall architecture to review the Goals, with voluntary local and national reviews at the national level, regional forums for each continent, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development at the global level. She then emphasized that, although those mechanisms were State-led, the active engagement of all stakeholders was crucial to achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

10.   The opening session featured a discussion by a panel that consisted of:

(a)   Thokozile Ruzvidzo (Director, Social Development Policy Division, ECA);

(b)   Stephen Chacha (Chair, Interim Committee for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Regional Engagement Mechanism).

11.   Ms. Ruzvidzo explained that 3,000 participants had registered for the Regional Forum and that a substantial majority were representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, which reflects their commitment and the importance of their involvement in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They were critical partners with a unique strength upon which governments and other development partners relied. Among other key roles, major groups and other stakeholders participate and engage in the formulation of national and international policies, provide scientific and technical expertise, and function as experts on the ground, watchdog entities and force multipliers.

12.   Following an overview of the progress made in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, she noted that the participants embodied vast and diverse expertise, along with a wealth of knowledge of the continent's challenges and opportunities. Major groups and other stakeholders had much to contribute to the Decade of Action, not only in implementing initiatives, programmes and projects that actively improve the daily life of citizens, but also in reviewing and discussing in a comprehensive manner advancement of Goals implementation at local, national, regional and global levels.

13.   Ms. Ruzvidzo noted that countries still had a decade to commit to and act for the people and the planet. The Regional Forum was designed to be an action-oriented forum where participants could agree on sets of concrete and workable solutions that would allow African countries to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 within their respective time frames.

14.   Mr. Chacha reminded everyone that Africa was faced many challenges in the present Decade of Action to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. He also reminded the participants that the sixth session of the Regional Forum was opportunity to facilitate the pooling of the two agendas and to guarantee their harmonized implementation by 2030. After

several years of discussions among major groups and other stakeholders, the time had come to officially launch the African Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism.[2]

IV. Session 1: Setting the scene: Progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 - Presentation of the background report

A. Introduction

15. Edith Madela-Mntla, Chair of the session, stated that the session's objective was to discuss the regional progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals. The report was presented by was Paul Mpuga (Economic Affairs Officer, Macroeconomic and Governance Division, ECA). The panellists included Yetnebersh Nigussie (Disability Inclusion Advisor, Light for the World, Ethiopia) and Thuli Makama (Yonge Nawe/Friends of the Earth, Eswatini).

B. Presentation

16. Mr. Mpuga presented the report, which focused on the sub-themes "People, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships". Africa was off-track in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Demographic trends in Africa showed that 60 per cent of the continent's population was under the age of 25. An estimated 45 per cent of which lived in urban areas, of which 60 per cent resided in slums; by 2030, over 50 per cent would be living in urban areas. At the time of reporting, 420 million people (32 per cent of the total population) lived in extreme poverty, i.e., on less than $1.90 a day. Women and children were badly affected by the lack of equality and lack of access to land rights. In that context, he highlighted that human capital development, infrastructure and governance were vital for improving people's lives and enabling prosperity. An investment of up to $1.8 trillion per year would be required to meet the Goals, combined with tax and fiscal policy reforms, with public expenditure being aimed at the most vulnerable groups. He concluded by stating that the Goals were intertwined and inclusive and that it was not possible to implement one and leave out others.

17. Ms. Nigussie spoke on the theme of "Data, duty and development". There was a need for disaggregation of data to help in leaving no one behind. In respect of duty, it was essential to understand that it was the responsibility of governments to live up to their promises. There should also be mutual accountability among governments and major groups and other stakeholders. In terms of development, she said that it was ironic that Africa was simultaneously rich and poor in human capital. As such, education was essential, in particular in early childhood, beginning even before birth. Lastly, she noted that there was a mismatch between training and job requirements.

18. Ms. Makama noted that the current situation was frightening. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania were among the countries that most struggled with inequality and poverty; yet they were mineral-rich, which was a paradox. There

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[2] In May 2020, the African Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism was renamed the African Regional Mechanism of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders. All subsequent references thereto in the present document will use the latter name.

was a lack of investment in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals that was not related to a lack of resources for their implementation but rather to economic systems that enabled extraction but not re-investment. Money needed to stop flowing outside Africa. The resources that governments used to give subsidies to industry should be shifted towards increasing energy access and towards small and medium-sized enterprises to boost local economic activity.

C. Discussion

19. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted the neglect of rural areas and the disproportionate attention accorded to urban areas. Smallholder farmers were feeding the population, yet they were not receiving subsidies. There was a clear consensus that support must be provided to people in both rural and urban locations. Migration to urban areas was a growing trend that deserved attention. It was equally important to invest in rural areas to improve the quality of livelihoods and economic productivity. Addressing issues related to migration from rural to urban areas required an interdisciplinary focus on gender, indigenous and disability concerns.

20. There was a call for more accountability, which was linked to the importance of data. The quality of data sources varied owing to collection capacity. There were challenges related to the types of tools being used. There was a need for governments to work closely with civil society. Citizens needed to have access to information and disaggregated data. Mutual accountability was essential.

21. Participants discussed the role of education at various levels. They acknowledged the lack of adult literacy facilities, the crucial role of early childhood development, even during pregnancy, and the need to raise awareness on the part of both mothers and fathers. There was a call to address the mismatch between skills and jobs by training people for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

D. Recommendations

22. In the light of the discussion, participants made the following recommendations:

(a) Africa had many poor people, but it was not poor. Therefore, there was a need to shift the paradigm in the way that resources were allocated by focusing on vulnerable groups (in particular rural people);

(b) Data collection was essential. It should be disaggregated, corrected and verified to ensure that countries could use it for data-based policymaking;

(c) Inclusive growth and accountability would materialize only if people were empowered;

(d) Governments needed to provide leadership while providing space for the participation of other key players;

(e) The Decade for Action would be the last opportunity to do things differently.

V. Session 2: Voluntary national reviews and peer learning on implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

A. Introduction

23.   George Osei-Bimpeh (Co-Chair, Ghana Civil Society Organizations Platform on the Sustainable Developments Goals) chaired the session and invited Florence Syevuo (Sustainable Development Goals Kenya Forum), Fatchima Noura Djibrilla (Niger National Association of Environmental Scouts) and Sawsan Elshowaya (Sudanese Sustainable Development Goals Platform) to discuss the lessons learned from the voluntary national reviews.

B. Presentation

24.   Mr. Osei-Bimpeh stated that the session was centred on sharing experiences and facilitating learning through lessons learned on voluntary national review processes. It would also look at the challenges and opportunities that had arisen during the voluntary national review processes and at how major groups and other stakeholders could optimize their roles to enhance the process. Furthermore, it would consider how political and social contexts influenced the process.

25.   Ms. Syevuo spoke on the case of Kenya in relation to civil society engagement in producing the voluntary national reviews in 2017 and 2020 and the progress that had been achieved. Part of the success achieved had laid the foundation for the progress report in 2019. There had also been more comprehensive consultation through online submissions, together with an independent analysis of the process for reviewing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Kenya had participated in a multi-stakeholder side event at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and worked on taking actions based on the voluntary national review process. Ms. Syevuo wrapped up her intervention by insisting on: (a) the need to continuously build the capacity of civil society organizations in respect of the voluntary national review process; and (b) the importance of creating awareness and supporting citizens in telling their Goal-related stories at the grassroots. Stakeholders should reinforce collaboration and synergy among themselves. She emphasized the role of data to encourage evidence-based reporting.

26.   Ms. Djibrilla explained, that in the Niger, civil society organizations and other stakeholders initially had not been involved in drafting the first voluntary national review in 2018. However, for the 2020 voluntary national review, they were actively engaged in the assessment process. She recommended that governments increase the involvement of civil society organizations in producing the voluntary national review reports, given that their role in representing people at the grassroots made their contributions highly useful.

27.   Ms. Elshowaya presented the case of the Sudan. The 2018 voluntarily national review prepared by the Sudanese Sustainable Development Goals Platform reflected the activities of the platform around the Goals and their understanding, analysis and vision of the practical implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Regarding creating an enabling policy environment, many challenges remained in achieving the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in the Sudan, notwithstanding the existence of national institutions that had related competencies and mandates. Some persistent challenges for the country were the absence of political will, the

absence of peace and democracy, the absence of supportive policies for development, disparities and imbalances in development among the states, a lack of understanding of the essence of the Goals, a lack of monitoring mechanisms and poor coordination. Although a high level of political will existed in the aftermath of the 2018 revolution, challenges remained in respect of regional and political interests. She firmly believed that the Sudan would have outstanding results in its efforts to achieve the Goals by 2030 if they were driven by the will of its people to live in dignity and prosperity.

C.   Discussion

28.   It was stressed that voluntary national reviews were the starting point and not the end point of the process. They were important because they created partnerships. In all instances in the Niger in 2020, civil society organisations would be represented even if their number would remain marginal. There were still opportunities to improve their representation. The media played a vital in encouraging the inclusion of all societal constituencies.

29.   Participants discussed the possibility of having shadow reports added to or integrated into the official report. In Kenya, people living with disabilities produced their own report in 2019. Shadow reports ought to include indigenous people and the elderly and fuse the findings at the macro level. It would be easier to engage governments when developing shadow reports if civil society organizations spoke with one voice.

30.   Participants highlighted the following challenges:

(a)   Lack of multi-stakeholder engagement by duty bearers in voluntary national review processes;

(b)   Significant variance between the indicator data of civil society organizations and those of governments;

(c)   Interest groups working in their own interests;

(d)   Lack of sufficient knowledge among citizens, especially at the grassroots level.

D.   Recommendations

31.   The recommendations from session 2 were as follows:

(a)   There was a need to strengthen national statistical institutions to improve data collection on Sustainable Development Goals indicators. It was equally essential to harmonize indicators and to have standard definitions of indicators;

(b)   Funding was a significant challenge towards achieving the Goals. Domestic resource mobilization, as well as partnerships, were critical to secure additional funding;

(c)   Meaningful stakeholder engagement was vital in the voluntary national review process, and coordinating mechanisms were critical for the implementation and monitoring of the Goals;

(d)   Corruption was a challenge that needed to be dealt with to redirect revenue towards efforts to achieve the Sustainable Goals;

(e)   Political will was essential if countries were to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

VI.   Session 3: Role and space of civil society in implementing the Goals and reviewing their implementation from the global to the local levels

A.   Introduction

32.   The session was co-chaired by Fiona Amony (Youth Representative, Uganda) and Salina Sanou (Head of Programmes, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance). The panellists were Oliver Henman (Global Coordinator, Action for Sustainable Development) and Kenneth Owusu (Lead Consultant, City of Accra).

B.   Presentation

33.   Mr. Henman shared key findings of a study on implementing and reviewing the Sustainable Development Goals and noted that countries were starting to follow the principle of leaving no one behind. However, civil society organizations were being subjected to pressure and were finding it harder to participate and operate freely. He noted that the transformative aspirations of the 2030 Agenda (e.g., in relation to climate, equality and civil society) were being dropped and the focus was shifting towards business as usual. A whole-of-society approach needed to be applied much more methodically to ensure the continuation of consultative processes.

34.   Mr. Owusu shared information on the efforts of Ghana to institutionalize civil society engagement. In Ghana, civil society organizations had often been in opposition. As a result, stakeholders had established a civil society coalition to address that problem. The government had engaged with this coalition and had built a strong relationship at the national level. In contrast, coordination with civil society at the local level had been weak.

35.   On the adaption of the Sustainable Development Goals to fit local realities, Mr. Owusu noted that lessons had been learned from the failure to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. A decentralized planning system helped with coordination, with national-level entities providing broad direction and local-level entities deciding on the details. In Ghana, local government officials were required to prove that they had engaged with stakeholders. Otherwise, they were obliged to re-start consultations. Since 2016, reporting on Sustainable Development Goals had been at the national level. In 2019, the government of the City of Accra had volunteered to undertake a local review on the basis of 34 indicators. At the time of reporting, the document was undergoing internal review; plans were in place to then forward the document to stakeholders for external review.

C.   Discussion

36.   There was a discussion on how the report of the government of the City of Accra would feed into the report on the high-level political forum on sustainable development and whether it would be independent of the official draft of the government. Mr. Owusu said that a decision on the matter was pending and that the accountability framework required cities to prepare their own reports.

37.   Mention was made of the exclusion of citizens in reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals. Of particular concern was the marginalization of certain groups and the exclusion of those who lacked resources. The situation had led to a lack of understanding of the role that civil society organization played in the implementation of the Goals. The collaboration strategies between governments and civil society organizations needed to be further developed. There was discussion of the means to strengthen various processes and to ensure that they were inclusive. A representative from a human rights organization in Egypt noted that there was a need for transparency regarding the participation of civil society groups at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Mr. Owusu noted that Ghana was a unitary system, which permitted the involvement and engagement of all.

38.   A representative of the International Trade Union Confederation asked about the role that civil society played in ensuring policy cohesion at the level of the African Union. The representative also asked about the extent to which civil society organizations could help to secure the release of civil society actors that had been arrested by governments in some countries.

39.   A question was raised on how to improve engagement at the high-level political forum on sustainable development given the frustrations brought on by a process that did not provide sufficient time to ensure accountability. It was suggested that the process could be improved by allocating more time at the high-level political forum to written submissions and questions by using technology that would facilitate greater involvement. There was a need to bridge the gap between what happened at the regional forums and what occurred at the high-level political forum.

40.   On the issue of leaving no one behind, dialogues at the national level in Kenya and Nigeria had been aimed at fostering engagement and raising awareness in local languages. Dialogue participants had been urged to articulate their needs, which then had been mapped to the Sustainable Development Goals. Such good practices could be applied in other countries.

D.   Recommendations

41.   Participants suggested that there was room for improvement in the area of financing in support of planning and implementation at the local level, which would allow for the grounding of the Sustainable Development Goals.

42.   Participants called for recognition of the importance of enabling civil society to monitor progress, for example, by using citizen scorecards, which emphasized independence and focused on delivering on the Goals and engaging with governments.

VII.   Session 4: Update on the African Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism and the handover to its elected leadership

A.   Introduction

43.   The session was chaired by Mr. Chacha. Interventions were made by other members of the Interim Committee for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Regional Engagement Mechanism, including Edith Madela-Mntla and Adessou Kossivi. Kofi Kankam, in his role as representative of NGOs, and Nozipho Wright, in her role as representative of women, also contributed to the conversation.

B. Presentation

44. As part of the sixth session of the Regional Forum, session 4 of the workshop was devoted to strengthening the coordination of the activities of major groups and other stakeholders. With the participation of all organizations representing major groups and other stakeholders, the goal of the session was to set up a permanent committee, to be named the African Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism, which was subsequently renamed the African Regional Mechanism of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders. The discussions focused on three main points:

(a) The need to establishment a standing committee;

(b) The official establishment of a standing committee;

(c) General discussion.

45. Mr. Chacha explained that the Interim Committee had been set up in 2015, the year that the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted. He had had an initial three-year mandate as Chair of the Interim Committee. The Committee comprised seven organizations. Its objective was to launch a formal and permanent network of major groups and other stakeholders to contribute to the review process of Goal implementation in the region.

46. The objective of the African Regional Mechanism was to strengthen and support major groups and other stakeholders in improving the monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level (by having standard definitions of what constituted action, implementation, monitoring and evaluation); and to reinforce the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

47. Mr. Chacha presented the structure, governance, roles of coordination focal points and working documents of the African Regional Mechanism. Two crucial documents had been prepared for the operation of the standing committee of the Mechanism relating to governance and statutory texts. Those management and scoping tools had been shared online before the workshop, and further contributions had been made during the workshop.

48. In terms of participation, the standing committee would comprise 22 positions, 17 of which had already been filled. The process involved consultation with more than 1,500 organizations working on various themes and belonging to various large groupings. The structure of the standing committee would be presented in the statutory texts.

49. The list of focal points and additional information would be shared with those on the mailing list of the African Regional Mechanism. The official handover would take place within a month, and which point the new team would take over. Positions were available for people interested in serving as focal points.

50. According to Mr. Chacha, the purpose of the African Regional Mechanism was as follows:

(a) To coordinate and facilitate the consistent engagement of major groups and other stakeholders in Africa on regional and global sustainable development processes for the effective delivery of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b)   To coordinate and facilitate access to and exchange of information, best practices and experiences on sustainable development among major groups and other stakeholders;

(c)   To contribute to the setting of the agenda and decision-making in regional and global sustainable development processes of the United Nations system, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030;

(d)   To coordinate and facilitate the development of common positions, statements and contributions on sustainable development issues by major groups and other stakeholders;

(e)   To serve as a liaison between entities in the United Nations system and major groups and other stakeholders.

51.   The African Regional Mechanism would be led by a committee made up of 17 constituent groups, including, among others, representatives of the private sector, young people and children, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities, NGOs, scientific and technological communities, and women, along with representatives of the continents five subregional groupings.

52.   The Regional Mechanism would ensure the active participation of African civil society organizations and major groups in high-level forums organized under the Economic and Social Council.

C.   Discussion

53.   Following the presentation on the standing committee, discussions centred on taking into account input from organizations representing vulnerable groups, especially indigenous peoples, the elderly, the disabled, young people and children, albinos, as well as faith-based organizations.

54.   Representatives of the various groupings and the subregional focal points would be elected by their respective constituencies.

D.   Recommendations

55.   In the following two weeks, the African Regional Mechanism would be institutionalized, through the election of the co-chairs, the members of the regional coordination committee, the focal points and the members of an advisory group. The co-chairs and designated members would work:

(a)   To develop a strategic plan or work plan;

(b)   To mobilize resources;

(c)   To establish a communications team.

56.   The African Regional Mechanism would represent Africa in steering committees of major groups and other stakeholders at the global level.

VIII. Session 5: Breakout session discussions of views and key messages on the sub-themes of the Regional Forum

57.   Participants dispersed to work on a statement in the form of a position paper that would be presented during sixth session of the Regional Forum. The statement, set out in annex II to the present report, includes key messages on each of the sub-themes that were discussed during the sixth session. Each subtheme was discussed in a group format. The Chair of each group organized an online consultation in order to reach a consensus on key messages before the Regional Forum took place. Detailed key messages from the breakout sessions are provided in annex II to the present report. The themes of the breakout sessions were as follows:

Group 1 (People)   Goals 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 4 (Quality education) and 5 (Gender equality)

Group 2 (Prosperity)   Goals 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 10 (Reduced inequalities) and 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)

Group 3 (Planet)   Goals 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 12 (Responsible consumption and production), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water) and 15 (Life on land)

Group 4 (Peace)   Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)

Group 5 (Partnership)   Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

Annexes

Annex I: Statement of major groups and other stakeholders on the theme of the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, "2020-2030: A decade to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063"

We, representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, met in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, on 24 February 2020, ahead of the sixth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held under the theme "2020-2030: A decade to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063".

We highly appreciate and are encouraged by the commitment of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union Commission to engaging with major groups and other stakeholders, and their recognition of the role of major groups and other stakeholders in realizing sustainable development in Africa.

With the forthcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development having the theme "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development", we commit to returning to the five key highlights of the 2030 Agenda, which are people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, and question ourselves on the progress that Africa has made in terms of these critical areas, which directly relate to the goals under review at the forthcoming high-level political forum.

On the basis of the principles underpinning Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, we call upon member States, United Nations agencies, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to drastically accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

With support from the major groups and other stakeholders at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, African governments and their partners need to strengthen their commitment to empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. To realize this goal in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, we recommend the following:

I.   People

On Goals 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 4 (Quality education) and 5 (Gender equality), we recommend that member States:

1.   Urgently monitor, report and publish progress against national averages to understand and measure intersectionality of group-based inequalities in various contexts, as part of the voluntary national review process, and increase investment in systems to monitor disaggregated data;

2.   Progressively increase public investment, in line with agreed targets, and the provision of high-quality, inclusive, accessible and affordable health, education and social protection services, along with universal health-care coverage, for all segments of society;

3.   Increase avenues for meaningful and inclusive participation of all stakeholders, including children, young people, older persons, people with disabilities, women and girls, internally displaced people, refugees, indigenous communities and other marginalized groups,

in decision-making, implementation and accountability processes around the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

4.   Ratify, integrate into national legal frameworks, implement and periodically report on regional and international conventions and protocols that promote good governance and the rule of law;

5.   Establish mechanisms for the integrated national implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals to accelerate progress on Goals under the "People" sub-theme, which will have positive, synergistic effects with the Goals under the other sub-themes.

II.   Prosperity

On Goals 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 10 (Reduced inequalities) and 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), we recommend:

6.   National and subnational governments make investments in the transition towards 100 per cent renewable energy, in climate-resilient infrastructure and low-emission development in both cities and rural areas, that are gender-sensitive and take into account the needs of vulnerable groups;

7.   Governments design and implement pro-decent-work macroeconomic policies and strategies supported by progressive policies on minimum wages that are above national poverty lines, and transition from the informal to the formal economy;

8.   There should be inclusive policies to reduce inequality that enhance equity and opportunities for all, supported by readily available disaggregated data;

9.   For industry, decent work and economic growth, there should be a paradigm shift that fosters structural transformation of African economies through commodity-based industrialization, the transfer of technology and skills, investment in active labour market policies and programmes, high-quality public education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, with measures taken systematically to reduce the skills mismatch.

III.   Planet

On Goals 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 12 (Responsible consumption and production), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water) and 15 (Life on land), we recommend:

10.   Enhanced understanding of the connections between political decisions and scientific knowledge, and of the knowledge, views, traditions and involvement of vulnerable groups;

11.   Tackling the root causes and drivers of planetary destruction, implementing gender-responsive policies and enabling access to water, sanitation and hygiene and waste-reduction plans that bring socioeconomic benefits and reflect environmental awareness;

12.   Smallholder farmers participate in decision-making processes relating to access to markets and investment in eco-tourism as a means of protecting biodiversity.

IV. Peace

On Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) we recommend:

13. Active engagement of all vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women and youth, in global peacebuilding and conflict-resolution processes through preparing and implementing various plans, decisions and resolutions;

14. That member States support local initiatives on conflict resolution, peacebuilding and combating terrorism, violence, extremism and xenophobia, and work towards resolving existing social, political, cultural and gender-based violence conflicts;

15. Increased civic space for and protection of all human rights defenders and media workers, with a view to the protection and promotion of freedom of expression, assembly, association and thought, along with the respect of all international conventions that promote human rights;

16. The adoption of progressive transparency and accountability frameworks to implement effective mechanisms that ensure access to information for and monitoring by various stakeholders such as civil society organizations, the media and citizens.

V. Partnership

On Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) we recommend:

17. The adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach that fosters social dialogue among various interest groups and the vulnerable, who should be properly represented in the spirit of leaving no one behind;

18. Investment by governments in institutions that generate data and also recognize citizen-generated data to resolve the data-paucity problem; these data should be used to benchmark and monitor progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and be disseminated in a user-friendly and accessible manner;

19. Adoption by governments of clear Sustainable Development Goal financing mechanisms, with an emphasis on domestic resource mobilization, curbing illicit financial flows and monitoring private-sector involvement;

20. Resolving the issue of shrinking civic space and the over-regulation of civil society organizations and trade unions and recognizing them as actors in development in their own right;

21. Strengthening and promoting indigenous knowledge systems as alternative means of addressing the many challenges facing humanity.

VI. Other key messages

22. It is necessary to strengthen governance and the rule of law in creating an enabling environment for the Sustainable Development Goals, and accelerate action to address discriminatory or harmful laws, cultural practices and policies in the region that are holding back progress and the fulfilment of human rights for all. We call upon member States to ratify,

integrate into national legal frameworks, implement and periodically report on regional and international conventions and protocols.

23.   Mechanisms for integrated national implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals should be established., as accelerated progress on the Goals under the "People" sub-theme will unlock positive synergistic effects on other Goals and vice versa. Improved access to markets and financial services for the poor will have positive impacts on efforts to reduce poverty. At the same time, adequate investments in sustainable and humane agricultural systems are vital for food security. They will also have positive synergies with the Goals under the "Prosperity," "Planet" and "Peace" sub-themes.

24.   Governments should transition towards 100 per cent renewable energy (solar, wind, hydro and bio-energy) by investing in accessible, affordable and sustainable (off-grid and on-grid) energy as alternatives to the use of fossil fuels, in recognition of the need to reduce the fuel-collection burden, which falls disproportionately on women.

25.   Governments need to design and implement pro-decent work macroeconomic policies and strategies, in line with the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) of the International Labour Organizations (ILO), supported by progressive policies on minimum wages above national poverty lines, and transition from the informal to the formal economy (see ILO recommendation No. 204). This must be done with the full involvement of social partners through social dialogue, independent tribunals and other legislative mechanisms.

26.   Governments must integrate into the mainstream economy communities facing specific discrimination, marginalization and exclusion based on the work that they perform and their descent. This must be done through promoting inclusive policies that enhance equity and opportunities for all and that are supported by readily available disaggregated data.

27.   National and local governments should make investments in climate-resilient infrastructure and low-emissions development in both cities and rural areas that are gender-sensitive and take into account the needs of vulnerable groups (e.g., peoples with disabilities, older persons, women, children and adolescents) through local-level engagement.

28.   The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires a good understanding of the connections between political decisions and scientific knowledge and consideration of actors on the ground, including rural women, indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society organizations, with due regard for their knowledge, points of view, traditions and their involvement in the management of their surroundings.

29.   Gender-responsive policies and programmes and their effective implementation are essential. The situation is too dire to talk endlessly about mitigation measures - what is needed is to tackle the root causes and drivers of planetary destruction.

30.   Access to water, sanitation and hygiene is an indicator of equality. The building of knowledge and capacities among communities is needed to enable active participation in the design and implementation of community water management, sanitation and waste-reduction plans that embody economic efficiency, gender equity, social justice and environmental awareness.

31.   All vulnerable groups, including women and young people, need to be actively engaged in global peacebuilding and conflict-resolution processes through preparing and implementing national actions plans based on United Nations decisions and resolutions, namely, Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, and 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security.

32.   The role of civil society should be promoted through training and capacity-building to ensure active participation in decision-making processes, and create local, regional and international networks that support partnerships and cooperation, including with governments.

33.   It is necessary to strengthen and promote indigenous knowledge systems as alternative means of addressing the many challenges facing humanity.

Annex II: Additional messages from the breakout sessions

I.   People

1.   Address inequalities, exclusion, discrimination, abuse and violence. In addressing these issues, it is important to enact laws and devise policies that will protect and ensure that no one is left behind, and their rights and interests are protected.

2.   Enact laws, policies, and programmes that are responsive in terms of gender, age and disability, and arrange for equal participation in decision-making of all people at all levels. Urgently ratify and implement of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa.

3.   Member States should develop and implement clear targets for the groups that are often left behind, with yearly reports on the key strategies used and the status of implementation. This will enable follow-up and measurement of the strides made towards inclusivity in the Sustainable Development Goals in the next few years.

4.   Increased expansion of social protection mechanisms across the lifecycle is recommended, with the empowerment of citizens of all ages and emphasis on their participation in various decision-making processes.

5.   Expand markets and access to microfinance systems.

6.   The proper devolution of power in respect of fiscal federalism in Africa must be emphasized to promote inclusive decision-making at lower levels of government, and so that people take ownership of governance outcomes. This objective needs to be followed by all stakeholders.

7.   Increase water harvesting by constructing more dams and setting up irrigation schemes that are dedicated to youths and women. Irrigation schemes will be a pathway to improve crop production, crop diversity, nutrition and income levels among the youth people, thereby fighting hunger and poverty.

8.   Strengthen the infrastructure and equipment needed to transport, store and transform agricultural products.

9.   Support the emergence of rural commercial agriculture based on a smart mixture of agribusiness/commercial farming and family farming.

10.   African governments need to formulate real policies and legislation and dedicate resources to improving menstrual health across the continent.

11.   Access to quality primary health-care services should be strengthened to provide universal health care to all This will go a long way towards ensuring that, even those at grassroots levels receive quality health-care services at an affordable cost. Governments should ensure that sanitary pads are tax-free; this is an imperative measure towards ensuring reproductive health across the lifespan for girls and women of all ages.

12.   The budget for health should be increased in all member States to reach a threshold of 15 per cent, in accordance with the Abuja Declaration. Governments should fund mobile medical clinics to ensure adequate access to health services in rural areas.

13.   Provide affordable health-care services to all.

14.   Given that economic inequality and conflict are drivers of illiteracy, we call upon the member States to contextualize educational interventions, develop learning outcomes that meet the needs of communities, and provide educational infrastructure that includes and supports marginalized groups, especially children, refugees, internally displaced people, girls, women and people with disabilities.

15.   Improve financing for the education sector by ensuring that resources are wisely spent and closely scrutinized to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and equality of education systems.

16.   Governments in low- and middle-income countries need to expand their domestic tax base to at least 20 per cent of gross domestic product, and increase the share of spending on education to at least 20 per cent of budgets.

17.   The Global Partnership for Education should be fully funded for its next strategic period.

18.   Employ measures to improve learning and increase investment in more and better books and learning materials, opportunities at school and home, and teacher training and retention. A more participatory approach should be adopted to ensure that young people are part of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the entire education and development strategy. Young leaders should be meaningfully engaged in all decision-making processes.

19.   Ensure that older people have the equal access and opportunity to all forms of learning (including digital learning) and all levels of education without discrimination based on age or any other grounds.

20.   Construct libraries in rural areas to provide access to current information and disburse reading materials to rural schools.

21.   Create high-quality vocational programmes as part of providing access to education to groups that have previously been discounted in the education system.

22.   Highlight the linkages between Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 4 and how they relate to others in the 2030 Agenda.

23.   Invest in early childhood care and education to foster early childhood development, specifically for children from vulnerable backgrounds.

24.   Provide education that promotes entrepreneurship and creative thinking in Africa.

25.   Rehabilitate school infrastructure to cater to disabled learners.

26.   Harmonize national laws, policies, programmes and budgets to eliminate all discriminatory laws that prevent women, older persons, people with disabilities and the young people from accessing relevant information and services concerning their sexual and reproductive health, including safe abortion services.

27.   Accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5, to ensure that all women and girls can live their entire lives free from violence, forced pregnancies and harmful practices.

28.   Provide young people with comprehensive sexual education that supports their right to informed choice and autonomy, including evidence-based information on contraception and abortion.

29.   Ensure that policies, plans and programmes on sexual and reproductive health and rights include and specifically address women and girls with disabilities. Monitor national policies and plans on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

30.   Ensure women's rights to land ownership and ownership of assets (such as animals for farming).

31.   Equally empower girls and boys.

32.   Involve civil society and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ensure accountability for actions taken to advance the Goals. Strengthen the capacity of all development actors and program beneficiaries. Strengthen North-South and South-South partnerships to facilitate the financing of programmes and projects, and encourage the participation of large groups in decision-making.

33.   Invest in national statistical capacity and provide financing to support both improved life course statistics and innovative programmes, including those that use non-traditional sources of data.

34.   Organize regular dialogues at the national, regional and global levels to strengthen information-sharing and collaboration, bringing together government entities, statistical bodies, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to review progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

35.   Governments, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations should strengthen the documentation of learning related to the ageing process.

II.   Prosperity

36.   Lobby governments through their respective ministries of energy to advocate change in policies relating to the promotion of renewable and alternative sources of energy through market regulation to ensure access to affordable lighting and fuel for both urban and rural communities. Scale up investments in increasing access to energy, with increased funding for the decentralization of renewable energy and clean cooking fuels to target rural communities in Africa.

37.   Encourage and invest in the production of biofuel pellets or briquettes among other energy-saving fuels, by training women and youth groups and cooperatives in the manufacture

and trade of such fuels. There is a need to plant more trees and to have other affordable alternatives to cooking fuel to reduce air pollution.

38.   African governments need to urgently take advantage of solar energy given its availability throughout the year in the region.

39.   Adopt gender-sensitive energy planning and decision-making process. The provision of energy should meet the broader development needs of communities, be financially, socially and environmentally sustainable, and ensure that no one is left behind.

40.   Promote women's economic empowerment initiatives, safeguard gender equality as a means to improve service delivery, and close gaps that affect minority groups at all levels. Ensure access to affordable, high-quality care services to support women's economic empowerment and promote the well-being of children and others who need care, such as the sick and elderly. Put in place and enforce robust equal pay and gender-based anti-discrimination legislation, including pay transparency measures.

41.   Lobby governments to ensure that all rural schools are connected to solar energy sources.

42.   Governments need to stimulate economic growth, intensify efforts to build capacity in high-technology sectors, and develop a labour force with skills that are aligned with current market demands.

43.   Africa's focus during the present decade should be on livelihoods and alleviating poverty, which can be done through partnerships, private development financing, trade and investment agreements, which should not sacrifice fundamental human and worker rights, in particular those of working women.

44.   A paradigm shift is underway that is fostering the structural transformation of African economies and moving away from the neo-liberal economic agenda to an industrialization process that is commodity-based and promotes human-centred development, human capital development and technology skills transfer. Resources should be channelled to the local level to enable the people directly at-risk to have control over their future and to take the most appropriate action to increase their resilience.

45.   National and local governments along with traditional leaders need to review and reform their laws and policies to ensure gender justice, protection, and the fulfilment of women's land, housing, property, inheritance and economic rights.

46.   Follow up the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment to recognize, redistribute and reduce care work, which is mainly provided by women, and ensure decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers.

47.   Adopt a twin-track approach to the reduction of economic inequality for the most marginalized and vulnerable groups, among them women, minorities, rural dwellers and persons with disabilities, mainstreaming their concerns into general programmes while undertaking activities that target these groups.

48.   Integrate communities, such as those facing discrimination on the basis of work and descent, into implementation processes. Caste and other forms of discrimination based on work

and descent remain significant barriers to educational attainment, social and employment mobility, justice, equality and resilience, and are essential factors that sustain contemporary slavery. The impacts thereof cut across Sustainable Development Goals and targets, thereby demanding a comprehensive approach to addressing them.

49. Any advancement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 could be wiped out by disasters if not risk is not taken into account. An assessment of risk and potential impact should always be carried out when investing in development.

50. With climate change increasing the frequency and intensity of natural hazards, disasters will happen more frequently, making resilience-building at the local level all the more relevant.

III. Planet

51. Help developing countries to acquire the scientific and technological resources that will enable them to move towards more sustainable consumption patterns and production methods.

52. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative to form national mechanisms for strategic planning, plan elaboration, training and monitoring of implementation under multiple tracks by various institutions.

53. Develop a time frame for compliance monitoring, implementation enforcement and reporting thereon on a quarterly basis.

54. Strengthen civil society organizations to do this work.

55. Promote low-carbon development to ensure the survival of the most vulnerable countries.

56. Take concrete and sustainable actions to reduce the vulnerability of communities that highly exposed to the adverse effects of climate change.

57. At the international level, Africa must work to mitigate the losses and damage caused by natural disasters and ensure development that takes disaster risks into account.

58. Save indigenous peoples by promoting concrete adaptation actions and taking concrete measures to reduce their vulnerability and to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

59. Africa must speak with one voice and work to mobilize sufficient resources to reverse the current situation in order to reduce conflict and related mass population movements.

60. The development of sectors must be guided by the principles of sustainable consumption and production, to prevent the pollution of freshwater and marine ecosystems and the unnecessary conversion of terrestrial ecosystems, and to foster the protection of all species.

61. In the face of current existential threats to our planet, including climate change and biodiversity loss, we need a massive injection of political will if we are to survive and thrive. This will mean making hard political decisions and pushing ahead with policies, programmes and practical implementation.

62.   Deliberate investment in smart agriculture, smart technologies and prudent waste management strategies should be every member State's top priority

63.   For the world to combat climate change, women at the grassroots have to play a more significant role in decision-making, policymaking, project designing, budget making, disaster management, the implementation of livelihoods projects, the distribution of community-managed resources, monitoring and evaluation, and, most notably, building resilience to climate change.

IV.   Peace

64.   Create a national mechanism to ensure the strategic planning and monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through quarterly reports.

65.   Support freedom of expression according to the statutes of the law.

66.   Combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

67.   Call upon different African Union offices and entities to promote justice, accountability and peace.

68.   Cultural awareness education should be available in all state institutions to equip people with conflict resolution, peacebuilding and negotiating skills.

69.   Create networks to raise awareness of mechanisms for engaging various stakeholders in processes to monitoring human trafficking and the illicit arms trade at the local level.

70.   Call upon international medical (mental and physical) and financial support to reintegrate children who were victims of violence in conflict areas back into their communities.

71.   Support local initiatives to raise awareness of various types of bribery and the short- and long-term consequences of bribery and corruption.

72.   Enable various collaborators to participate in decision-making processes and monitoring activities to ensure accountability and transparency.

V.   Partnerships

73.   End exploitation and debt traps, and foster equal partnerships. Africa is richly endowed with natural resources and must not always get the shorter end of the stick.

74.   There should be an institutionalized mechanism by which governments, civil society organizations and businesses can monitor progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

75.   Young people ages 25 and below should be included and considered as partners because they represent 60 per cent of the continent's population, but are excluded.

76.   Come up with a strong statement that encourages social dialogue and collaboration among all key stakeholders.

77.   Institutionalize mechanisms by which governments, civil society organizations and businesses can assess progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

78.   To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative to form national mechanisms for strategic planning, plan elaboration, training and monitoring of implementation under multiple tracks by various institutions.

79.   Develop a time frame for compliance monitoring and the enforcement of action in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. Report quarterly on and conduct periodic surveys to determine the status of the implementation of the Goals.

80.   There is a need to strengthen civil society organisations to do this work.

81.   Effective partnerships and scaled transformation require useful empirical data. It is vital to ensure that national statistical authorities are fully funded and collect comprehensive data following the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Wherever possible, data collection should be based on internationally recognized formats to allow cross-country comparisons. National statistical authorities should pay particular attention to the most marginalized and vulnerable groups, for instance, by using the Washington Group of Questions on Disability in the national census.

82.   Promote fair collaboration and partnership between the South and North, wherein the exchange of goods and persons takes place on the basis of mutual consideration and equal treatment.

83.   Encourage social dialogue and collaboration among various actors and sectors with a view to coherent and robust whole-society development.

84.   Re-engineer partnerships on a genuine, monitorable and non-exploitative basis, with an emphasis on extractive, innovative and industrial value chains. This could be achieved by scaling up partnerships from the grassroots and synchronizing partnerships with particular focus on women, young people, the unemployed and minority groups. Member States should commit to allocating 1 per cent of their gross domestic product to creating partnerships that work better.

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