



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

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**The 2016 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on the theme
“Ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030
Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063”**

Opening Remarks

by

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Dusit Hotel, Cairo, Egypt

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome you all to the second Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development organized in collaboration with the Government of Egypt.

Allow me to express utmost gratitude to the Government and the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the warm hospitality extended to all the participants. On the same occasion, I wish also to acknowledge the exemplary collaboration undertaken for the successful convening of the Forum between the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and United Nations agencies, namely the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Fund for Population Affairs.

Africa is rich in natural resources and human capital. Over the past decade, the region has enjoyed high rates of economic growth but has struggled to harness these into robust and sustainable and inclusive socio-economic growth.

The continent needs therefore, to promote economic diversification as well as the efficient utilization of its abundant human, physical and natural resources. Structural transformation of the continent through industrialization and high value-added services is imperative. Industrialization with its potential to generate direct and

indirect employment, strong backward and forward linkages with other sectors, including agriculture, could ensure growth that translates into more inclusive development. In a global economy, constrained by climate change, Africa has a unique advantage to celebrate its latecomer status and design the kind of industrialization it wants to pursue whilst moving toward the construction of a green infrastructure that can exploit intra-regional trade, create jobs and leverage on productivity and competitiveness.

Accelerated structural transformation will enable African countries to respond to such challenges and opportunities of building inclusive societies. The fragility of current growth and the heavy dependency on nonrenewable natural resources necessitates that we ratchet up our ambition levels to stay within the arena of resilient, inclusive and sustainable economies.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Africa's aspirations to secure the well-being of its people and ensure the optimal functioning of its member states is deeply enshrined in its African Union's agenda 2063 and the agenda 2030 that defines the long-term Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving the Agenda 2063 and fulfilling the agenda 2030 will demand a major re-engineering of development strategies across the continent.

Although the agenda 2030 and 2063 have a common goal of long-term sustainable development, some differences exist in terms of timelines, modes and means of implementation.

This goes without saying that Africa's transformative agenda provides a pathway for the transition from the current state to what is envisaged in agenda 2030 and 2063.

In this connection, the 2016 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the High-level Political Forum are worthy of mention in advancing an inclusive and integrated approach in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The High-level Political Forum will provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on its implementation and follow-up.

Our regional Forum has an important role in originating concrete practical outcomes that will shape deliberations at High-level Political Forum and provide a road map that will enable Africa to follow through on its commitments to achieving growth and social justice.

Also, this year, ARFSD and the HLPF, will be taking place for the first time after the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. This agenda is a framework for financing sustainable development and is recognized as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is important for the implementation of Agenda 2063. In the AAAA, countries adopted concrete commitments that are crucial for implementing Agenda 2063. Among the key commitments are those on the mobilization of domestic public resources; domestic and international private

business and finance; debt and debt sustainability; science, technology, innovation; and capacity-building. The convergence of the follow-up and review of this Agenda and that of the 2030 Agenda at the High-level Political Forum emphasizes the importance of our regional forum in ensuring that Africa's concerns on the means of implementation including finance are well-articulated and recognized at the global level.

Finally and of direct relevance to our Forum is that, this second meeting of the ARFSD and the July High-level Political Forum will also take place for the first time within the closely overlapping implementation timeframes for the 2030 Agenda (2016-2030) and Agenda 2063 with its first Ten-year implementation plan spanning the period 2014 to 2023.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

This last milestone underlines the importance of the theme of this Forum, namely *“ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063*. While this theme is well aligned with that of the 2016 High-level Political Forum, namely, *“ensuring that no one is left behind”*, what also stands out for Africa is the imperative of integrated and coherent approaches in the implementation of the two Agendas. The theme puts a spotlight on the following:

- (a) The need to recognize the intricate relationship and synergies between the two agendas and their mutual relevance to sustainable development in the region;
- (b) The unique and dual obligation of countries in the region to implement and therefore follow-up on both agendas;
- (c) The importance of giving equal attention to the two agendas; and
- (d) The required engagement and support for effective integrated implementation and follow-up and review of the two agendas.

Through the 2016 Conference of Ministers and other high level policy and decision making platforms, African member states indicated that existing silo/uncoordinated approaches to the framing, implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 will create challenges for effective implementation and monitoring – jeopardizing the optimal use of scarce resources, efforts, time and focus. A harmonized approach is therefore imperative if the targets of the Agenda 2030 and 2063 are to be achieved. The harmonized approach must ensure that implementation and monitoring outcomes are well aligned with the Africa’s sustainable development priorities and aspirations.

To this end, convening an Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to develop a comprehensive, integrated, inclusive and unified framework for the implementation of the agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 is both appropriate and opportune and will reinforce the messages of the ninth Joint AUC-ECA Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of the Economy and Finance and ECA

Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (COM) held from 31 March to 5 April 2016 in Addis Ababa. In their Ministerial statement, the Conference recognized that multiple development frameworks have not met Africa's imperative for accelerated, inclusive and sustainable growth, thus weakening the continent's prospects for structural transformation. The Ministers, thus, underscored the importance for Africa adopting a coherent strategy for the effective and coordinated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, the conference agreed on a single monitoring and evaluation framework, accommodating both agendas, and a common reporting architecture that will produce a single periodic performance report.

The theme and format of this Regional Forum will also ensure consistency of messages with regard to the most effective approaches in implementing and following-up of the two Agendas.

The task before you therefore is to articulate strong messages aimed at the seamless implementation and follow-up of Agenda 2063 and 2030. The outcome of this Forum is important in catalyzing such an approach at regional, subregional and national levels. A common development framework for Africa has the potential to be a powerful driver of sustainable pro-poor growth in African countries. But equally important, the outcome of this Forum should send a strong signal to, and rally the international community around this approach and to ensure that equal attention is given to these two Agendas.

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We are passing the baton to future generations who will enjoy the longevity of growth and prosperity, not as transient phenomena, but as key fundamentals to the “Africa we want” and woven through the common thread of sustainable development. The connection points of these two agendas and their implementation processes must challenge our collective humanity to crystallize the true meaning of ‘leaving no one behind’ into a concrete set of proposals for our shared and common future.

Thank you for your kind attention.