

The Victoria Falls Declaration on Africa Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism

We, the representatives of Major Groups, other Stakeholders (MGoS), Civil Society, and non-state actors assembled at the Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, on 24th February 2020 on the occasion of the Sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD), building up on the process that we initiated at the first Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in 2015, and in line with the Decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. We resolve to institutionalize and launch the Africa Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism to self-organize and coordinate our efforts to contribute in the implementation, follow-up and review of Sustainable Development and related global agreements in Africa and globally.

We resolve to making a strong complementary and collaborative efforts among each other and with our governments, development partners and citizens towards sustainable development, and other regional and global agreements by the African Union Commission, United Nations through the Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank, and other stakeholders.

We affirm our contribution to the delivery of a transformed and prosperous Africa through the effective, inclusive and integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in our respective domains while promoting cross learning and sharing of technical competencies and resources across the region to catalyse the realisation of 'leave no one behind', human rights and social justice for all.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and Agenda 2063, a "call for action to all segments of African society to work together to build a prosperous and united Africa based on shared values, inclusiveness and a common destiny."

We recognize the importance of partnerships with governments and other key players in our respective countries of activity and on the continent as a whole in achieving the goals of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 to build the Africa we want.

We reaffirm our commitment to working together as civil society organisations, major groups and other stakeholders on the continent and with those across other continents, towards common goals.

We reaffirm our meaningful participation in decision-making processes and the provision of accurate, evidence-based, disaggregated, qualitative and quantitative data, which are required for informing evidence based public policies and programmes, monitoring progress and identifying gaps with a stronger focus on domestic financing sources.

We will advance issues of gender, the youth, labour, migration, older people, people with disabilities, farming communities, fisher folks, internally displaced persons, indigenous people, local authorities, science and technology, Non-Governmental Organizations, business and industry, SMEs, volunteers and all other segments of society towards building a transformed and prosperous Africa.

We will collaborate with our governments, the UN systems, and other stakeholders in advancing a rights-based approach to sustainable development.

We will promote culturally adapted and friendly scientific methods and appropriate utilization of appropriate technologies to advance development on the continent and speed up the achievement of sustainable development.

We reaffirm our commitment to the principles of mutual respect, collegiality, equality, inclusiveness, and strengthened collaboration that promotes intergenerational coexistence and solidarity. As we

build upon the successive African Regional Fora on Sustainable Development, we further resolve to enhancing our strategic partnerships for the benefit of all people in Africa.

We reiterate our determination to work together to strengthen multilateralism in international relations, and to promote a fair, just, equitable, generational, democratic and representative international order.

We commit to:

- Strong mobilization and harnessing capacity to increase awareness on both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 among African citizens thereby enhancing traction and ownership. This includes brokering expertise and knowledge to build the capacity of civil society participants to engage in sustainable development processes at local, national, regional and global level.
- Facilitating innovations, knowledge and good practices sharing among different stakeholders on Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 implementation (including CSOs, member states, private sector, and development partners, among others) on what works and what does not.
- Availing and promoting the use of non-traditional data including citizen generated data that are locally relevant and disaggregated in measuring SDG and Agenda 2063 progress through effective participation in the National Statistics System.
- Promoting democracy in Africa and across the world to facilitate the implementation of the sustainable development goals and others related agenda to build community's resilience around the world.
- Promoting local level solutions and opportunities for scaling up initiatives with government and developing partners thereby reducing the learning curve.
- Strengthening opportunities for vertical review and follow-up (across all key stakeholders involved in SDG and Agenda 2063 implementation including governments, private sector and civil society) as opposed to horizontal review only (i.e. government to government).
- Giving meaning to the "leave no one behind" by reaching out first to the furthest left behind, and fostering inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups (including indigenous groups, persons with disabilities, women, older persons, youths, children, among others) to actively participate and lend their voices to the processes.
- Coordinate non-state actors' efforts on implementation, follow-up and monitoring at national and regional level through inclusive civil society engagement mechanisms and platforms, and report at national, regional and global level on major groups and other stakeholders role in implementation and follow up and review of sustainable development.

We are coming together to ensure that:

- African Governments provide leadership in ensuring inclusion of all actors especially the marginalized and vulnerable groups, and in linking Sustainable Development to the realities and aspirations of citizens, as well as creating an enabling environment (including policy coherence for sustainable development, resource allocation, and institutional frameworks)

for major groups and other stakeholders to play a meaningful role. They should intensify awareness on the principles and benefits of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 to African citizens as well as open more collaboration opportunities at national, regional and global levels thereby creating ownership.

- We strengthen the role of civil society, major groups and other stakeholders in Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to share experiences and learn on implementation and follow-up and monitoring, coordinate regional efforts and jointly develop consolidated regional positions for the HLPF, as well as track progress on SDG and Agenda 2063 implementation at national and regional levels thereby ensuring that no country or stakeholder is left behind
- We contribute towards strengthening the joint implementation and follow-up and review architecture of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.
- Civil Society, Major Groups and Other Stakeholders are actively and continuously engaged throughout the duration of the forum beyond preparing a Major Group and Other Stakeholders statement.
- Africa Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism is recognized and integrated in UN regional structures to ensure sustainable and meaningful engagement.
- We contribute towards realizing HLPF objectives as an inclusive platform for tracking SDG and Agenda 2063 implementation, sharing learning and experiences among member states and stakeholders; review and consolidate means of implementation based on shared opportunities and challenges in SDG implementation; amplify voices from regional and national level; and also address the capacity needs of member states.
- Africa's partners provide capacity, appropriate technologies, technical and financial support to member states, civil society, major groups and other stakeholders to complement progress made and bridge possible risks to the effective and efficient implementation of SDGs.
- Member states provide strong political leadership and enabling environment for non-state actors including civil society organizations, Major Groups and Other Stakeholders to be part of the priority setting and implementation of both SDGs and Agenda 2063.
- Member states integrate major groups, civil society, and other stakeholders in national multi-stakeholders coordination mechanisms, committees and/or commissions for 2030 Agenda and agenda 2063 implementation, follow-up, monitoring and reporting.
- UNECA and UNDESA facilitates major groups and other stakeholders' access to technical, capacity building and financing opportunities to enhance their work on the ground. They should also strengthen coordinated platforms and opportunities to consolidate efforts, and exchange good practices among major groups across themes including community of practice.
- Governments, AUC, AfDB, ARFSD, UNECA, UNDESA and UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes support a sustainable engagement mechanism open to all civil society for participation, involvement and contribution to the implementation and follow up and review of Agenda 2063, 2030 and their outcomes at various levels through ARCSEM.