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Statutory issues

Progress report of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: achievements, main outcomes and way forward

I. Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs; the African Development Bank (AfDB); and the African Union Commission, convened the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, in Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 May 2017, in preparation for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, which was held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017.
2. The Forum was attended by 415 participants, comprising high-level representatives of Governments of the 54 member States of ECA, intergovernmental bodies, major groups and other stakeholders,
3. ¹ United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and other international organizations.
4. Since 2015, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development has been convened on an annual basis to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. The Forum promotes coordination and coherence, and the learning and sharing of best practices. It serves as an important mechanism, not only for tracking progress in implementation, but also for keeping all the stakeholders in Africa mobilized and engaged, to strengthen their commitment towards concerted action. It also helps to garner international support for efforts to translate the Sustainable

* E/ECA/COE/37/1

¹ The term "major groups" refers to the following: groups and associations of women, children and young people; indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers.

Development Goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063 into measurable and shared prosperity that benefit the planet and its people.

5. The theme of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was: “Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all”. This theme was chosen in line with that of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.

6. The session undertook an in-depth review of the implementation of the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, corresponding to the following sub-themes:

- (a) Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa;
- (b) Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa;
- (c) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all;
- (d) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- (e) Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation;
- (f) Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

7. The review under each sub-theme also examined the required enablers and means of implementation.

8. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was preceded by and informed about the outcomes of the tenth session of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development; the Africa Regional Workshop on preparations for the 2017 voluntary national reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017; and the Preparatory and Capacity Development Workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region.

II. Context, objectives and format of the Forum

9. Similar to other regional forums on sustainable development, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development provides inputs to the annual sessions of the High-level Political Forum, which are integral pillars of the follow-up and review architecture for the 2030 Agenda. The regional forums are strategically placed to link the national and global discourse and serve as multi-stakeholder platforms to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. These forums are set up following General Assembly resolution 67/290, resolution 70/1 and resolution 70/299 which, inter alia, acknowledge the importance of the regional dimensions of sustainable development; invite the Regional Commissions to contribute to the work of the High-level Political Forum through annual regional meetings; and encourage member States to identify the most suitable regional forum, as an additional means of contributing to follow-up and review at the High-level Political Forum.

10. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was established pursuant to the above resolutions. It is operating according to resolution 930 (XLVIII) and resolution 939 (XLIX) of the eighth and ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in 2015 and 2016, which requested ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, AfDB and other partners, to convene the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on an annual

basis to follow-up and review the Addis Ababa Action Plan, Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

11. The 2017 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was organized with the overall objective of undertaking a regional follow-up and a review and facilitating learning, including sharing experiences and lessons learned to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. With a particular focus on the selected Sustainable Development Goals for the 2017 High-level Political Forum and the corresponding goals of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. The specific objectives of the Forum were to:

- (a) Carry out a regional follow-up and review, deliberate on progress and address challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the two agendas;
- (b) Provide a platform for peer learning and share experiences, good practices and lessons learned, to accelerate the implementation of the two agendas;
- (c) Deliberate and agree on Africa's priorities and recommendations in the form of key messages as the region's collective input to the 2017 High-level Political Forum.

12. The 2017 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was a three-day event comprising a one-day pre-event and two days of main sessions. The pre-event was organized jointly by ECA and the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs to strengthen the capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to effectively participate in the Forum and the High-level Political Forum. The major groups and other stakeholders adopted a joint statement that was presented and incorporated in the deliberations of the Forum. During the two days of the main sessions, the Forum elected a Bureau² to guide its deliberations. The matters underpinning the deliberations were as follows:

(a) An opening session: The Forum was officially opened by H.E. Dr. Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Electricity of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The opening session was addressed by Ms. Fatima Denton, Director of Special Initiatives Division of ECA, H.E. Ms. Nehal Magdy Ahmed Elmegharbel, Deputy Minister for Planning and International Cooperation of the Arab Republic of Egypt, representing the Bureau of the 2016 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, ECA, Executive Secretary, a.i., and Mr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs.

(b) High-level Panel discussion: The panel highlighted the challenges and opportunities that arise in the course of achieving inclusive growth and prosperity for all in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. The panellists included: H.E. Mr. Amedi Camara, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; H.E. Ms. Mutuuzo Peace Regis, Minister of State for Gender, Labour and Social Development of the Republic of Uganda; H.E. Ms. Nehal Magdy Ahmed Elmegharbel, Deputy Minister for Planning and International Cooperation of the Arab Republic of Egypt; H.E. Ms. Rosalie Matondo, Minister of Forestry, Sustainable Development and Environment of the Republic of the Congo; H.E. María Jesús Ncara Owono Mze, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea; H.E. Dr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs; Dr. Ben Paul Mungyereza, Executive Director, Uganda Bureau of

² Chair, Togo (West Africa); First Vice-Chair, Seychelles (Eastern Africa); Second Vice-Chair, Zimbabwe (Southern Africa); Third Vice-Chair, the Congo (Central Africa); and Rapporteur, Algeria (North Africa).

Statistics; and H.E. Ms. Nyasha Chikwinya, Minister of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development of the Republic of Zimbabwe. The high-level panel was chaired by H.E. Dr. Seleshi Bekele, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the discussions were moderated by Ms. Fatima Denton, Director, Special Initiatives, ECA.

(c) Plenary presentations and discussion on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The presentations were on the Africa regional report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, and an indicator framework for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the two agendas developed jointly by ECA and the African Union Commission.

(d) Round table on peer learning and the exchange of experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of the two agendas: The discussions were moderated by Mr. Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue of Cornell University. Countries that shared their experiences and best practices included Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. There were also interventions from Mr. Belay Begashaw, Director General, Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa, and a representative of major groups and other stakeholders.

(e) Plenary presentations and discussions on the sub-themes of the Forum: The presentations were drawn from the various background reports on the Forum sub-themes, mentioned previously.

(f) Breakout discussions and feedback: These sessions enabled further presentations by ECA and partners, clarifications from authors of background papers, in-depth discussions and reaching an agreement on the main issues and key messages on the sub-themes of the Forum.

(g) Consideration and adoption of the key messages of the 2017 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: During this session, the Forum adopted its key messages to constitute Africa's input to the 2017 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

(h) Closing of the meeting: Ms. Fatima Denton, Director of Special Initiatives Division of ECA and Mr. Gervais Tchaou Meatchi, Director of Planning and Development Policy, Ministry of Planning and Development of Togo and Chair of the current session of Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development made brief closing remarks.

III. Main achievements

13. The Forum was successful in the following:

(a) Achieving multi-stakeholder dialogue, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the importance of, and reaching an agreement on key recommendations for national, regional and global engagement to ensure inclusive and integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

(b) Enhanced capacity of African countries to participate in the voluntary national reviews. The regional workshop for voluntary national review countries strengthened capacity of the seven participating countries to prepare for the review at the High-level Political Forum. Moreover, the sharing of voluntary national review experiences during the Forum was provided opportunity for peer learning including sharing good practices and lessons learned among the 2016 and 2017 voluntary national review countries and the rest of the member States.

(c) Strengthening the capacity of member States to articulate Africa's priorities during sessions of the High-level Political Forum. Such capacity

enhancement was evident in the key messages adopted by the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, complemented by technical backstopping by ECA at the 2017 High-level Political Forum. Consequently, the important role was recognized of the Ministerial Declaration of the 2017 High-level Political Forum, among others. In addition, the significant contribution was highlighted of regional and subregional forums, including the Regional Commissions, in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and their contribution to the work of the High-level Political Forum through the involvement of relevant stakeholders.

(d) Strengthened link between the High-level Political Forum and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Following consultations with the bureau of the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, chaired by Togo, ECA in collaboration with the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA) organized a workshop on the Regional Forum with African Permanent Missions to the UN in New York to discuss the evolution of the format of the Forum to better serve Member States and stakeholders and meet the requirements of HLP. This was based on the conviction that the Forum should become a continuous process that evolves with the needs and new challenges faced by its stakeholders. The workshop was specifically targeted at African Permanent Missions because of their deep involvement in the High-level Political Forum and the need to enhance involvement in the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to strengthen the Regional Forum – High-level Political Forum links. The workshop identified mechanisms and made recommendations on the improvement of the Regional Forum.

(e) Generating policy reports on the various sub-themes of the Forum, which are available at <https://www.uneca.org/arfsd2017/pages/forum-documents>.

(f) Featuring web-based news, advocacy messages and infographics on the theme and outcomes of the Forum.

(g) Strengthening understanding within ECA and engaging in the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, the High-level Political Forum and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. This resulted in wide-ranging substantive engagement on the part of the Divisions. Furthermore, the Subregional Offices played an important role in facilitating contacts with member States to secure the confirmation of participants. The Publications Section was instrumental in the timely processing of the documents for the Forum.

(h) Strengthening collaboration between ECA and partner organizers, including FAO, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Women, United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs; AfDB; and the African Union Commission.

IV. Main outcomes and results (key messages) of the Forum

14. The 2017 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development adopted important recommendations in the form of key messages to ensure inclusive and integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. While the key messages adopted were to feed into the 2017 High-level Political Forum at the global level, they were also addressed, to accelerate the relevant implementation and follow-up actions at regional, subregional and national levels.

15. The detailed key messages are available at: https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/images/third_arfsd_key_msgs_adopted_final_english.pdf.

16. Some of the key messages grouped under each of the sub-themes are as follows:

(a) Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all and overall success in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

(i) *The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 calls for inclusive and integrated approaches to their implementation and for reporting that builds on existing mechanisms and integrates the reviews of the outcomes of the major conferences of the United Nations and the African Union.* Thus, it is important to support the countries in mapping the two agendas and to ensure their convergence with national development plans at every stage of the planning cycle.

(ii) *Voluntary national reviews are at the forefront in demonstrating and catalysing progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on account of the emerging good practices and lessons learned in domesticating and implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.* More countries are encouraged, and should be supported to undertake and widely disseminate the outcomes of their voluntary national reviews. Countries are also encouraged to strengthen national frameworks for follow-up and review to allow adequate inputs to voluntary national reviews from major groups and other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

(iii) *For timely policy decisions and adequate comparison within and between countries, the national statistics offices across the continent require international assistance to build stronger capacity for gathering and analysing disaggregated data on a broad range of issues relevant to sustainable development.* The national statistical offices, supported by development partners, therefore need to strengthen their statistics development systems, data gathering, and management plans to support the monitoring and reporting requirements of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in a harmonized and integrated manner.

(b) Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa

(i) *Economic growth is a necessary condition for poverty reduction in Africa, but growth alone is not sufficient.* Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ending poverty in Africa will require accelerated and inclusive structural transformation through economic diversification and accelerated industrialization.

(ii) *Weak data systems and data gaps in some member States pose serious challenges for effective monitoring and evaluation of progress in eradicating poverty.* In particular, weak disaggregation of indicators, whether by gender or location, poses further challenges for data collection and analysis. In this context, target 17.18 of the Sustainable Development Goals is critical: to “leave no one behind” and to “reach the furthest behind first”.

(iii) *The means of implementation, including financial assistance through continued Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains vital to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1 by 2030.* Developed countries must honour their historic obligations and responsibilities, as part of the commitments made in the context of the Global Partnership for Development, which itself also needs to be expanded and strengthened, also in the context of the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).

(iv) *It is important to reinforce the existing modalities and programmes for international assistance from groups of countries in special situations in Africa.* The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development must devote adequate time to addressing poverty eradication and sustainable development

challenges facing African countries, in particular, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States.

(c) Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa

(i) *The combination of low productivity, low incomes, and stagnant and degraded agricultural production systems in Africa has resulted in entrenched hunger.* The key is to address the three elements — productivity, purchasing power and production — through a comprehensive, integrated approach to tackling food insecurity.

(ii) *In the context of Africa's rapidly growing urbanization, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, as well as a number of related goals, necessitates the promotion of rural transformation and improvement of urban-rural linkages.* This could be attained through targeted investments in infrastructure, in food systems capable of delivering safe, sustainable and nutritious food to urban markets, and expanding economic opportunities for rural and peri-urban populations along the supply chain.

(iii) *Effective continental leadership and ownership of the transformation agenda is essential for effective implementation, delivery and accountability for results.* Strong political commitment to end hunger and promote food security must be driven by frameworks such as the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development (CAADP) Programme. South-South cooperation has been a particularly effective means of advancing policies and programmes towards ending hunger and should be further strengthened.

(d) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all

(i) *Member States are on average still far from meeting the key financing goals for health care.* Among such goals are those in the Abuja Declarations and the Frameworks of 2000/2001 for Action on Roll Back Malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases, where 15 per cent of national budgets are to be allocated to health; and to tackling non-communicable diseases such as fistula and cancer. Sustained investments in accessible health care, coupled with appropriate reforms, are needed in order to have in place resilient systems that can respond effectively to the health needs of African people.

(ii) *Africa has adopted regional frameworks and initiatives that demonstrate political will and commitment, which should be pursued to realize the region's vision of harnessing its demographic dividend to achieve the health-related goals and targets, and sustainable development.* Such regional strategic frameworks and agreements that should be fully supported and implemented include the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; the Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030; the Abuja Declarations and Frameworks of 2000/2001 for Action on Roll Back Malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases on increasing government funding for health; and the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa.

(iii) *There is the need for the States of Africa to collaborate and for international assistance in respect of health innovation, including drug and health technology development and assessment,* in order to improve access to essential, good quality and affordable medicines, eradicate rampant and emerging diseases and expand the life expectancies of populations.

(e) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

(i) *Pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls should lie at the heart of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, if poverty eradication and inclusive and sustainable development are to be realized.*

(ii) *Growth that overlooks or worsens gender inequality cannot be inclusive or sustainable.* Appropriate measures and stronger action must be taken to reflect issues relating to gender and women, including those relevant to girls and young women. These should be part of the national integrated plans that countries are developing to incorporate the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their domestic legal frameworks, and also into regional strategies and plans to harness the demographic and gender dividend.

(iii) *Special attention should be given to women's economic empowerment by harnessing their entrepreneurial talent and opportunities, and guaranteeing full enjoyment of productive employment and decent work for all women, especially those in vulnerable situations.* As a precursor to this, there is the need to ensure access at all levels to high-quality education and skills. Moreover, women and girls, particularly in rural areas, should be fully involved in and benefit from strategies and initiatives to transform and diversify the continent's economies.

(iv) *There are alarming rates of maternal mortality and an unmet need for voluntary family planning, in particular among younger women.* Greater investment in women's sexual and reproductive health should be prioritized in development planning and financing at all levels. In this regard, it is critical for African countries and the international community to reaffirm the promises made and ensure the rights of women and girls, guarantee their universal access to such health and family planning services, and increase investment in this area.

(f) Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation

(i) *Infrastructure, industrialization and innovation are among Africa's top priorities that are central to higher economic growth and poverty eradication.* Progress in the goals and targets under this sub-theme is vital to efforts by African countries to bridge the infrastructure gap. This includes the development of modern, clean and low-carbon energy, and harnessing of the transformative and job-creating potential of industrialization and innovation for shared green growth and prosperity; and for the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

(ii) *Inclusive and sustainable industrial development is a significant source of income, which allows for rapid and sustained increases in living standards for all people, including women and young people.* Without green industrialization, a sustainable path of economic development will not be achieved.

(iii) *The high transaction costs related to unreliable and expensive power supply and telecommunications, and poor transport infrastructure due to non-regionalization of critical infrastructure, have undermined the development of the competitive and productive capacities of African economies, contributing to the marginalization of the region in world trade, finance and investment.* Because of the capital-intensive nature of infrastructure, adequate efforts will be possible only by joining forces with the private sector, and international and emerging partners.

(iv) *All Governments, including regional and local authorities, should promote inclusive, ecologically-sound industrialization and ensure the provision of modern and well-maintained infrastructure that incorporates the protection of nature, especially by investing in renewable energy and solar energy infrastructure and undertaking participatory decision-making.*

(g) Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

(i) *Achieving long-term sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa will depend on the sustainable and optimal management of its natural capital, including oceans, seas and marine resources.* The ocean-based and marine-based natural capital should therefore be harnessed through sound social, environmental and economic policy regimes. It is also crucial to eliminate and reverse the effects of illicit activities and recoup the financial gains made from them, in order to enhance the flow of marine resources-based economic and social benefits and increase investments for the sustainable development of ocean and sea resources.

(ii) *Transboundary approaches to management of shared marine resources are needed to enhance national and regional efforts to face challenges in the marine and coastal environment, as well as implement the Sustainable Development Goals.* As the world transitions to an inclusive green/blue economy and looks towards oceans and blue natural capital for the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, countries will continue to rely on the “shared seas” approach to restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, as envisaged under the Sustainable Development Goals.

(iii) *Strengthening the capacity of coastal African countries, in particular that of the least developed countries, islands and small island developing States, especially in the context of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, is crucial for sustainable, managed and enhanced social, economic and environmental benefits from oceans, seas and marine resources.* Investments are needed to enhance the knowledge capacity of least developed countries and small island developing States in ocean and marine science on the interaction between oceans, and climate impacts on marine and ocean resources, and strengthen their marine observation capacity.

V. Moving forward

17. In order to ensure efficient and effective organization, strengthen the role, and achieve the desired results of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, the following are recommended for moving forward:

(a) The convening of the regional forums on sustainable development is a mandate (A/RES/67/290, and reiterated by 2030 Agenda) that all the United Nations regional commissions have taken up. In the specific case of Africa, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development has been instituted and its mandate widened and strengthened by the Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. In 2016, the Conference adopted another resolution on the Forum. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is a multi-stakeholder body that brings together senior policymakers and experts from the ministries responsible for at least the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), regional organizations (the African Union Commission, AfDB and the regional economic communities), representatives of the nine major groups including private sector and civil society organizations and academia, agencies of the United Nations and other partner organizations. It provides a platform to assess progress; share experiences; identify obstacles and provide concrete policy actions and other measures, and mobilize national efforts and global support to advance the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. By its nature, therefore, the Forum is a wider body that places ECA at a vantage position to validate and

advocate policy options arising from almost all the areas of work of the Commission. It raises the profile of ECA as a convener of gatherings on issues of strategic importance regionally and globally.

(b) ECA therefore needs to ensure that the convening of the Forum is an integral priority of its programming and includes the allocation of the required financial and human resources. The Commission should actively pursue the proposal in New York regarding the budget implications of the 2030 Agenda.

(c) The key messages and outcomes of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and African voluntary national reviews should be followed up and thus need to inform the programming of ECA's work in support of the implementation and review of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 goals.

(d) The High-level Political Forum provides expanded opportunities for delivery, uptake and recognition of regional dimension of sustainable development and in particular contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is necessary to organize more and targeted events during the High-level Political Forum sessions, in support of the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and voluntary national reviews. The effectiveness of such events can be enhanced through involvement of regional and subregional organizations and partners in particular, African Union Commission and AfDB. ECA also needs to strengthen the coordination, documentation and dissemination of ECA efforts/work in support of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

(e) Voluntary national review countries capacity needs to be strengthened to effectively communicate/report on their voluntary national reviews review at the High-level Political Forum, especially given the very short time allocated for each country's presentation. Voluntary national review countries capacity development in effective multimedia communication is essential to enable them to communicate and garner global attention.

(f) More countries should be encouraged – and should be supported – to undertake and widely disseminate the outcomes of their voluntary national reviews.

(g) Countries should also be encouraged and supported to strengthen national frameworks for follow-up and review to allow adequate inputs to voluntary national reviews from diverse stakeholders such as major groups and other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

(h) ECA should strengthen its collaboration and harmonize activities with the African Union Commission and other partners in the organization of the Forum. This should entail clear identification of focal points in the respective institutions, and with well-defined roles for the organization of the Forum. Furthermore, ECA should pursue the recommendations of the Conference of Ministers to avoid multiple regional review forums. In that regard, the Commission should take all necessary steps, in the context of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to designate the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development as the platform for the review of progress and follow-up on Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; to align the consultations of the Africa Regional Forum with the annual reporting cycle of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda; and to enlarge the mandate of the Africa Regional Forum to include a review of progress, challenges and gaps in meeting the commitments outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

(i) ECA should engage with work related to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on an ongoing basis, not as a once a year activity of only organizing the Forum. In this regard, ECA needs to engage with

partners, member States, and the High-level Political Forum to disseminate and advocate, and follow-up on the implementation of recommendations (key messages) of the Forum. The Bureau of the Forum should be actively updated and engaged in these activities.

(j) It is important to enhance synchrony and synergy between the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Conference of Ministers, to ensure that Africa's priorities benefit from the feedback from loops in the two strategic platforms. Moreover, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development should provide a space where implementation matters can be discussed, evaluated and contested.

(k) ECA should also be actively involved in other work streams on the follow-up to Agenda 2030 and the monitoring of sustainable development that will shape the outcomes of the High-level Political Forum. In this regard, ECA needs to designate and structure arrangements for engagement with the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs on the Global Sustainable Development Report, the global report on Sustainable Development Goals, and Africa countries volunteering for peer review at the High-level Political Forum. Harmonizing Africa's inputs to the Global Sustainable Development Report and the report on the Sustainable Development Goals with those through the peer review and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will ensure a coordinated and strong position of Africa at the High-level Political Forum.
