Theme: “Strengthening Partnerships for Inclusive Sustainable Development, Good Governance, Peace and Stability in Africa

Briefing Notes by

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on

"Strengthening the partnership between the UN-AU-RECs in the context of the Regional Coordination Mechanism",

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Excellencies,
UN and AUC Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by thanking H.E. Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, UN Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser on Africa, for his kind invitation to Africa week. The close cooperation between OSAA and the ECA is exemplary as we have worked jointly on a number of programmes. Let me also take the opportunity to recognize senior UN colleagues present at this meeting.

We are gathered here this week to "bring Africa" to the UN and tell everyone the great strides African member States are making. These achievements have been realized because African countries are embarking on an accelerated growth by pursuing industrial policies within the context of structural transformation. It is hearting to note despite the decline in global demand for its commodities in recent years, Africa’s economic performance over last decade has been very robust, growing in the last two years around 4 percent which is higher than the global average of 2.5 percent. Several of Africa’s social indicators are also pointing up. The continent is therefore poised to attain robust economic growth this year and beyond. However, we need to work hard so that the positive growth performance is translated into increased employment for the youth, reduced poverty and improved access to health and education services.

For its support to add value, the UN family must continue to support the aspirations of Africans, particularly the Agenda 2063 and its 10-year implementation plan. As we all know the Agenda has been framed in a manner to get the African Union closer to its vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.” To achieve the tenets of the agenda, its accompanying 10-year implementation plan calls for an accelerated efforts by countries to implement development strategies which are aimed at achieving sustainable inclusive growth that provides decent employment, social protection and ensures the rights of women and youth empowerment. However for the achievement of sustainable inclusive growth, African countries would have to invest more in infrastructural development and science, technology and innovations.

On the global front, the UN General Assembly in September last year adopted the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Despite some successes with the MDGs, the SDGs come at a time when billions of people are living in poverty and inequalities within and among countries are widening as well as marked disparities in opportunity, wealth and power. The SDGs have also been crafted to respond to the challenge of climate change, gender inequality, rising unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, threats to global health, conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people.

Both the Agenda 2063 and the Agenda 2030 place Africa on solid foundations to build upon, both of which African countries have committed to their implementation. African countries also have their own development plans and strategies. This pose a daunting challenge for African policymakers on how to implement these frameworks. That is why the theme for this meeting, *AU-UN Partnership for the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals*, is very pertinent. Africa needs a common strategy for the implementation of Agenda 2063
and Agenda 2030 so as to achieve the goals and targets enshrined in the frameworks and minimize the costs of implementing both agendas.

Chairperson
Excellencies

The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) continues to present an important vehicle for cooperation and coordination of UN activities at the regional level in support of the Africa Union. The RCM is the means through which the United Nations system in Africa coordinate its activities, in line with the priorities of the African Union, including its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and NEPAD. It also serves as a vehicle to enhance coordination and coherence by increasingly engaging in joint planning and programming in order to “deliver as one” in response to the needs and priorities of its regional and sub-regional partners. It is also a mechanism for the UN cooperation with regional organizations.

At no time was this partnership more evident than when we came together to prepare and present the Common African Position, which was Africa’s contribution to the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals. We also witnessed the strength of the UN-AU partnership when together we hosted the world in Addis Ababa for the third Financing for Development conference, which produced a landmark outcome, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) which provides the means of implementation of the SDGs.

We can comfortably proclaim that the coordination mechanism has improved its efficacy and effectiveness and contributed immensely in strengthening UN-AU partnership. Despite the progress, we need to double our efforts in turning our commitments into actions that will lead to long term concrete results on the ground. To be truly effective, the UN should continue to align its support to the priorities of the African Union. In the same vein, there is a need for greater coherence, cooperation and coordination of the support of development partners to the African Union and its organs.

Chairperson
Excellencies

At the sub-regional level, together with the regional economic communities we have established the Sub-Regional Coordination Mechanism (SRCM). Through the SRCM, the UN and the RECs have developed programmes that are aligned to the overall development agenda of member States in the subregion. The mechanism the UN was able to support Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement, which was signed in June 2015. While much work remains to be done to put the agreement into effect, this is nonetheless a substantial step towards rationalizing Africa’s regional trade arrangements. Through the RCM and the SRCM, the UN provides support to the African union and the RECs on the negotiations on a continental free trade area which was formally launched in June 2015 and are expected to continue until the end of 2017. The mechanisms supported ECOWAS to launch its customs union in January 2015.
Realizing the importance of infrastructure in the promotion of trade, the UN supported the AU and the RECs in developing the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which provides a long-term vision for Africa’s infrastructure development. In addition the UN continues to support the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI), which consists of eight projects championed by the African Heads of State and Government and drawn mostly from PIDA projects, provides further impetus to the implementation of regional infrastructure projects in Africa. PIDA, in turn, draws largely from the infrastructure master plans of regional economic communities. In addition to PIDA and PICI projects, several regional corridors link Africa’s landlocked countries to the sea. The most prominent of these regional programmes is the Trans-African Highways (TAH) network.

In the area of governance the UN had significant policy influence on the APRM while continuing supporting the APRM participant countries and continental structures. The RCM also allowed the UN to provide direct technical support to APRM countries and RECs to accelerate the peer-review process. To improve the governance of extractive industries through the APRM, the UN has taken steps in mainstreaming the Governance of Natural Resources in the APRM Process. By assisting the APRM with this approach, ensures that APRM country’s reports measure up to the principles and standards put forth by the African Mining Vision (AMV).

Chairperson
Excellencies

Allow me to use my remaining minutes to return to the partnership between the UN and the African Union. In the last ten years the UN has cooperated with the African Union through the UN-AU Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme. Through this framework, the UN and the AU have collectively achieved a lot by working collaboratively on programmes and initiatives to advance the development agenda of the continent. However, the ten-year-capacity-building programme comes to an end this year. Together we have developed a new framework of collaboration, Framework for a Renewed UN/AU Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027 (PAIDA) as its replacement. PAIDA was endorsed by the AU Summit last year and now going through the UN General Assembly processes for adoption.

PAIDA therefore recognizes that Agenda 2063 is the overarching framework for Africa’s transformation, integration and development under which all the other sectoral and other frameworks, blueprints, programmes and plans of action are subsumed. Furthermore, through the influence of the RCM-Africa, PAIDA is focussed on the total structural transformation of the African economy. I will recommend that PAIDA, which is anchored on the Agenda 2063 and its ten-year implementation plan, should be the framework of the UN engaging with the AU beginning next year.

As I end let me make a few recommendation that will strengthen the mechanisms in support of the implementation of the SDGs and the Agenda 2063:
i. There is a need for better alignment between the SDGs and Agenda 2063. In this regard, common framework, targets and indictors for measuring the progress made on the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

ii. The monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the sustainable development goals need to be undertaken at all levels – local, national, subregional, regional and global.

iii. Data should be systematically collected, disaggregated and analysed to inform regular performance reports. A common reporting framework for the indicators will be required to compare performance across countries, subregions and regions.

iv. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development needs to effectively monitor implementation at the global level, taking into account specific regional and national circumstances and the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility.

v. The UN system in Africa has made significant contributions to the capacity development needs of Africa. The active participation of African Union Commission (AUC) as co-chair of the RCM-Africa has continued to make a significant difference in the work of the RCM. While waiting for more tangible results, solid foundations have been laid for fruitful cooperation in terms of enthusiasm shown by some AUC management. However, the non-uniform role and participation of the various departments within AUC affect cluster performance.

vi. In Africa, the African Union remains the apex institution for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs in the region. Its various ministerial bodies should monitor corresponding thematic areas of the goals; and the African Peer Review Mechanism should incorporate the goals and indicators into its assessment framework. The regional economic communities need to take responsibility for collating performance at the subregional level.

vii. There is a need for a clear and actionable indicator framework for sustainable development at the national level, to enhance understanding, guide integration modalities and identify the type of linkages that should exist among different sectors. In this connection, we request international and continental institutions to support the development and application of sustainable development indicator frameworks.

viii. Ownership and leadership by the main stakeholders in the work of RCM-Africa will be essential for the prioritization and implementation of the SDGs.

I would like to close by assuring you that the ECA will continue work closely all UN agencies to the support the development agenda of the AU and the RECs.

I thank you for your kind attention.