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Concept Note for the

**Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities to the
Member States of the United Nations**

On

***“The Role of Africa’s Regional Economic Communities in Consolidating Peace,
Security, Governance and Development in the Context of Agenda 2063”***

Organised by the

**Office of the Special Adviser on Africa,
United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa and
Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations**

Date: Wednesday, 1st October 2014

Venue: Conference Room 2 (CB)

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Time: 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Background:

The next few months will be a crucial period for Africa, as the continent aims to finalize the “development of the *Continental Agenda 2063*”, in accordance with the mandate given by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in its 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of 26 May 2013. Agenda 2063 is the forthcoming African Union’s 50-year structural transformation and development plan for realizing the Pan-African vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”.

Efforts to finalise the development of Agenda 2063 are still ongoing. However, it is currently envisaged that Agenda 2063 and its first ten-year plan will be adopted at the next Summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in January 2015. To this end, the Assembly at its 23rd Ordinary Session that concluded on 27 June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea mandated the African Union Commission (AUC), NEPAD Agency and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to “widely popularise” and “solicit further inputs” to Agenda 2063, as well as “explore Agenda 2063 flagship programmes, including the Continental Free Trade Area and the free movement of people”, among others.

As the building blocks and implementing arms of the African Union (AU), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are central to the formulation of Agenda 2063. Likewise, upon its adoption the RECs will be highly essential and instrumental for the effective implementation, financing, monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2063 and its flagship programmes, at the regional level in particular. As an evolving document, Agenda 2063 underscores the need to take cognizance of the integration priorities of RECs¹, which are contained in the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) and are as a matter of fact also its constitutive elements. As such, the review processes leading to the development of Agenda 2063 have explicitly and reiteratively called for greater alignment of the integration priorities of RECs with other objectives or priorities of Agenda 2063. Namely, African identity and renaissance, continued struggle against colonialism, social and economic development, peace and security, democratic governance, determining Africa’s destiny and Africa’s place in the world. In essence, whilst the integration agenda remains the mainstay for the RECs, Agenda 2063 calls for more robust engagement of the RECs in the implementation of other common continental frameworks, including those on peace and security, democratic governance, social and economic as well as sustainable development, among others. Agenda 2063 also calls for an enhanced focus on approaches that strengthen and operationalise the linkages between peace, security and development.

The importance of the robust engagement of the RECs, as well as of the alignment of the priorities of the RECs with that of the AU cannot be overemphasised. At the continental and regional levels, the AU and the RECs have made significant progress on the integration agenda, including on their cooperation in the areas of peace and security, socio-economic development, political integration and the harmonisation of policies. However, the scope and depth of progress

¹ Integration priorities of RECs as contained in the MIP: i) free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, ii) peace and security, iii) infrastructure and energy, iv) agriculture, v) trade, vi) industry, vii) investment, viii) statistics, ix) political affairs, x) science and technology, and x) social affairs.

varies considerably among RECs, with some being more advanced than others in terms of realising their respective founding treaty objectives and the priorities of the MIP. In addition, the priority areas for the RECs do not necessarily always align with the priorities of the AU, which are outlined in its strategic framework, thus bringing about conflicting priorities. This situation calls for greater coherence, harmonisation and collaboration among the RECs on the one hand, and between the AU and the RECs on the other. Given that Agenda 2063 aims to respond to a range of contemporary development challenges confronting Africa, including in the area of peace and security, the ongoing consultations to finalize the agenda provides an opportunity for the RECs to further consult and decipher their respective roles in creating an enabling environment for the realization of Agenda 2063.

The United Nations engagement and support to the African Union and its RECs:

As a longstanding strategic partner of the AU, the UN recognizes the increasingly significant role the AU and its RECs play in peace, security, governance and socio-economic development through the adoption of policy and institutional frameworks and tools to mediate disputes, prevent conflicts, strengthen mechanisms for early warning, and to promote good governance, the rule of law and sustainable development. As such, the UN has supported the development of the AU's normative frameworks, instruments and tools on governance, peace and security and socio-economic development and continues to encourage and emphasise the need for strengthened collaboration between the continental and regional organizations.

The UN system entities have supported the consolidation of democratic and participatory governance, including support to the implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), among others. The UN continues to support efforts by the AU and RECs to fully operationalize the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and other regional mechanisms for conflict resolution, crisis prevention, recovery and peace consolidation. UN system entities also supported the various processes instituted by the AU at continental and regional levels to formulate Africa's priorities for the sustainable development goals and the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. They continue to support the AU and RECs in accelerating implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). As Agenda 2063 encompasses all these issues as well as seek to build on past achievements and challenges, the UN remains fully committed to supporting the efforts of the AU and RECs to finalise and implement this 50-year vision and action plan for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Role of Regional Economic Communities in Peace, Security, Governance and Development in Africa:

In accordance with the principles of the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa and the 1991 Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, the RECs continue to promote the agendas for regional integration and economic cooperation. They have been instrumental in promoting intra-African trade and the free movement of goods and services, investments, macroeconomic convergence and infrastructure development. In this respect, some

RECs² have launched and are implementing a tripartite free trade area initiative that will unify their combined market space of over 500 million people, thus providing a strong springboard and impetus towards the realization of the continental free trade area by 2017.

The RECs have also been increasingly active in relevant areas, such as peace and security, political governance, social affairs and monitoring and evaluation. The AU's relations with the RECs and the other Regional Mechanisms are elaborated in article 16 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council. The RECs and Regional Mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution (RMs), which constitute an integral part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), have been working closely with the AU to facilitate the full operationalization of the APSA. The RECs have institutionalized their mechanisms for early warning and conflict prevention, and are also increasingly cooperating with the AU and among themselves in the areas of mediation, peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, combating transnational organised crime and elections management. The RECs and RMs continue to play a critical role in the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF) which is expected to attain its full operational capability by 2015 through the regional standby forces. In the past two years, the AU and the RECs have worked closely in handling conflict and crises on the continent including deployment of joint missions under AU leadership such was the case in Mali with AFISMA and MISCA in the Central Africa Republic, which have both now been transformed into UN missions.

The AU Panel of the Wise has continued to work closely with the Regional Panels/Councils of the Wise in the area of conflict prevention and mediation. To this end, the Pan African Network of the Wise (PanWise) was established in 2013 to enhance cooperation and collaboration between the AU Panel of the Wise and corresponding mechanisms of the RECs/RMs. The AU is also assisting some RECs to build their mediation capacity. The African Solidarity Initiative (ASI), which was launched by the AU in 2014 to promote the philosophy and practice of Africa helping Africa and the AU's transformative agenda to silence the guns by 2020 and achieve a conflict-free Africa have both provided a framework for further enhancing solidarity and cooperation between the AU and the RECs/RMs in addressing a range of peace, security and post-conflict reconstruction and development challenges.

The AU and the RECs have also worked closely in the formulation/articulation of normative frameworks in a number of peace and security-areas including promoting the rights of women in armed conflicts and ending sexual exploitation in armed conflicts, frameworks for arms control and disarmament, and security-sector reform. The AU is also working with the UN to bring the RECs/RMs into their joint framework for peace and security collaboration that provides a holistic approach to the broad spectrum of conflict resolution, prevention, mediation, and analysis of conflicts on the continent.

On governance, the AU and the RECs are working closely with the APRM to support African Member States in improving political accountability, public service and administration, and in instituting a culture of regular competitive elections. The RECs have also been instrumental for the harmonization and implementation of various continental policies on good governance,

² This involves the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

democracy, elections and human rights, including those within the framework of the Pan-African Governance Architecture (AGA). This has been vital for reducing fragmentation and ensuring greater complementarity with the priorities of the AU.

These achievements notwithstanding, several constraints and challenges remain. On the economic front, intra-African trade remains much lower in Africa than in other developing regions such as Asia and Latin America. In the area of peace and security, the continent is experiencing more frequent lethal and nefarious activities by terrorist, extremist, radical and transnational criminal groups that continue to pose severe risks to the fragile security, humanitarian and human rights situations in a number of countries. The problem is further exacerbated by the proliferation of weapons and armed or militia groups, growing popular discontent by citizens that is driven by prevailing social and economic inequalities and poor political governance, poor natural resource management and the rapidly growing problem of youth unemployment. In recent months, the emergence of the Ebola virus has also placed strain on inter-and intra-regional cooperation as countries that had been moving towards open borders responded to the epidemic by closing their borders and restricting the movement of goods and services.

As these situations affect the regions differently, the leadership of the RECs becomes even more critical for addressing these challenges. With its people-centered focus, Agenda 2063 provides the RECs with a comprehensive framework for adopting a more pro-people approach in tackling these challenges in their respective regions.

The Event: Briefing by Africa’s Regional Economic Communities on “*the Role of Africa’s Regional Economic Communities in Consolidating Peace, Security, Governance and Development in the Context of Agenda 2063*”:

In line with the above, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Africa and the Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, are convening a high-level briefing on the margins of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the topic: “*the role of Regional Economic Communities in Consolidating Peace, Security, Governance and Development in the Context of Agenda 2063*”.

This RECs briefing is in keeping with the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations on the cooperation between the UN and regional organisations/arrangements and the Decision of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the AU in its 23rd Ordinary Session to solicit further inputs to Agenda 2063. As such, the RECs briefing is aimed at garnering inputs towards strengthening Agenda 2063 and identifying priorities areas where the UN can further enhance its support to RECs in the areas of peace, security, governance and development. The event, which is scheduled for Wednesday, 1st October 2014, will provide a global platform for the RECs to discuss Agenda 2063 and examine their respective roles in creating an enabling environment for the realization of the aspirations, goals and priorities of Agenda 2063, in particular in the areas of peace, security, governance and development. It will

also explore measures on how to further strengthen coordination and collaboration between the RECs, AU and United Nations in these areas.

The event is structured in two main parts, with the first comprising of short presentations by RECs on their current roles in enhancing peace, security, governance and development in their respective regions and their perspectives on how to further enhance such roles in conformity with the aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063. The second part will feature an interactive panel that is comprised of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations who are working closely with the RECs. The panellists will provide their respective insights on how the United Nations system can further support RECs in enhancing their roles and contributions in consolidating peace, security, governance and development at regional levels, as well as within the context of Agenda 2063.

Specific Objectives:

The general objectives of the annual RECs briefing is to: a) raise global awareness on the role and contributions of the RECs to peace, security, governance and socio-economic development in Africa, b) provide a platform for RECs to share experiences and foster peer learning among themselves, and c) create opportunities for RECs to engage the international community directly, including potential partners.

In addition and in light of the current continental goal to finalise the formulation of Agenda 2063, the RECs briefing this year has the following specific objectives:

- i) To critically assess the activities of the RECs in the areas of peace, security, governance and development with an aim to identifying best practices, gaps and challenges pertinent to strengthening Agenda 2063;
- ii) To examine current development challenges confronting Africa with an aim to identifying gaps in existing frameworks, and proposing measures for ensuring the appropriateness of Agenda 2063 in addressing these challenges and fostering sustainable development;
- iii) To identify the major drivers of development at regional levels (including peace, security, governance and socio-economic development) and the gaps in current response with an aim to proffering concrete recommendations on how Agenda 2063 can provide a new framework for addressing or strengthening these drivers; and
- iv) To explore ways and means to further strengthen coordination and collaboration between the RECs, AU and the United Nations as well as enhance United Nations system support to RECs in addressing these challenges and gaps.

Expected Outcomes:

A report on the proceedings of the event will be jointly prepared by the co-organizers and will inform their respective future work in different ways. Other specific outputs include:

- i) Specific recommendations for strengthening Agenda 2063, to be jointly submitted by the RECs and organizers of the event to the AUC, NEPAD Agency and UNECA -- the three entities mandated by the Assembly to solicit further inputs to Agenda 2063.
- ii) A brief outlining the current development challenges confronting Africa, existing gaps and proposals on how to address these through Agenda 2063, to be presented to the UN Interdepartmental Task Force African Affairs (IDTF) with an aim to further enhancing UN system support to continental efforts to address these challenges and gaps.
- iii) Specific recommendations to the RECs on their respective roles in addressing and strengthening the major drivers of development at the regional levels (including in the areas of peace, security, governance and socio-economic development).
- iv) Concrete proposals on ways and means to further strengthen the coordination and collaboration between the RECs, AU and the United Nations as well as enhance United Nations system support to RECs in addressing these challenges and gaps.

Participants:

The event will be attended by African Regional Economic Communities (led by their respective Executive-Secretaries or Presidents), African Member States chairing the RECs, Member States of the United Nations, including the African Group, United Nations system entities and non-governmental organisations, particularly those working with RECs. It will also be attended by a number of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) of the United Nations, given their proximity and close engagements with RECs on the ground.

Partners:

1. Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA),
2. United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP/RBA),
and
3. Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

Venue:

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