

## 2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment

1-3 May 2018

### Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies

#### Inputs from the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA)

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#### I. Resilience in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063

- Since 2000, African countries achieved remarkable economic growth that allowed progress towards advancing socio-economic progress and achieving many of the MDGs. Strong domestic demand, improving business environment, and better macroeconomic management continue to enhance investment and growth. According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects, six African economies are expected to feature among the top 10 fastest growing economies in 2018.
- In addition, the continent is rapidly urbanizing and the middle class is growing. Africa's burgeoning youth population presents opportunities for harnessing the demographic dividend. infrastructure development continues to underpin regional integration, with the Regional Economic Communities providing the building blocks for achieving Agenda 2063's aspiration of a unified and prosperous Africa.
- However, Africa remains the region with the greatest development challenges. According to the World Bank, about 390 million Africans still live in poverty – accounting for half of the world poor. This is more than the number of the poor in all other regions combined. Africa is the region with the highest rates of maternal and under-five mortality. almost 700 million Africans have no access to improved sanitation facility and more than 300 million Africans have no access to safe drinking water. The negative effects of climate change; including the recurrent cycles of drought, desertification and land degradation continue to have disruptive effects on livelihoods and weaken resilience across communities.
- In the African Union Agenda 2063, African countries have placed strong emphasis on building resilience across all sectors. Building resilience against the negative effects of

climate change and natural disasters and promoting economic diversification to reduce the impact of global economic shocks are among the key priorities of Agenda 2063. Both the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development and the AU Agenda 2063 share a deep commitment to promoting resilience and inclusiveness as demonstrated by their people-centered approach and the promise of leaving no-one behind.

- Building sustainable and resilient societies entails dedicated efforts by African countries, supported by development partners to make progress across all the SDG, while paying due attention to addressing capacity gaps in the quality of and access to basic services and preparedness to tackle natural, health and other crises. It is also imperative to continue to promote socio-economic transformation, including through building productive capacity and expanding economic opportunities, particularly to women and youth.
- The prioritization of structural transformation and regional integration as key underpinnings of the African Union Agenda 2063 demonstrate the political will and commitment of African countries to tackle these gaps and promote economic growth that is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

## **II. Cases of African efforts to build sustainable and resilient societies**

### ***Building productive capacity and enhancing economic resilience***

- Innovative ideas and solutions are crucial to reverse the production and consumption patterns that characterizes African economies in order to remedy domestic issues such as low growth, fiscal imbalances and current account deficits. According to the African Development Bank's 2018 African Economic Outlook, after low growth of 2.2 % in 2016, average real GDP rebounded in 2017 reaching 3.6 % and is projected to reach 4.1 % a year in 2018 and 2019. However, these growth levels still below the average growth rate of 7% needed to attain the SDGs and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 in Africa.
- To reduce vulnerability to multidimensional global shocks and reliance on a narrow-base of primary commodity exports, African countries have prioritized industrialization and value addition and have put in place national and regional strategies to increase the output of the manufacturing sector, including through more investments in education, training, skills development, energy, infrastructure development and facilitating intra-African trade,

including taking concrete steps towards the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

- Leveraging technology and partnerships is key to track, stop and reverse illicit financial flows which is estimated at \$60 billion dollars per annum superseding total ODA to the continent. Resources freed from this domain could be utilized to build resilience across the vital sectors of society such as health, quality education, spur green industrialization, invest in sustainable energy as well as to reinforce infrastructure, boost productivity, youth employment and adequately invest in human capital.

### ***Building resilience against health crises***

- Many African countries suffer immense capacity constraints<sup>1</sup>and pervasive weak health systems which was further weakened by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2013-14. Ebola has revealed that it is time to reinforce Africa's public health system to combat future health threats. Ebola engendered immense losses both in human lives and livelihoods, bringing economic activity almost to a halt in affected countries and deepening structural weakness of neighboring countries of affected countries.
- In response to which and in an effort to build resilience through innovative tools, technology and closing the digital divide. In January 2016, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) endorsed the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to reduce sickness and death by improving prevention, detection, and response to public health threats.
- The Africa CDC is a measure by African Member States to hasten the attainment of SDG3 and Goal 3 of Agenda 2063. The AU Member States will be the direct beneficiaries of the Africa CDC. By supporting African countries in their efforts to monitor the public's health, respond to emergencies, address complex health challenges, and build needed capacity, the Africa CDC will help build resilience close dangerous gaps in Africa's public health system.

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<sup>1</sup> From 2007-13- Density of Health Workforce -2.7 per 10,000, compared to a global average of 13.9, Nursing and midwifery personnel 12.4 per 10,000 compared to 28.6 global average, Pharmaceutical personnel-0.8/10,000 compared to 4.5 globally, Psychiatrists less than 0.05/10,000 compared to 0.2 globally, Hospitals, Psychiatric beds, computed tomography- 2013 0.8/10,000, 3.4/10,000, 0.4/10,000 compared to 22.9 globally. Radiotherapy, mammography-2013, 0.1,7.4/10,000 compared to 1.8 globally.

- By working closely with the World Health Organization and Ministries of Health, the Africa CDC will help bolster local disease prevention and monitoring, improve laboratory diagnosis of pathogens, and strengthen emergency response to outbreaks.
- Africa's urban population is expected to triple in the next 50 years as a result of natural increase and migration. The urban population is young, as Africa has the largest concentration of young people in the world. Africa's youth population is increasing rapidly and expected to double, reaching over 830 million by 2050; while Africa's general population is estimated to reach almost 2.5 billion in 2050 according to the 2017 UN World Population Prospects. Therefore, the processes of urbanization and population growth, and the potential and risks embedded therein, present invaluable opportunities and challenges for Africa hence the need for new transformative and adapted technology to harness to benefits of the demographic dividend.
- The Common African Position on Habitat III endorsed by Heads of State at their Summit in July 2016 identified the dynamism from the urban dividend and the expansion of its youthful population in its third Pillar "*Enhance people-centred urban and human settlements development*."
- Sustainable Development Goal 11 calls to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable" and the goals and targets of Africa's Agenda 2063 also highlight urbanization as a strong driver of structural transformation. Aspiration 1 in Agenda 2063 'A Prosperous Africa Based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development' relies heavily on the standard of living in Africa's cities, and its sub-goal states that "Cities are hubs of cultural and economic activities, with modernized infrastructure and access to affordable and decent housing as well as basic necessities".

***Conflict prevention and reinforcing the peace, security and development nexus***

- Conflict prevention and addressing existing and emerging threat to peace and security, such as organized crime, terrorism and forced migration are central to any successful efforts to build sustainable and resilient societies in Africa. The international community must support the African ambitious strategy to end all wars in Africa by 2020 as outlined in the "Silencing the Guns" Initiative.

- This entails enhancing the capacity of the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development as well as supporting efforts, including by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to promote good governance and economic, social and political inclusion.

#### *Climate resilience*

- African countries continued to take measures to address the negative effects of climate change to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience, including by implementing and integrating climate change adaptation approaches into national development policies. This was demonstrated through the adoption of national strategies for the protection and promotion of biodiversity as well as national climate change adaptation strategies. In addition, there has been strong focus in the activities by African institutions, including the NEPAD Agency promoting climate -smart agricultural practices.

### **III. The imperative of building the capacity of national data systems and tackling the digital divide to leverage technology and innovation to promote resilience**

- African countries continue to address data gaps, particularly in the area of disaggregated data by building the capacity of their data systems. This is crucial for informed policy making. According to the World Bank, only 27 of 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa had conducted at least two comparable surveys between 1990 and 2015 to track poverty. It is imperative to step up international cooperation to build and strengthen national data systems in African countries to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Leveraging innovation and technology to support resilience, inclusiveness and the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in Africa is an imperative. Harnessing the full potential of ICT for development requires targeted investments in broadband infrastructure, networks and technologies.
- According to ITU estimates, bandwidth increased by 72% between 2015-2016 in Africa which is more than double the global growth rate of 32%. However, Africa is still lagging

other regions. Only 18 % of households in Africa have internet access at home compared to 84% in developed countries. In addition, while the gender gap has narrowed in most regions since 2013 in using the internet, it has widened in Africa where the proportion of women using the Internet is 25% lower than the proportion of men.

- Information and communication technology play a key role to enhance education, e-learning opportunities and skill development, robust youth engagement, online platforms offer women and girls a much a larger space to advocate for their interests, rights and for social transformation SDGs 4, 5, 10. and many of the goals of Agenda 2063, including goal 1, 2, 17.
- New technologies and innovative solutions is vital to increase agricultural productivity and lift millions of African women out of poverty since in Africa, women contribute 75% of agricultural work and produce 60 to 80% of food yet still they earn 10 percent of African incomes and own just 1% of the continent's assets.
- It is essential to craft gender sensitive solutions using technology and innovation as they will have a multiplier effect on poverty eradication, productivity as well as sustainable economic growth. It is estimated that equal participation for young women in the economy means a potential boost of \$ 28 trillion to global annual GDP by 2025.

#### **IV. The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) advocacy and analytical work to contribute to the promotion of sustainable and resilient societies in Africa**

- OSAA continues to support efforts by African countries to build national capacity and enhance the resilience of African societies. Over the years, OSAA's advocacy and analytical work, including reports, knowledge products, high-level panel discussions and expert group meetings focused on issues of significant importance to building resilience and reinforcing the peace, security and development nexus.
- In particular, building economic resilience through promoting economic diversification and regional integration have been accorded due consideration within OSAA's reports on the progress in the implementation of NEPAD. In addition, tackling the root causes of conflict pertaining to youth unemployment, inequality, and economic and social exclusion, including through the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture and

promoting closer cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) continue to be key areas of OSAA's activities.

- Areas of significant importance to promoting sustainable and resilient societies in Africa continue to feature prominently in the thematic focus areas of the reports of the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism (UNMM), mandated by UNGA resolution 66/293 to review the implementation of commitments by African countries and development partners towards Africa's development which has designated OSAA as the UNMM's secretariat. The 2018 report, due to be considered by the General Assembly in September 2018 will focus on a number of key development priorities that are aligned with the African Union Agenda and the review cycles of the High-Level Political Forum, including industrialization and regional integration, climate change, and health, water and sanitation.
- Within the framework of alignment with the African Agenda and priorities, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) organized the 2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum Regional Breakout Session on Africa on the Theme: Role of African Youth in Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Resilient Urban and Rural Communities. The regional breakout session on Africa provided a platform for young people, especially young Africans to engage with policy makers to address the theme of the session "Role of African Youth in Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Resilient Urban and Rural Communities". The Theme for the Break-Out Session on Africa is a juxtaposition of the African Union Summit Theme for the year 2018- Winning the Fight Against Corruption and the Theme for the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2018- The Role of Youth in Building Sustainable and Resilient Urban and Rural Communities.
- Participants identified challenges, provided solutions, strongly condemned corruption, unemployment, poverty, advocated for peace and security, as well as climate change and committed to uphold the values of integrity, accountability, transparency, supporting the building of resilient urban and rural communities, and to effectively implement the Sustainable Development Agenda Goals and Agenda 2063 of the African Union as well as the recommendations of the Session which they all pledged to take back to their network and transplant the proposed solutions.

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