Supporting an Integrated, Prosperous, People-Centred and Peaceful Africa: Towards the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ECOSOC Chamber
United Nations Headquarters, New York
Monday, 16 October 2017, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
I. Introduction and Background

Following the historic adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union’s transformative Agenda 2063, the collective journey to establish a peaceful, inclusive and prosperous future for all, where no one is left behind, is being given further impetus. The ambition and attention have rightfully shifted towards implementation, starting with the need to domesticate the goals and targets of these agendas in national development plans and mobilize sufficient resources to support the effective, coordinated and integrated implementation of both agendas. Global success in achieving the promise of a life of dignity for all and economic growth that is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable will depend to a great extent on the effective implementation of both agendas in Africa, a continent whose development challenges have far reaching implications.

Hence, the focus of Africa Week 2017, and the theme of this year’s high-level inaugural event is: “Supporting an Integrated, Prosperous, People-Centred and Peaceful Africa: Towards the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

The First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 seeks to seize the momentum created by the remarkable economic growth achieved over the past two decades in Africa by continuing to foster high rates of economic growth while also promoting socio-economic inclusion and environmental protection. The Plan prioritizes improving the standard of living, quality of life and wellbeing for all Africans through advancing progress in critical areas, including inclusive growth, regional integration, job creation, agriculture development and food security, women and youth empowerment, social protection, peace and security and addressing the effects of climate change.

In many areas, progress is being made on the African continent. Seven African Member States participated in the second Voluntary National Reviews of the High-Level Political Forum, which took place under the auspices of ECOSOC at the United Nations Headquarters in July 2017, as part of the follow-up and review mechanism of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Meanwhile, the African Union is working on the domestication of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan into national plans, with a view to mobilizing resources and implementing capacity development plans concurrently.

Nevertheless, the level of ambition of the goals in both agendas means that much more needs to be done. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017 indicates that the rate of progress in many areas is far slower than needed to meet the targets by 2030.

Against this background, Africa Week 2017 provides a timely opportunity to discuss the implementation and impact of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, identify lessons learnt and gaps to sustain the momentum in promoting a mutually reinforcing implementation of both agendas and address the root causes of Africa’s sustainable development challenges.
II. Coordinating the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 to achieve an Integrated, Prosperous, People-Centred and Peaceful Africa

An integrated, prosperous, people-centred and peaceful Africa summarizes the holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda as well as that of Agenda 2063. The goals and objectives are deeply interlinked – for example, infrastructure development creates economic growth and jobs (SDG 8 and 9), supports health facilities (SDG 3) and forms the basis for sustainable urbanization (SDG 11).

People are at the centre of all of these outcomes, as they aim to live and work in a healthy environment with a decent standard of living. To achieve significant outcomes, implementation plans should focus on results that can leverage success against more than one goal. Similarly, the African Union Agenda 2063 flagship projects are good examples of initiatives that require a high level of investments but have the potential to deliver substantial results in a number of areas. An Integrated High Speed Train Network and Silencing the Guns would create ripple effects to benefit various priorities on the global and regional agenda. At the regional and country level this means that activities need to be carefully coordinated with collaboration from multiple government departments and development partners. The empowerment of women, for example, is not the task of a single ministry, but should be a priority for all development partners, government, private sector, civil society and academia. However, fully harnessing the interconnectedness of the agendas cannot be attained by simply focusing on ‘quick wins’, especially since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifies that the goals need to be met for all segments of society, including the most vulnerable.

A prosperous Africa is the very manifestation of sustainable development, and requires above all overcoming the greatest global challenge of poverty eradication. Extreme poverty has been falling in Africa, but is still a reality for many on the continent. Decent work opportunities are the first step for many Africans to ensure stability and social protection. The 2030 Agenda and the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan emphasize the importance of infrastructure as the backbone of the economy. Industrialization and value addition have been among the key underpinnings of the African Union’s Agenda 2063. National and regional strategies have been put in place to increase the output of the manufacturing sector, including through more investments in education, training and skills development, energy, infrastructure development and further promoting regional integration, including intra-African trade. In these sectors, complementary policies to improve skills, infrastructure, trade facilitation and access to affordable credit can boost industrialization as well.

The ongoing implementation of the NEPAD sectoral framework, including the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) are significantly contributing to Africa’s structural transformation and regional integration. The positive steps that have been taken so far to facilitate the free movement of persons, goods and services, including the issuance of the pan-African passport and the launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area, comprising 26 African States members of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community, are crucial for further strengthening regional integration and the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).
Intra-regional trade can be a large enabling factor for increased economies of scale, diversification and value addition, thereby supporting industrialization and infrastructure development. African countries recognise the role the CFTA can play in achieving its industrialization and have designated industrialization as the central pillar of the CFTA project.

To deepen this debate, this year’s Africa Week will highlight the importance of infrastructure by dedicating the *High-Level Event on Tuesday, 17 October, to “Financing Africa’s infrastructure and agricultural development: inclusive growth for economic transformation”.*

Such inclusive growth on an integrated continent is especially critical for young Africans, as Africa has proportionally the largest concentration of young people capacity. According to statistics from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 46 per cent of the 1.3 billion person increase in Africa’s labour force over the period from 2015-2063 will be young people aged 15-34, averaging 12.1 million people per year. Africa’s people are its greatest asset, but harnessing the demographic dividend is also one of its greatest challenges and dependent on whether the working population has sufficient productive engagement in the labour force. The African Union dedicated its 2017 theme to “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth”, and endorsed the roadmap to transform education and skills development, health and wellbeing, and empowerment as well as employment and entrepreneurship. An educated African work force can propel industries forward. A people-centred approach also demands significant attention to policies that provide social protection to citizens, through improvements to health and education systems for example.

For that purpose, on **18 October, Africa’s Regional Economic Communities will brief UN Member States and UN entities on “Regional and Economic Integration in Africa: How to Effectively Involve Africa’s Youth across National Borders”**, as the commonalities between African youth can support regional and economic integration.

### III. Institutional Reform to Enhance the Impact of the Peace and Security Elements of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

Peace and security play a central role in both agendas, as reflected in SDG 16, which seeks to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” and in Aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063, which aims to build a “peaceful and secure Africa.” In the context of these transformational frameworks, the UN and the AU have separately embarked on major institutional reform processes to enhance their ability to deliver as well as effectively implement these agendas. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has launched important efforts to reform the UN’s development system, its peace and security architecture and its management structure. He also called for renewed emphasis on conflict prevention and sustaining peace in the work of the Organization. In addition, the recent establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism will help the UN address the complex and multidimensional global challenge of violent extremism and terrorism in a more strategic, holistic and comprehensive manner.
At the 28th AU Summit in January 2017, African leaders considered a proposal of vast institutional reforms, developed under the leadership of President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, which is aimed at strengthening the institutional structure of the AU while enhancing its impact and effectiveness by focusing the work of the AU on key priorities with continental scope. In addition, the AU has undertaken steps to achieve overall financial autonomy, including with regard to its peace and security activities, by agreeing to enforce a 0.2 per cent levy on eligible imports to African countries among others. Furthermore, the continued operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) through implementation of its 2016-2020 Roadmap, the revitalization of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the endorsement of the AU Master Roadmap on Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020 by the AU Summit in January 2017 - a key priority of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 - are further examples of the progress made towards the implementation of Agenda 2063 over the last few years. Efforts to further strengthen the vital partnership between the UN and the African Union in the area of peace and security have reached a new milestone with the signing of the Joint UN–AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security during the first ever United Nations-African Union Annual Conference on 19 April 2017.

Under the wider theme of peace and security in Africa, this year’s Africa Week will dedicate explicit attention to three intertwined challenges to a sustainable and peaceful African continent, namely climate change, conflict and forced migration. According to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Africa is the continent that will be most affected by climate change despite its low contribution to global warming. Where climate change threatens the lives and livelihoods of already vulnerable communities while overwhelming the capacity of local communities, countries and entire regions to mitigate its impact, it can act as a threat multiplier fuelling forced displacement and exacerbating conditions and factors that heighten the risk of conflict and violent extremism such as competition over natural resources and increased political, social and economic inequality.

In turn, insecurity and conflict have always been major drivers of forced migration globally. Africa, which hosts approximately 4.5 million refugees and 12 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), is not immune to this predicament. However, despite strong interlinkages between climate change, conflict and forced migration, international and regional responses have often been fragmented and designed to individually target each challenge instead of addressing the climate change, conflict and migration nexus as a whole. Especially in regions where those three challenges are strongly intertwined, such as the Lake Chad Basin or the Horn of Africa, integrated, holistic and comprehensive approaches are needed to improve the prospects for communities in affected regions.

Therefore, **the High-Level Event on Thursday, 19 October, will be dedicated to “Addressing the Climate Change-Migration Nexus and its Implications for Peace and Security in Africa”**, in order to provide a platform to raise awareness and discuss the nature, impact and possible responses to the climate change, migration and conflict nexus in Africa.
IV. Financing the Implementation of the Transformative 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

The investments required to achieve the SDGs in Africa across the three pillars of sustainable development are enormous and require mobilizing all sources of finance - public and private, domestic and international. According to the United Nations, they are estimated at $600 billion per year. Africa has committed to maximizing domestic resource mobilization to finance its development. However, the importance of international support to complement national efforts, including within effective global partnership for development, cannot be over emphasized. This includes the fulfilment of ODA commitments and scaling up green financing and the implementation of the UNFCCC commitments, including providing financial resources to support adaptation and mitigation by African countries. Other financial and non-financial means of implementation, including capacity building and technology transfer, are also indispensable for supporting progress towards development objectives, including eradicating poverty by 2030.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda commits all signatories to redouble efforts to substantially reduce Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) by 2030, with a view to eventually eliminating them, including by combating tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased cooperation. In light of the scale and negative impact of IFFs - estimated at a loss of over $50 billion annually according to the report of the High-Level Panel on IFFs - it is imperative that Africa’s development partners enhance their cooperation with African countries to address issues such as tax avoidance and profit shifting, including by multinational companies, in order to stem IFFs from the continent and strengthen the capacity of tax systems in African countries. This is crucial for maximizing domestic resource mobilization and providing a major source of funds for development programmes, including building and expanding social protection floors. According to the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, countering these activities requires greater transparency, more effective intelligence gathering and analysis, and improvements in cooperation and information sharing among government agencies and among countries to prevent, detect and prosecute criminals and recover the proceeds of their illicit activities.

V. Overall Objective

In the context of advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU Agenda 2063, and particularly its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan, the High-Level Event will focus on the progress and challenges of the implementation of both agendas in Africa.

Both agendas are strong and holistic in nature, but also characterized by a large set of ambitious and interlinked goals. The challenge for Governments and other multi-stakeholder development partners, including parliaments, civil society, women and youth associations, the private sector and academia, lies in effective coordination regarding the implementation of these agendas, to ensure that sustainable results are achieved for all segments of society. This includes transforming the architecture to ensure that peace and security issues are tackled in a most effective and efficient fashion. The speakers during this event will discuss the efforts underway and how all actors can strengthen their performance, by sharing insights and experience that is of critical importance to the implementation of these agendas.
Lastly, the event will emphasize the importance of financing mechanisms and promoting the engagement of the private sector, including through public-private partnerships and blended finance, as well as the need to stem IFFs from the African continent, as this will be one of the most impactful efforts to make funding available for the vision that both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 embolden.

VI. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the inaugural session are to:

I. Underscore the importance of coordinated and integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063 in Africa;

II. Share insights and experiences on Africa’s existing implementation strategies in socio-economic, environmental, and peace and security areas, and progress made in the implementation of both agendas; and

III. Highlight opportunities to overcome the financing challenge that African Member States face to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.

VII. Guiding Questions

I. What are important considerations for African countries, and all other development actors, including the private sector, academia and civil society, to ensure that the agendas are implemented in a coordinated fashion?

II. How can African Member States and their partners strengthen the people-centred focus of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 during the implementation phase? What best practices can the international and regional communities draw from?

III. What are some of the concrete measures that African countries, supported by development partners, can take to deepen regional integration?

IV. What more can be done by the United Nations and African countries to reduce the drivers of conflict and violent extremism in Africa?

V. Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 40 per cent of its citizens under the age of 14. To harness this demographic dividend, African countries must focus on both today and tomorrow’s youth. How can Africa’s development partners support the continent in creating employment opportunities in this regard?

VI. How can the UN strengthen its support to African countries to address illicit financial flows, building on the momentum achieved recently through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/213 on the “promotion of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows in order to foster sustainable development” and the launch of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax among IMF, OECD, UN and the World Bank?
VIII. Format and Featured Speakers

The event will be structured in two parts, consisting of both an inaugural and substantive session. Featured expected speakers will include the President of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the President of the UN Security Council for the Month of October, and the Executive Secretary for the Economic Commission for Africa, among other high-level speakers. The event will be co-moderated by the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa and the Chair of the African Group for the month of October.