

**Contribution of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) for  
the Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Vienna  
Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries for the  
Decade 2014-2024**

**II. An overview of recent socio-economic development in landlocked developing countries including impact of COVID-19 pandemic and building back better**

Through the Interdepartmental Taskforce on African Affairs (IDTFAA), the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), in close collaboration with DPPA-DPO, UNDP, ECA and other UN system entities, coordinated to deliver the Secretary-General's policy brief on "the Impact of COVID-19 in Africa" published in 20 May 2020. The policy brief aimed at supporting the response of African countries, including LLDCs, to COVID-19 to prevent, mitigate and address the multifaceted crisis. It examined the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Africa, highlighted Africa's swift response and called for a strong global solidarity to bolster Africa's efforts including for long-term post COVID-19 recovery. Several recommendations were proposed in the policy brief to strengthen Africa's response to the pandemic and build forward better, among others: i) the need for a comprehensive response to improve the resilience and preparedness of healthcare systems in Africa to the increasing exposure to economic, climatic and health pandemic related shocks; ii) an across-the board debt standstill for African countries as well as comprehensive options towards debt sustainability and solutions for structural issues in the international debt architecture; and iii) ensuring that the response to COVID-19 is "conflict-sensitive" and does not lead to new tensions.

Similarly, OSAA coordinated the production of the Secretary-General's reports on the "New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Eighteenth consolidated progress report on implementation and international support. The report assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and Agenda 2063. The report notes that there is a heightened risk that African continent, including LLDCs, are likely to fall further behind in the SDG implementation. With less than a decade to the 2030 SDG target date, the report argues that the pandemic was the opportunity for Africa, including LLDCs, to demonstrate how together the continent can collectively respond to major shocks through the various AU coordination mechanisms and initiatives. It also calls for redoubled efforts by African countries and their partners during the Decade of Action.

OSAA also participated in the Post-COVID 19 Task Force to build back better and promote disability inclusion in vulnerable countries, including many LLDCs in Africa. The Task Force led by UNDP and UN Country Offices, in close collaboration with specialized UN agencies, UN Regional Economic Commissions and IFIs, assessed the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and communities, including in African LLDCs. The outcome of the review concluded that COVID-19 had both short-term and far-reaching implications for people with disabilities in many areas of life, and therefore, a disability inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery would best serve everyone. Moreover, a disability inclusive COVID-19 response would help provide for more inclusive, accessible and agile systems capable of responding to complex

situations, reaching the most vulnerable in LLDCs. It would also pave the way for a better future for all. The Review also stressed the need to ensure mainstreaming of disability in all COVID-19 response and recovery processes, together with targeted actions. In addition, it noted that in building forward better, we should ensure accessibility of information, facilities, services and programmes in the COVID-19 response and recovery. Accessibility is fundamental to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the immediate health and socio-economic response to COVID-19. The Review noted that we should ensure meaningful consultation with, and active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of the COVID-19 response and recovery. Most importantly, the Review stressed the need for countries to establish accountability mechanisms to ensure disability inclusion in the COVID-19 response and ensure inclusive investments to support disability-inclusive outcomes. For donors, UN agencies, African Governments and LLDCs, in particular, the Review stressed the need to establish mechanisms to monitor investments to ensure it is reaching persons with disabilities.

### **III. Status of implementation of the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action**

Given the overlap between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU's Agenda 2063, the implementation of these regional and global platforms also directly contributes to the implementation of the priorities of VPoA. In this respect, taking into account that half of LLDCs (16 out of 32) are located in Africa, all the activities of the Office contribute directly and indirectly to the implementation of the VPoA. Through its reports of Secretary-General's reports on NEPAD and the "UN Monitoring Mechanism's on the review of the implementation of the commitments made towards Africa's development" OSAA contributed towards the monitoring and review of national and international efforts towards Africa's development with a view to ensuring strengthened accountability for shared aspirations. The reports highlight progress, gaps, and challenges along with concrete recommendations to accelerate progress towards Agenda's 2063 and 2030 Agenda. In particular, the NEPAD report reviews progress made and provides analysis, identifies gaps and challenges in the implementation of selected NEPAD priorities: the African Continental Free Trade Area, Infrastructure, Industrialization, and Health and COVID-19. The report notes the substantial progress made by African countries infrastructure development, especially in the ICT sector with installation of new regional submarine and terrestrial cables. As the key priority sector for regional integration, infrastructure development also contributes to trade facilitation, including through corridor approach, such as One Stop Border Posts. Following the food crisis and disruption in the medical supply chains, the report also stressed the need for African countries to grasp major opportunities offered in agro-processing, pharmaceutical manufacturing and the starting of trading under the AfCFTA. The report acknowledges the efforts of African countries to respond to the economic and humanitarian fallouts of the pandemic and alleviate the impact on the population and the role of the United Nations system in assisting countries to put in place emergency response plans.

The UN Monitoring Mechanism report highlights progress, impact and challenges in five thematic areas critical to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development, as well as to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the

African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, namely (i) strengthening the means of implementation of the SDGs in Africa: finance, policy and institutional coherence; (ii) promoting peaceful and inclusive societies by Silencing the Guns in Africa; (iii) promoting a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system: an opportunity to fulfill by supporting the AfCFTA; (iv) leveraging science, technology and innovation for SDG implementation; and (v) promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships for Africa's development against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyzing the status of implementation of these commitments from an analytical and data-based perspective and with an African lens, the report provides policy recommendations to close the gaps, where progress is lagging, and accelerate the implementation of the commitments. Given that Africa accounts for half of global LLDCs, inferences might be drawn from the analyses presented in this report and the LLDCs, where appropriate. OSAA is willing to share drafts of these reports, if suitable.

The list of subsections in Chapter 3 could also include (i) Energy and (ii) ICT – both of which are critical enablers for the implementation of VPoA for LLDCs as “Energy and ICT” are identified as LLDCs priority areas in the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs in the Remaining Five Years.

OSAA, in close partnership with the AU and UN entities, convened the virtual Africa Dialogues Series (ADS) 2020 under the theme “COVID-19 and Silencing the Guns in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities” in May 2020. ADS contributed towards raising global awareness on the gravity of the COVID-19 crisis on the continent and its serious adverse impacts on achieving the 2030 and 2063 agendas, in particular, AU initiative on silencing the guns. It also mobilized international support and solidarity to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and promote peace, security and sustainable development in Africa, including LLDCs. ADS particularly focused on international trade and trade facilitation by organizing a session on “the Africa Continental Free Trade Area as an Opportunity for Silencing the Guns and overcoming COVID-19 and other Pandemic in Africa.” The session provided recommendations, among others, that it is imperative to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA in order to enhance the continent's resilience and strengthen domestic and regional supply chains through intra-African trade.

#### **IV. Follow-up and review**

OSAA, serving as a secretariat of the Interdepartmental Taskforce on African Affairs (IDTFAA), facilitated a coherent and coordinated UN system support to African countries' response, including LLDCs, in their fight against COVID-19. In particular, in August 2020, the IDTFAA endorsed the Africa Knowledge Hub managed by the Economic Commission for Africa as the platform for information sharing on UN response to COVID-19 in Africa. The Hub is a useful tool with a wealth of data, information and knowledge on response efforts of the UN and African countries, including LLDCs.