



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited  
5 March 2022

English and French only

Original: English

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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**  
Eighth session  
Kigali (hybrid), 3-5 March 2022

Item 11 of the agenda\*

**Consideration and adoption of key messages and the Kigali Declaration**

### **Eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: summary, key messages and the Kigali Declaration**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), together with the Government of Rwanda and in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and entities of the United Nations system,<sup>1</sup> convened the eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development at the Kigali Conference Centre, in Kigali, in a hybrid format featuring both in-person and online participation, from 3 to 5 March 2022.

2. The Forum was attended by more than 1,800 participants, comprising ministers and high-level representatives of the Governments of 54 ECA member States, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders.

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\* ECA/RFSD/2022/1.

<sup>1</sup> The following entities of the United Nations system were involved as partners in that process: United Nations Development Coordination Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, United Nations Office to the African Union, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteers programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the World Food Programme.



3. The Forum was held against the backdrop of the continuing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has resulted in the loss of millions of lives. Recovery efforts to date have been uneven, inequitable and inadequately geared towards achieving sustainable development. COVID-19 continues to threaten to reverse decades of development gains, further delaying the urgent transition to greener, more inclusive economies. Prior to the outbreak, the Sustainable Development Goals were already off track, although some progress had been achieved in poverty reduction, maternal and child health, access to electricity, and gender equality. The eighth session of the Forum hence offered an opportunity to exchange good practices and devise solutions to accelerate and expand the scale of implementation within the narrow window of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

4. The eighth session was held on the theme: “Building forward better: a green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”. This theme is closely aligned with that of the 2022 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, namely: “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

## **II. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]**

5. The session was moderated by the journalist, Lerato Mbele, of South Africa. It was officially opened by the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Opening statements were delivered by the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and the Congo Basin of the Congo, and Chair of the seventh session of the Forum, Arlette Soudan-Nonault; the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe; the President of the Economic and Social Council, and Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations, Collen Kelapile; the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission, Josefa Sacko, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed.

6. Ms. Soudan-Nonault thanked the Government of Rwanda and in particular the President, Paul Kagame, for hosting the Forum and for his commitment to the leadership of Africa in transforming the continent. Noting that Rwanda was a model for the resilience and dignity of Africa, given its success in containing COVID-19, she called for strengthened regional solidarity. She highlighted key achievements of the outgoing Bureau of the Forum and called on the incoming Bureau to focus on a number of priorities, including funding mechanisms for sustainable recovery; the Great Green Wall and the Great Blue Wall for Africa; accelerated achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want, of the African Union; building the capacity of the young people and women of Africa in science, technology and innovation and green business; and gender equality and the empowerment of women and young people to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Ms. Songwe outlined recent positive achievements by Africa, including tremendous progress with vaccine acquisition and establishment of the Africa Medicines Agency, along with great strides in digital technology and operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area, although much remained to be done to arrest regression on the Sustainable Development Goals. Critical partnerships and intra-African cooperation were already being leveraged to that end. She congratulated African countries, including Rwanda and Kenya, which had been instrumental in the landmark decision on plastics at the 2022 session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. She called for support for African youth in the areas of intellectual property rights and innovation, which had high potential for job creation and development on the

continent. She urged member States to ensure that, at its twenty-seventh session, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would deliver for Africa, especially in regard to means of implementation and global consensus on carbon pricing, to reward Africa for its custody of global climate goods, such as the carbon sequestered in the Congo basin forest and its peatlands.

8. Mr. Kelapile said that the theme of the Forum perfectly matched the path that Africa should take to recover from the pandemic in a sustainable manner. He outlined five actions to achieve the desired sustainable recovery: first, overcoming COVID-19 by ensuring equitable access to lifesaving vaccines; second, ensuring that African countries had adequate fiscal space to finance COVID-19 recovery efforts; third, addressing the climate crisis and supporting Egypt in hosting a strong climate summit that delivered for Africa; fourth, decisively tackling the root causes of persistent inequalities within and between countries; and, fifth, making the African Continental Free Trade Area work for Africa. He reaffirmed the commitment of the Economic and Social Council to support for Africa and informed the Forum of the decision reached by the President of the General Assembly and himself to convene a special event soon on the development of Africa.

9. Ms. Sacko, representing the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, underlined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public health and economic advancement of Africa. She observed that those impacts offered an unprecedented opportunity for African countries to build back stronger and greener. She highlighted the African Union Green Recovery Plan, designed to support member States' efforts in key areas, including climate finance, renewable energy, nature-based solutions, resilient agriculture, and green and resilient cities. She outlined plans and progress made by the African Union Commission and its partners in preparation for the next climate summit, along with initiatives for the sustainable management and use of water resources. In conclusion, she called for practicable recommendations from the Forum at the current session and reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to implementing policy recommendations in partnership with ECA and other stakeholders.

10. Ms. Mohammed noted that the pandemic had caused disappointment for global solidarity and African economies, especially in education and health systems, worsened by insufficient access to the Internet and sustainable, affordable energy. She called on member States to focus on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, highlighting five priority areas for action: first, ending the pandemic and building resilience to future shocks; second, scaling up climate resilience, with developed countries honouring their pledges; third, just transitions in energy and food systems; fourth, recovering education losses; and fifth, supporting gender equality actions. She noted that Africa would determine the overall fate of the Goals, as it had the largest gaps. She welcomed the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, which could free up resources to invest in the Goals, and called on member States to prioritize the African Continental Free Trade Area, asking them and development partners to ensure that needed investments were realized.

11. Mr. Kagame noted that, while Africa had made significant socioeconomic progress, the pandemic had slowed development gains and reversed progress. Pandemic responses and recovery could serve as a springboard to accelerate progress and invest in human capital, building a greener, more resilient Africa, using the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 as a blueprint. He outlined three actions for consideration: building partnerships to strengthen African vaccine manufacturing capacity; prioritizing domestic resource mobilization to finance African development, in particular national health systems; and using the African Continental Free Trade Area to promote the adoption of sustainable technologies and infrastructure, supporting green

growth. Strong mechanisms to monitor progress and adjust implementation were essential, and he commended the Regional Forum for showcasing the benefits of national and subnational voluntary reviews of implementation. He stressed that building the Africa we want was on Africa, which had to own and lead the process.

### III. Summary and key messages

12. The following sections summarize the main issues, trends and key messages, including policy recommendations arising from the presentations and deliberations during the eighth session of the Regional Forum. The key messages comprise priorities, policy options and recommendations for Africa, to accelerate implementation at multiple levels, and the region's collective input to the 2022 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

#### A. High-level panel on unlocking financing to build forward better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis and accelerate delivery of sustainable development in Africa [agenda item 2]

##### 1. Discussion and trends

13. In the ensuing discussion, panellists noted that countries' pace of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic had been determined by their pre-pandemic macroeconomic performance. In that regard, Rwanda could be considered a model country, as it had invested heavily in information and communications technology (ICT) and had had a low level of debt prior to the pandemic.

14. They noted that, as Africa was losing \$88 billion annually in illicit financial flows, its liquidity crisis would not be resolved unless those flows were urgently staunched. In addition, over the past two decades, the continent's debt profile had shifted from concessional to commercial and bilateral sources. Concessional loans and debt relief initiatives mainly targeted low-income countries, but lower middle-income countries were also very vulnerable.

15. Young entrepreneurs were being held back by reduced access to information due to insufficient use of the latest technologies by policymakers. Access to finance from the formal sector posed another challenge for young entrepreneurs, especially women, as interest rates for financing were exorbitant, hampering investment and business prospects.

16. Lastly, participants suggested that the issue of bankability of projects could be addressed through the project preparation facility scheme of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank).

##### 2. Key messages

17. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Given the magnitude of post-pandemic financial needs in areas such as infrastructure and health; and as the pandemic has reversed hard earned gains over the last two decades, governments need to work in partnership with the private sector and international players such as the United Nations and multilateral banks to meet these urgent challenges;

(b) As the opportunity cost of women being sidelined is \$60 billion a year, gender parity should go beyond social fairness and human rights to include ownership of assets;

(c) Domestic resource mobilization is critical for sustainable development. Africa needs to address the issue of its liquidity crisis with a sense of urgency, recognizing its multiplier effect in supporting countries' risk profile and boosting their credibility;

(d) Governments should become enablers, not competitors, in creating a conducive environment for the private sector. To that end, empowering the private sector is vital, to enable Africa to take ownership of its development;

(e) As commodity dependence is a constraint and a risk, African countries are urged to switch to value addition and manufacturing to build forward better and reduce resource dependence;

(f) Governments are urged to undertake robust reforms on domestic markets to stimulate private sector development and access to finance in an inclusive manner;

(g) De-risking mechanisms must be identified to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and to lower interest rates;

(h) To reduce the cost of borrowing and to lower bank risks, use should be made of innovative schemes such as movable collateral registers and blended finance, a track record of credit information in support of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the provision of credit guarantees by policymakers;

(i) For small and medium-sized enterprises, there is need to incentivize the formalization process by providing good external finance to finance current expenditures and a tax grace period;

(j) No promising idea should be allowed to die for lack of funding and no one should be left behind.

## **B. Highlights of progress at the regional and subregional levels in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in the context of the COVID-19 crisis [agenda item 4]**

### **1. Discussion and trends**

18. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that, even though poverty had declined in Africa in general, food insecurity persisted in some subregions; energy remained inaccessible for half of all Africans and one third of the continent's people still had no access to the Internet.

19. While encouragement could be drawn from the achievement of Goal 13 on climate action by 40 countries, the continent had also recorded the highest annual rate of net forest loss. That process must be curbed if the planet was to be preserved and full advantage taken of the opportunities offered by carbon sequestration.

20. Participants stressed the need to improve regional resource mobilization as the ratio of domestic debt to gross domestic product (GDP) had increased, owing in part to reliance on raising resources from outside the continent. In addition, efforts must be made to promote the COVID-19 vaccination at the community level, thus also ensuring revival of the economy.

21. To better measure progress, additional capacity was needed for monitoring and evaluation and risk identification in national development plans. ECA and other institutions could be of great support if they intensified capacity-building in areas such as digitization and access to finance, which were vital to progress and attainment of the two agendas.

22. Participants stressed the need for each country to underpin its priorities with reliable information and to consider interconnections between the Sustainable Development Goals and their multiplier effects, ECA was urged to

support the development of appropriate tools. Spatial planning and a linked financial framework were highlighted as essential to achievement of the Goals. Fiscal space could be expanded in the light of successful African examples and public resources could leverage more resources from the private sector.

23. Lastly, participants noted major setbacks to peace at both subregional and regional levels, exacerbated by conflict and terrorism, and that a bare fourth of all Africans were satisfied with their governance systems. The nexus between security and development was broached, with a broad consensus on the links between them, in that there could be no development without security, and no security without development. Only inclusive growth would ensure that no one – no individual, group or subregion – would feel alienated and therefore resort to violence.

## **2. Key messages**

24. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Member States should make efforts to align national development plans with both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and use the integrated planning and reporting toolkit to facilitate, quantify and deepen the alignment of both frameworks;

(b) Member States should make the African Continental Free Trade Area work for regional cooperation and use it as a key mechanism for industrialization, enabling them to compete at not only the regional but also the global level, leveraging the opportunities that the Area provides to pool resources and spread the benefits across the continent;

(c) Member States are urged to promote nature conservation as one of the continent's greatest assets, with transformative potential, as a source of wealth, in particular through the monetization of carbon sequestration;

(d) Member States are urged to capitalize on digitalization to unlock the potential of education, health, social protection and trade;

(e) Member States, ECA and other development partners, including Afreximbank and the African Development Bank, are requested to invest in capacity-building and tools in support of implementation, including access to finance, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063;

(f) Member States are urged to enhance regional cooperation and domestic resource mobilization and use their special drawing rights recently approved by the International Monetary Fund in innovative ways as development levers that could be catalytic for attainment of the development goals.

## **C. Plenary round-table panel on boosting the generation and use of data and statistics to build forward better and accelerate delivery of sustainable development in Africa [agenda item 5]**

### **1. Discussion and trends**

(a) As a result of the general shortage of financing for statistical systems, Africa was not prepared for the adverse shocks caused by COVID-19.

(b) Long-term underinvestment in data and statistics had resulted in structural challenges and issues with data quality and analysis methodologies that needed to be addressed urgently. Some legal frameworks also needed to be reviewed to ensure compliance.

(c) National statistical offices needed support with using new technology.

(d) Cost-effective data production required stronger collaboration among key stakeholders in the private and public sectors. National statistical offices could produce all the data required for policymaking. Partnerships between official and non-official data producers needed to be reinforced.

(e) Young statisticians needed to play a bigger role by driving modernization and innovation and applying technology to ensure that policies designed to achieve Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 were evidence-based.

(f) African countries needed to improve data interoperability; consult and integrate data generated by non-governmental organizations and other development operators; and synchronize and harmonize databases produced by various agencies and players.

## 2. Key messages

25. In the light of the discussion, the Forum urged Member States:

(a) To harmonize and integrate their statistical systems; to strengthen partnerships with civil-society organizations, the private sector, academia and unofficial data producers; and to ensure that there is constant communication between national statistics offices and the private and public sectors.

(b) To develop frameworks for quality assurance to be performed on non-official data and to develop legal frameworks for key stakeholders to share data among each other.

(c) To create an environment that is conducive to young statisticians supporting the modernization of national statistical systems for reporting on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Young statisticians should be at the centre of statistical development strategies through innovation, the development information and communications technology capabilities, and the creation of a competitive environment that is conducive to their professional development.

## D. Plenary round-table panels on national and subnational actions and reviews to build forward better and accelerate delivery of sustainable development in Africa [agenda item 6]

### 1. Voluntary national reviews and peer learning to strengthen country-level interventions [agenda item 6 (a)]

#### (a) Discussion and trends

26. Panellists discussed the voluntary national review process carried out in their countries; how it contributed to policymaking and implementation; and how to link global and regional goals to the national context. They reported on progress towards achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, drawing on best practices from Africa and beyond, and highlighted the challenges that they faced as part of the review process. Experiences were shared by countries conducting voluntary national reviews for the first or second time. International partners and young Africans also shared their perspectives on the review process.

#### (b) Key messages

27. In the light of the discussion, member States are urged to:

(a) Collaborate with other countries in the region to build on and learn from best practices;

(b) Put mechanisms in place to reach women, youth and civil society organizations to help ensure that reviews are grounded in real experiences;

- (c) Incorporate feedback from stakeholders and communities on previous reviews to improve the implementation of subsequent reviews;
- (d) Prioritize reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals that are most relevant to national priorities, and use the reviews to mobilize awareness of and interest in those Goals, while recognizing that other Goals cannot be ignored;
- (e) Embed accountability by Governments to civil society organizations and other groups within the review process;
- (f) Prioritize education as it relates to children, the vulnerable, social inclusion, human capital and other vital areas;
- (g) Assist in particular certain groups, such as children, that have fallen further behind owing to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (h) Focus on building capacity to collect accurate and timely data, and build interactive dashboards to display those data;
- (i) Build on the reviews to ensure that it does not end with just a one-off report, but serves as a springboard for an ongoing process;
- (j) Incorporate other important issues into the review process, such as governance;
- (k) Use the reviews as a tool to link national development plan activities to the programmes of the United Nations and other partners in the country, with a view to optimizing the delivery of services;
- (l) Use the review process as a tool to mobilize donor support and domestic budgetary resources for specific sectors and activities.

**2. Voluntary subnational reviews and peer learning to bolster local action**  
[agenda item 6 (b)]

**(a) Discussion and trends**

28. Panellists discussed the extent to which the two agendas had been localized and the role that voluntary local reviews had played in delivering the services needed to make human settlements sustainable. The session brought together mayors of localities that were preparing to conduct reviews. It was highlighted that voluntary local reviews were crucial to the ability of localities to ensure transparency and inclusiveness.

**(b) Key messages**

29. In the light of the discussion, member States are requested:

- (a) To scale up efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 to foster a sense of ownership at all levels of society, including through community institutions;
- (b) To institutionalize national-local partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogue in voluntary local reviews, engaging, in particular, with national associations of local government;
- (c) To strengthen institutional mechanisms to engage local governments in regional and global agendas and to take note of recommendations made by the advisory group on local and regional governments that the Secretary-General has planned to establish as part of the common agenda of the United Nations system;
- (d) To prioritize the involvement of women, young people and other stakeholders at all stages of voluntary local reviews to deepen ownership, integration and delivery on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
- (e) To leverage voluntary local review processes to identify,



implement and accelerate interventions for local development and inform the design and revision of existing strategies and plans;

(f) To enhance the knowledge, skills and financial capacities of local and regional governments, including in terms of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and voluntary local reviews;

(g) To strengthen the disaggregation of data relating to Sustainable Development Goal indicators at the subnational level to facilitate local progress reviews and the targeting of interventions and investments required to accelerate progress;

(h) To take urgent action to plan and manage urbanization and human settlements for sustainability as part of the New Urban Agenda, taking advantage of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, to be held on 28 April 2022, to galvanize momentum and action;

(i) To strengthen engagement in the high-level political forum on sustainable development and put forward strong arguments regarding the importance of urban and human settlement as key elements for the overall implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the critical role of voluntary local reviews in this regard;

(j) To place housing and basic services at the core of the implementation of global and regional commitments and to mobilize the power of cities to accelerate implementation of the Paris Agreement.

30. The United Nations is requested:

(a) To disseminate its regional guidelines for voluntary local reviews at the local and national levels to support subnational authorities in conducting such reviews and to ensure common reporting across all localities while ensuring strong linkages to voluntary national reporting;

(b) To scale up support for subnational reviews by promoting the uptake of the guidelines for voluntary local reviews in Africa, including among smaller localities and those with resource constraints.

## **E. Parallel meetings for an in-depth review of progress made and peer learning on the sub-themes of the Regional Forum [agenda item 7]**

### **1. Parallel meeting on the sub-theme of quality education [agenda item 7 (a)]**

#### **(a) Discussion and trends**

31. The quality of teaching, learning and training needed to be improved across the education system.

32. Investment in early childhood education urgently needed to be increased.

33. Technical and vocational education and training needed to be made relevant to the labour market.

34. Greater partnership with the private sector was needed to provide, design, finance and implement training programmes.

35. Digital transformation needed to be leveraged to accelerate the achievement of Goal 4.

36. Education needed additional and more diversified financing.

37. Education systems needed to be stronger to meet the diverse needs of learners, with education becoming more inclusive and addressing the digital

divide, gender inequality and the needs of persons with disabilities or vulnerabilities.

**(b) Key messages**

38. In the light of the discussion, the Forum urged member States:

(a) To improve inclusive quality education, with a focus on learning outcomes, including in early childhood education;

(b) To strengthen the relevance of training programmes to reduce the mismatch between training and the labour market, including through public-private partnerships;

(c) To improve the information system used to formulate education policies and to integrate a labour-management information system into education;

(d) To leverage digital transformation to accelerate the achievement of Goal 4.

**2. Parallel meeting on the sub-theme of gender equality [agenda item 7 (b)]**

**(a) Discussion and trends**

39. During the discussion, participants noted that member States needed to prioritize actions that addressed the intersection between climate change, disaster risks, and gender equality and women's empowerment. Specifically, they needed to invest in strengthening social protection systems, improving education and introducing measures to address the impacts of gender-based violence, including in conflict zones and humanitarian work.

40. Strategic partnerships between the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders were important to support member States in delivering national gender equality and achieving their women's empowerment priorities. The United Nations system was well poised to catalyse implementation of the Goals leverage its position to garner political commitment for gender equality and women's empowerment to be achieved in full.

41. Grass-roots movements were crucial to bring about transformational change. Youth movements and networks that championed the priorities of young women needed to be established and strengthened. Participants called upon United Nations entities and the African Union to invest in young people to ensure inclusive engagement in the formulation and implementation of policies to address climate change.

42. The coherent implementation of Goal 5 and of aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 was crucial for a sustainable and inclusive Africa. For the two agendas to be successfully implemented at the national level, member States needed:

(a) To translate the Goals into quantitative national objectives and benchmarks;

(b) To integrate the Goals into medium- to long-term national strategies and plans and align them with the Goals;

(c) To ensure the availability of human and financial resources to facilitate successful implementation;

(d) To adopt whole-of-society and whole-of government approaches to building ownership of the two agendas.

**(b) Key messages**

43. In the light of the discussion, the Forum urged Member States:

(a) To strengthen institutional arrangements to enhance implementation of commitments on gender equality and women's

empowerment;

(b) To align gender-responsive policies and programmes with Sustainable Development Goal 5 and with aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063;

(c) To ensure that there was sustainable financing for gender-responsive climate adaptation measures and that the commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment set out in the Goals were fulfilled;

(d) To accompany the political will at different levels with a larger-scale, coordinated financing mechanism to support implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment priorities at all levels;

(e) To strengthen the evidence for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda through better gender data, statistics and analysis to effectively monitor progress among women and girls across all goals and targets. It was important to enhance the role of national statistical offices in generating and applying research-based information and gender- and sex-disaggregated data to support the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(f) To strengthen partnerships that were broad-based, inclusive and coordinated and that were key drivers of sustainable development and the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, which would require the strategic engagement of member States, the African Union, regional economic communities, civil society organizations, traditional and community leaders, and the United Nations development system;

(g) To ensure policy coherence at all levels so that women and girls were protected from the shocks of climate change;

(h) To support the perspectives of young people, especially women, which were essential to strengthen accountability and outcomes regarding implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(i) To ensure that women were effectively involved in decision-making on climate change at the local, national and international levels;

(j) To continue to prioritize gender as a cross-cutting consideration in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

### **3. Parallel meeting on the sub-theme of life below water [agenda item 7 (c)]**

#### **(a) Discussion and trends**

44. It was noted that progress towards attaining Sustainable Development Goal 14 was being constrained by the following factors:

(a) Limited financial resources and related institutional mobilization capacity;

(b) Continuing cascading risks, and climate change-related threats to the marine sector and communities, especially in small island developing States and coastal areas;

(c) Limited capitalization on the many synergies among the Goals and between the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(d) Insufficient support for innovations, youth entrepreneurship, production of marine data and marine science.

#### **(b) Key messages**

45. In the light of the discussion, member States and development partners are urged to:

(a) Build capacity to mobilize sustainable finance, including through debt-for-nature swaps and the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, to support

the implementation of a sustainable and inclusive blue economy;

(b) Strengthen partnerships to embrace and fund implementation of the Great Blue Wall in support of coastal and marine restoration and protection;

(c) Push for developed countries to honour the promise of providing \$100 billion per year for climate action by the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and dedicate a significant amount of those resources to supporting coastal adaptation, protection and resilience plans;

(d) Increase investment in marine data, science, technologies and youth entrepreneurship.

#### **4. Parallel meeting on the sub-theme of life on land [agenda item 7 (d)]**

##### **(a) Discussion and trends**

46. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that socioeconomic development could not be carried out at the expense of the environment, since land, forests and biodiversity resources were essential for the attainment of all the development goals. They underpinned economic growth, job creation, response to climate change and recovery and resilience building.

47. They further noted that countries were making progress towards achievement of Goal 15 and the corresponding goal 7 of Agenda 2063. Scaled up efforts were needed, however, to accelerate implementation and to combat such trends as the continued degradation of forests, land and biodiversity resources.

48. Financing remained a serious constraint to the implementation of relevant policies and plans and countries and partners needed to honour their pledges towards climate action and the sustainable management of natural resources. Insecurity and conflicts were also driving the degradation of forest resources.

49. They called for system-wide approaches and a strengthened focus on agriculture and green value chains development, in order to generate green jobs, in particular for youth and women. Attention was drawn to the opportunities provided by post-2020 biodiversity framework for progress towards sustainable forest, land and biodiversity management and to the business opportunities linked to such management, which needed to be identified and harnessed.

##### **(b) Key messages**

50. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Governments and partners should strengthen and scale up the valuation of natural capital and the mainstreaming of biodiversity, nature-based solutions and climate-friendly agriculture and disaster risk reduction in voluntary national reviews and development plans and budgets;

(b) Governments and the private sector need to increase investments to combat land degradation and enhance the productivity and sustainability of land, forests and biodiversity resources for inclusive green growth;

(c) ECA and the United Nations system as a whole should help to establish a truly developmental carbon market on the continent to contribute to increasing job creation, while also contributing to attainment of the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the sustainable management of forests and biodiversity;

(d) Member States should strengthen public and private partnerships and coordination, and effectively implement policies, national plans and legislative frameworks for the sustainable management of land, forests and

biodiversity at scale;

(e) Governments and partners need to strengthen their capacity to mobilize funding for the sustainable management of land, forests and biodiversity conservation and for COVID-19 recovery by exploring new and innovate sources such as the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility designed by ECA and partners; debt swaps for biodiversity and sustainability; and green and blue bonds;

(f) Governments are urged to strengthen national One Health approaches to attain optimal health for people, animals and ecosystems and better contain future pandemics;

(g) Governments, the private sector and partners need to implement fully the Nairobi Declaration adopted at the seventh High-level Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction in November 2021, to reduce disaster risk and build resilience, including through biodiversity conservation and nature-based solutions;

(h) Member States should endeavour to empower women, youth, indigenous people and local communities by strengthening and enforcing resource tenure rights and enhancing access to finance, to achieve inclusive wealth creation and the sustainable management of forest and biodiversity resources, and also to manage natural resource-based conflicts and disputes;

(i) Governments should strengthen research, development and innovation and better integrate environmental data and statistics in national statistical systems.

## **5. Parallel meeting on the sub-theme of partnerships [agenda item 7 (e)]**

### **(a) Discussion and trends**

51. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that flows of official development assistance to Africa had not resulted in significant development outcomes for the continent and that Africa needed extended partnerships and a stronger sense of ownership of its development agenda. To that end, African Governments needed to cultivate an environment conducive to fostering more effective partnerships.

52. They also regretted that national ownership of such powerful instruments as the African Continental Free Trade Area, a tool for attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 17, had been reduced by the failure of some member States to sign those instruments. Increased research and training in macroeconomic modelling could support a more enhanced understanding of the benefits of the Area.

53. They called for the further mobilization of partnerships to finance efforts in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby incentivising the private sector to provide much needed finance and investments. The public sector alone could not finance the continent's development agenda.

54. They noted the need for strengthened domestic resource mobilization, including through the recovery of capital from illicit financial flows, which currently amounted to almost \$90 billion annually, and the growing need for investment in data collection to inform evidence-based policymaking, and also for increased investments in capacity-building and capacity needs assessment.

**(b) Key messages**

55. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

- (a) Member States are urged to:
  - (i) Foster enhanced partnerships premised on peace and development and also on a shared understanding of the vision and aspirations of Africa enshrined in Agenda 2063, anchored on institutional trust, ethics and ownership;
  - (ii) Accelerate efforts on debt management, the removal of intellectual property rights to essential assets such as vaccines, and the lifting of barriers obstructing the free movement of people;
  - (iii) Reassess partnerships established thus far to ensure that all partners are well aligned and moving towards the same goal;
  - (iv) Invest in data-based evidence on the effectiveness of partnerships and evaluation of Governments' levels of accountability;
  - (v) Analyse data and trends on migration;
  - (vi) Promote appropriate and innovative tools and frameworks, including integrated national financing frameworks, for greater efficiency and efficacy in resources management and the allocation of financing for the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - (vii) Strengthen domestic resource mobilization by accelerating digitalization and closing loopholes in tax policy and administration, combating illicit financial flows and formulating governance and inclusive policies aimed at enhancing accountability and transparency, combating corruption, supporting participation and putting in place enabling legal and judicial regulatory frameworks;
- (b) ECA, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and their partners are urged to support African countries in building their capacity in the areas of early warning systems, disaster risk reduction and the management of national and global health risks.

**F. Plenary round-table panel on leveraging science, technology, innovation and digital transformation to build forward better from the COVID-19 crisis and accelerate delivery of sustainable development in Africa [agenda item 8]****1. Discussion and trends**

56. In the ensuing discussion, participants expressed the importance of the continent developing effective teaching and learning techniques and technologies for delivery of training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics at pre-tertiary levels. They appealed to member States to put in place relevant infrastructure, legal and regulatory systems and support measures. To that end, they called upon countries and development partners to support and join the Alliance of Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa and the Technology Development and Transfer Network in Rwanda.

57. While digital technologies were incredibly important in every aspect of life, participants expressed concern that a large proportion of society might be left behind owing to limited digital literacy and access to support infrastructure (e.g. energy), informality of businesses, outdated public procurement systems, and complex cross-border trade rules.

## 2. Key messages

58. In the light of the discussion, member States and their partners are urged:

(a) To work closely to strengthen or establish national councils (or equivalent institutions) on science, technology and innovation that are chaired at the highest levels of Government for continuous, time-bound and realistic science, technology and innovation dialogues, leadership, support, monitoring and evaluation, as it is recognized that countries that made significant strides in exploiting science, technology and innovation for development had such institutions, which enabled them to position these areas as key enablers for sustainable development;

(b) To enhance the effectiveness of the science, technology and innovation policy formulation and implementation processes by establishing mechanisms for stronger partnerships and engagement with academia, industry and government, and a rigorous and verifiable monitoring and evaluation framework to achieve African aspirations and the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(c) To raise the expenditure on research and development to a minimum of 1 per cent of gross domestic product, which will require countries to invest in and attract knowledge-intensive firms that are likely to perform research and development to remain competitive and innovative; Rwanda seeks to meet this target by 2024;

(d) To strengthen science, technology, engineering and mathematics approaches in education and attract more young people to such fields in order to significantly raise the number of scientists, researchers and engineers who will drive the required innovation and creativity on the continent, and create more opportunities for young people to develop in the tech industry and to contribute to science, technology and innovation policy formulation;

(e) To increase women's access to science, technology and innovation to break down gender barriers;

(f) To support research to understand and design measures to mitigate the impact of climate change and human activities on oceans and water bodies, given the importance of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and noting the need for member States to support the implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy and the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy, as Africa will reap economic benefits from the ocean;

(g) To operationalize the international framework for open science outlined in the Recommendation on Open Science of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to enhance the efficiency, inclusivity, reliability and responsiveness of science to societal challenges in Africa and to increase the access of early researchers to be able to publish in indigenous languages;

(h) To harness new forms of advanced materials, biosciences and intelligent systems to restore and improve land productivity, recognizing the importance of land and the numerous ecosystems in Africa.

## G. Presentations and discussions on sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 [agenda item 9]

### 1. Discussion and trends

59. In the ensuing discussion, participants affirmed that international cooperation was imperative for a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19

crisis. They noted that the vaccine inequity between poor and developed countries was partly caused by the infrastructure gap in Africa.

60. In addition, insufficient investment in the green economy was identified as a significant shortcoming in COVID-19 response interventions in many African countries, along with the absence of planning and budgetary frameworks commensurate with the challenges of climate change impacts. They called for urgent measures to alleviate debt distress in African countries, which was severely hampering response to the pandemic and socioeconomic recovery from the crisis.

## **2. Key messages**

61. In the light of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Development partners and the United Nations should boost international cooperation to enable African countries to vaccinate their entire population by the end of July 2022;

(b) The United Nations and other development partners are urged to advocate the lifting all restrictions in order to allow equal access to vaccines on the continent by leveraging endogenous initiatives and solutions;

(c) Member States must put in place budgetary policies sensitive to the green economy and climate effects to ensure a sustainable post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery;

(d) With a view to enabling the continent to participate actively in the next meeting of the high-level political forum in July 2022, the meeting should be held in hybrid mode and sufficient time should be allowed for interventions.

## **H. Presentations of commitments and actions to accelerate delivery of sustainable development [agenda item 10]**

62. *To be completed in consultation with Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum after the adoption of the report.*

## **I. Consideration and adoption of key messages and the Kigali Declaration [agenda item 11]**

63. *To be completed in consultation with Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum after the adoption of the report.*

## **J. Theme, dates and venue of the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development [agenda item 12]**

64. *To be completed in consultation with Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum after the adoption of the report.*

## **K. Other matters [agenda item 13]**

65. *To be completed in consultation with Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum after the adoption of the report.*

## **L. Closing of the session [agenda item 14]**

66. *To be completed in consultation with Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum after the adoption of the report.*



## Annex

### Kigali Declaration

*We, African ministers, and senior officials responsible for environment and sustainable development, finance, economic and social development, agriculture, education, justice, statistics, the digital economy, science and technology, heads and members of delegations of the parliaments of African Union member States and experts representing Governments and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society,*

*Gathered online and in-person in Kigali from 3 to 5 March 2022 at the eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held under the theme of “Building forward better: a green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063” and placed under the high patronage of the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame,*

*Expressing our gratitude to the President and Government of Rwanda for having hosted the Forum and having ensured that all the necessary conditions were in place for the successful completion of its work, which was marked by fruitful and high-quality discussions on the monitoring and evaluation of the progress achieved, the exchange of experiences in the area of sustainable development in Africa, and the formulation of key messages aimed at accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,*

*Considering that the health and socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic rolled back efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in developing countries, and that the diverging paths to recovery from the pandemic between developed and developing countries could mean longer periods of recovery for developing countries,*

*Considering also the disproportionate impact of climate change on the African continent given its low-carbon footprint, the role of the continent in capturing greenhouse gases, and its needs to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change,*

*Recalling and reaffirming the Brazzaville Declaration, adopted at the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on sustainable Development,*

*Noting the need for scaled up and sustainable finance for an inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and accelerated delivery of sustainable development in Africa,*

*Welcoming the establishment of the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility as mechanism for improving market access for African countries and, in particular, for crowding in private-sector investment in the green recovery of the continent,*

*Welcoming the launch of the Alliance of Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa and the African Technology Development and Transfer Network, which have been established to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices among academic and research institutions across the continent,*

*Expressing support for the ongoing process, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, of developing a post-2020 global biodiversity framework as a global policy framework for achieving accelerated action and transformative pathways for biodiversity and sustainable development,*

1. *Reiterate our commitment to accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, including through ensuring a green and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic on the continent, aligned with the objectives of the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals;*

2. *Demand* that developed countries facilitate equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines to enable African countries to recover faster from the COVID-19 pandemic, through inter alia: a moratorium on the application to developing countries of Articles 65 and 66, on transitional arrangements and least-developed country members, respectively, of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights; and technical assistance to improve supply chains efficiency, technology transfer and manufacturing capacity;

3. *Urge* African countries to link mutually-reinforcing policies for sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery to ensure an inclusive emergence from the pandemic, in line with the tenets of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

4. *Call upon* African countries, pan-African institutions, the United Nations and development partners to invest more in the generation of statistics that are relevant and timely, to inform national, regional and global development agendas, leveraging opportunities provided by new data sources, geospatial technologies, the United Nations global platform on big data for official statistics and regional data hubs in Africa, to facilitate capacity-development and the modernization of the national statistical systems of countries in Africa, involving young people in the decision-making processes relating to the sustainable development agenda;

5. *Call upon* African countries to leverage new tools, innovative solutions and technology, including through enhanced partnerships with the private sector, academia, non-governmental and civil-society organizations and others, to build strong, agile, sustainable and resilient national statistical systems;

6. *Invite* African countries to invest in developing more resilient education systems and to adopt resilient and risk-informed approaches to planning in the education sector, and to prioritize digital connectivity and capacities to achieve learning for all and skills development;

7. *Call upon* African countries to strengthen institutional arrangements, including gender-inclusive national strategies, to enhance national ownership and responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and accountability of the gender-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in all sectors and at all levels of government;

8. *Also call upon* African countries to strengthen their institutional capacities to enforce laws and regulations on the sustainable use of marine resources, to open up new opportunities for gender-sensitive and inclusive blue entrepreneurship, innovation, finance, value-chains and trade, and to support the “Great Blue Wall” initiative to build climate-resilient societies and economies;

9. *Call upon* the entities of the United Nations system, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other partners to strengthen the capacity of African countries to leverage the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility and other innovative financing mechanisms, including green and blue bonds and debt swaps for biodiversity and sustainable development;

10. *Call upon* African countries and their development partners to strengthen the capacity of the region to incorporate and increase investment in sustainable biodiversity and land management within national, subregional and regional development frameworks;

11. *Call upon* all parties to the Glasgow Climate Pact to establish an ambitious and reasonable price for carbon, aligned with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, to allow developing countries in Africa and elsewhere to

mobilize adequate financial resources to meet their climate commitments, including those made through the nationally determined contributions and Paris Agreement, while accelerating progress on towards the Sustainable Development Goals and allowing African countries to fully benefit from their natural heritage;

12. *Call upon* the entities of the United Nations system to build the capacity of the countries of the Congo Basin to deliver funding for sustainable development through the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin to support the implementation by these countries of their nationally determined contributions, to estimate their capacity for carbon sequestration, and develop livelihoods that are linked to the subregion's unique natural capital;

13. *Call for* the adoption of reforms to the international financial architecture that integrate innovative financing mechanisms that are initiated and led by African countries to ensure African debt sustainability and to support the development of nature-based solutions and a green and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;

14. *Call for* renewed vigour on the part of African Governments, the entities of the United Nations system and development partners in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, including with regard to strengthening opportunities to improve domestic resource mobilization through sustainable budgeting principles that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the Paris Agreement, and for renewed global solidarity in respect of public investment in the implementation of these agendas, on the basis of the principle of leaving no one behind;

15. *Reaffirm* that developed countries must honour their commitment to pay \$100 billion annually to help developing countries respond to the cascading threats of climate change to the land, water and oceanic resources of Africa and to mitigate the impact on African economic growth and on livelihoods of its people;

16. *Urge* African countries to leverage the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement to support the development of regional value chains, especially those for minerals used in the production of batteries and electric vehicles, to enable African countries to capture more value along global value chains;

17. *Also urge* African countries to increase their investments in research and development to at least the 1 per cent of gross domestic product, as recommended by the African Union, to boost their capacity to generate technologies and innovations in the marine and digital domains, to support sustainable the use of land and water ecosystems, and to build climate- and disasters-resilient economies and societies, including through research and development in the medical and health sectors, to reduce their vulnerability and foster the economic transformation of their economies and improve the lives and livelihoods of their peoples;

18. *Further urge* African countries to increase investment in the building of foundational skills for education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and to establish centres of excellence to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices;

19. *Call upon* all countries to implement the key messages adopted at the eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;

20. *Request* the Government of Rwanda to present the key messages on behalf of Africa: at the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in New York from 5 to 15 July 2022; at the twenty-seventh

session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and at other subregional, regional and global forums convened to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

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