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VIRTUAL WORKSHOP FOR CENTRAL, NORTHERN AND WESTERN AFRICA SUB-REGIONS

Strengthening the nexus approach in Africa for an accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063

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Welcoming remarks by

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Thank you Mr. Hamamand, Your Excellency from the "Chinese Permanent Mission,

Excellences,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join our esteemed colleagues in welcoming all of you to this virtual workshop on Strengthening the nexus approach in Africa for an accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 for the Southern and Eastern Africa Sub-regions. I bring you warm greetings from the Executive Secretary of ECA, Ms. Vera Songwe who fully supports this initiative and our cherished collaboration with OSAA and other partners on this project and several others.

I would like to start by thanking our colleagues at the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA) for organising this very timely workshop.

The inter-linkages between peace, security, humanitarian action and development cannot be over-emphasized. Peace is the foundation of development. As the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan once noted, "without peace, without security, good governance and the rule of law, no amount of resources, no amount of charity can set Africa on the path of prosperity and sustainable growth and development".

Yet, peace remains fragile and elusive in many African countries. The resurgence of military rule in some parts of the Continent suggests that the democratic process remains tenuous and a democratic culture that makes for negotiation, consensus, and citizens participation in decision making is yet to take firm root in several African countries.

Elections do not approximate democracy; its is more than that. It's about a culture of participation, accountability, rule of law, respect for institutions and processes, service delivery and eschewing corruption.

Conflicts continue to impose heavy toll on Africa with humanitarian challenges of internally displaced persons, refugees, disruption of livelihood for millions of people and the exacerbation of poverty and inequality. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its 2020 Yearbook, "there were at least 15 countries with active armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2019. Eight were low intensity, subnational armed conflicts, and seven were high intensity armed conflicts", in addition, "there were 20 multilateral peace operations active in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2019 including several large scale peace operations in countries that were experiencing armed conflicts like CAR, the DRC, Mali, Somalia, and South Sudan". The Sahel region remains quite fragile with the flow of small arms and light weapons and the debilitating activities of armed groups. Undoubtedly, neither Agenda 2030 nor Agenda 2063 can be realised in an environment of conflicts and instability.

The COVID 19 pandemic has further exacerbated the socio-economic vulnerabilities of African countries, which could be conflict triggers. It is estimated that about 32 million people were pushed into poverty in 2020 and likely to increase to 39 million in 2021. Fiscal revenue loss for African countries was estimated at about 20-30% at around $500 billion, while Africa's GDP contracted by no less than 5% in 2020. Both the formal and informal sectors lost over 20 million jobs in 2020. Foreign direct investment declined by about 15%. This excruciating socio-economic conditions have propensity for generating conflicts in African countries.

As a knowledge policy institution, ECA seeks to contribute to innovative thinking and policy formulation and implementation in addressing Africa's development challenges especially on how to accelerate the process of achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. It is in this context, that ECA conducted and (which includes our five sub-

regional offices) recently completed four sub-regional studies on the *"Inter-linkages between the Development, Peace and Security, Human Rights and Humanitarian Pillars"*. The studies sought to interrogate and analyse the inter-linkages between the pillars in the various sub-regions with the aim of promoting the joint implementation of interventions in the four pillars in contributing to effective and lasting solutions to conflicts. The findings will also contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda in the context of the AU-UN cooperation frameworks.

These studies were commissioned against the background of 2015, when African countries signed up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which embodies the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aims to leave no one behind, as well as the African Union's Agenda 2063, a blueprint and masterplan for Africa's transformation and sustainable development.

On its part, OSAA, through its advocacy and analytical work, continues to highlight emerging and persisting challenges on the nexus in Africa, among others, through the Secretary-General's annual report on the Causes of Conflict and Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa.

The First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, outlines a set of goals, priority areas and targets that the continent aims to achieve at national, regional and continental levels.The first continental level report published last year indicated a weak performance under Aspiration 1 of the Agenda; *A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development*, and Aspiration 3 *on good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law*.

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Africa is not yet on track to achieving them by 2030, with the COVID 19 pandemic setting back the modest gains recorded by many African countries. While the region has made notable progress in education,

health and other social outcomes, the pace of poverty reduction is slow, and inclusive growth remains elusive. Major gaps exist in the areas of employment and decent jobs, as well as gender equality. These indices adversely affect the continent's efforts to leverage the demographic dividend. Thus, overall, actions to meet the SDGs have not advanced at the speed or scale required.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to speed up progress, in 2019, the UN Secretary-General, called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a "decade of action" to accelerate sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges — ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and closing the financing gap. With only 9 years left to 2030, the year 2021 is considered pivotal to usher in a decade of ambitious action to deliver the Goals by 2030. In the context of Africa, alongside actions to achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals, it is imperative to promote and preserve peace and work towards combating conflicts within and across our borders. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from gender-based violence and other abuses and violations of their human rights, both during and after armed conflicts. The continent must be rid of all forms of conflicts, human rights violations and humanitarian disasters. Only then will Africa be peaceful, prosperous and integrated, and take its rightful place on the global stage.

The wide-ranging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including on the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals, amply demonstrated the need for interlinkages approaches in dealing with multifaceted challenges. Needless to say, recovery efforts should seek to achieve the transformative goals of both Agendas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations and the African Union realise the importance of strong collaboration and partnership, not only in ending conflicts but in promoting durable peace, stability, coordinated humanitarian action and accelerated development in Africa. It was within this context that in 2017, the UN and the AU signed the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (the Peace and Security Framework), and in 2018, the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the Development Framework). Worthy of note is that the Development Framework includes a thematic area on the nexus between peace and security, human rights and development.

The joint African Union-United Nations Framework on Human Rights is expected to be signed soon. Additionally, there exists a memorandum of understanding on Humanitarian Action between the African Union Commission and the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).Therefore, the significance of the African Union as a strategic partner of the United Nations, particularly in regard to the realization of interlinked objectives of the four pillars, cannot be overstated. The African Union and United Nations reforms provide ample opportunity for enhanced coordination and collaboration not only at regional and subregional levels, but at the national level as well.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The baseline assessment studies that we will be reviewing during this workshop, along with the draft training manual, were

informed by extensive desk reviews, questionnaire surveys and focussed interviews.

At the same time, ECA's four sub-regional reports will be published as standalone documents which will feed into the regional OSAA study. Our team, which includes very able consultants and experts will highlight the outcomes of the ECA studies during this workshop.

In the final analysis, it is your countries, along with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Secretariat of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) who will be the primary beneficiaries of the sub-regional studies, the OSAA baseline study and the training manual.

Therefore, we call on you to use this platform for robust deliberations, to identify gaps, provide comments and inputs and propose recommendations prior to finalization of the documents. This workshop also provides you with the opportunity to share experiences, including good practices and lessons in promoting an interlinked approach to conflict prevention and resolution. I am confident that your deliberations will produce useful inputs and recommendations.

Once again, please allow me to thank our partners and collaborators (The People's Republic of China, OSAA, OHRLLS, etc.) in the overall process. I would especially like to laud the partnership with OSAA and the Department of Global Communications (DGC), which together with ECA forms the tripod of Programme 9 of the UN under whose auspices the studies were conducted. I would also like to recognize the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office on the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) as important collaborators in this

process. Through this project, we hope to contribute towards raising awareness of, and strengthen capacities of countries in the regions covered by the study. The studies could not have been conducted without the collaboration of the African Union, regional and subregional organizations, member States, non-governmental organizations, and other sister UN agencies. Thank you all for your support.

We wish you all a successful workshop.

Thank you for your kind attention.