



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)
President of the Economic and Social Council

Africa Day at the 2025 HLPF

23 July 2025

Excellencies,
Distinguished Ministers,
Colleagues and Friends,

It is a privilege to join you for Africa Day at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum. I thank the African Union Commission, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, and all co-organizers for convening this timely and vital gathering.

Africa Day at the HLPF is more than a symbolic occasion—it is a platform to amplify African voices and ensure that Africa remains central to our global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Simply put: we only succeed globally if we succeed in Africa.

The launch of the 2025 Africa Sustainable Development Report today provides essential insights into the continent's achievements and the challenges that remain. We must recognize the resilience and leadership of African countries in advancing the SDGs, even amid climate change, economic disruption, and conflict.

Yet despite this resilience, the data is sobering. Only 35% of SDG targets are on track globally, and in Africa, a \$200 billion annual financing gap persists. We must redouble our efforts.

I am hopeful that the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla will deliver tangible results. The Sevilla Commitment includes a pledge to double support for domestic resource mobilization by 2030 and a renewed focus on debt transparency. These are important steps, even if many African countries had hoped for more decisive action on debt restructuring.

Africa loses over \$500 billion annually to illicit financial flows and inefficiencies. More than 60% of African countries spend more on debt servicing than on health



care. Strengthening domestic revenue systems is essential to empowering the developmental role of the state.

But let us also be clear: Africa is not standing still. The continent is moving forward—with innovation, resilience, and ambition. The African Continental Free Trade Area holds immense potential for regional integration and value retention, and intra-African trade has increased by 17% since 2018.

When I visited Kampala for the Eleventh Africa Regional Forum, I witnessed firsthand the energy and clarity of African leadership. The Kampala Declaration offers a bold roadmap—emphasizing value addition in agriculture and mining, investment in youth and women, and innovative financing, including green and blue bonds, diaspora bonds, and climate finance tailored to Africa’s needs.

I was especially moved by the determination of Africa’s youth. They are not asking for permission to lead—they are claiming their right to shape a dignified, just, and sustainable future.

As we look ahead, let us ensure that the outcomes of Africa Day inform our broader efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and realize the aspirations of Agenda 2063. As President of ECOSOC, I remain committed to supporting Africa’s leadership and priorities.

Let me close with a message I saw on the wall of a school I visited recently. It read: **“The bridge between hope and achievement is determination.”**

That determination is alive across Africa. Let us match it with action, solidarity, and partnership.

Thank you.