



# President of the General Assembly 79<sup>th</sup> Session



**Interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue to discuss the main findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of commitments made towards Africa's development**

***21<sup>st</sup> July 2025, Conference Room 2  
United Nations Headquarters, New York***

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **Background and Introduction**

As per the mandate in resolutions [78/262](#) of 26 February 2024 and 79/263 of 15 January 2025, which requested the implementation of provisions by organizing an interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue, the resumed session of the General Assembly is being held to discuss the main findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of commitments made toward Africa's development.

This dialogue is being held as part of a series of strategic, interrelated UN processes aimed at rethinking and revitalizing global cooperation frameworks for sustainable development, peace, and justice. It is situated within a critical policy convergence moment as three key processes unfold: the implementation of the Pact for the Future, the follow-up to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), and the upcoming 30th Anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD+30) to be held in Doha in November 2025.

The UNMM will play a bridging role across these global platforms by serving as a monitoring and coordination mechanism for Africa's engagements and follow-ups; facilitating knowledge exchange, policy coherence, and regional integration; and ensuring that African civil society, academia, private sector, and governments are not only consulted—but positioned as co-creators of global development solutions.

By bringing together diverse voices and actors, the UNMM dialogue hopes to strengthen Africa's ownership of global processes, enhance accountability, and contribute to

equitable and inclusive global governance. The UNMM dialogue also aims to enhance critical thinking on means of accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, including through the 6 transitions which identify key levers to accelerate progress.<sup>1</sup>

## **The 2025 report of the Secretary General**

The 2025 biennial report of the Secretary-General on the review of commitments made towards Africa's development takes stock of the progress made in implementing commitments related to governance, human capital, and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).

The report assesses Africa's development commitments using the SDG framework and the interlinkages between the six transitions, focusing on the interconnection between Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) with governance and human capital. Five years before the deadline for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, progress in these areas is insufficient. The report provides recommendations to reverse this trend and activate STI as a driver for industrialization and job creation, and governance as an enabler for human capital development.

Governance, human capital and STI are foundational enablers of prosperity and resilience, essential for Africa's sustainable development. Strong governance (SDG 16) ensures transparent, accountable institutions that foster peace, justice, and equitable service delivery, building public trust and resilient societies. Human capital (SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 8), through investments in health, education and social protection, equips communities to drive socioeconomic development and adapt to changing environments. These investments can also help to build resilience, which are crucial to be able to further create the space for innovation and transformation. STI (SDGs 9 and 17)<sup>2</sup> drives scientific and technological advancement and industrialization, providing tools for innovation and economic transformation. Together, these elements create synergies that promote economic growth and social resilience while ensuring long-term sustainability.

A strong and effective state is essential to unlocking sustainable development, as it ensures good governance, strengthens public institutions, and provides predictable regulatory frameworks. Effective states also lead development through smart, people-centered policies that upholds the rule of law, implement sustainable fiscal policies,

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<sup>1</sup> These transitions serve as entry points for systemic change and have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. They include: (i) Food Systems – (ii) Energy Access and Affordability – (iii) Digital Connectivity – (iv) Education – (v) Jobs and Social Protection – (vi) Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution- [Unsdg | Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs](#).

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that as a crosscutting enabler, STI-related indicators are found across 11 Goals of the SDGs.

including mobilizing domestic resources, and promote inclusive and equitable policies for its people.<sup>3</sup>

Investment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education is a building block to allow the skills needed for Africa's economic transformation and the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. STEM education and training are pivotal to Africa's workforce to advance STI – (SDG Indicator 4.4.1). Deploying STI and digital technologies will allow African states to mobilize resources more effectively, expand modern energy access sustainably, transform food systems for resilience, and strengthen institutional capacity through digital governance. Investing in STI is therefore a common thread that can unravel Africa's development paradoxes, unlocking the potential of its abundant resources toward a future of sustainable, inclusive growth.<sup>4</sup>

Strengthening digital infrastructure, alongside reinforced human capital, can also empower Africa's entrepreneurs, startups and MSMEs to improve productivity and business growth. The AU Agenda 2063,<sup>5</sup> STISA-2024,<sup>6</sup> Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2025),<sup>7</sup> and Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)<sup>8</sup> provide a framework for strengthening STEM education and harnessing STI to enhance industrialization and socio-economic development in Africa. But to achieve success, good governance remains essential to translating skills and technological progress into employment opportunities and ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and sustainable.

## **Objectives of the dialogue**

The objectives of the meeting are:

- To foster a dialogue around the progress on implementing commitments made toward Africa's development in governance, human capital and STI.
- To identify opportunities for targeted action in addressing the presented gaps, thereby fulfilling commitments towards Africa by the UN Member States.
- To promote an exchange on the policy implications of the interlocking global crises on the continent's development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063.

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<sup>3</sup> A/78/234-S/2023/553- Report of the Secretary-General; Promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

<sup>4</sup> SOLVING PARADOXES OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (Financing, Energy and Food Systems) [2023-nepad-report\\_en.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want [Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. | African Union](#)

<sup>6</sup> Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 [STISA-Final.indd](#)

<sup>7</sup> CONTINENTAL EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR AFRICA (CESA) 2016 – 2025 [continental-strategy-education-africa-english.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup> The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) [38507-doc-DTS\\_for\\_Africa\\_2020-2030\\_English.pdf](#)

## Context

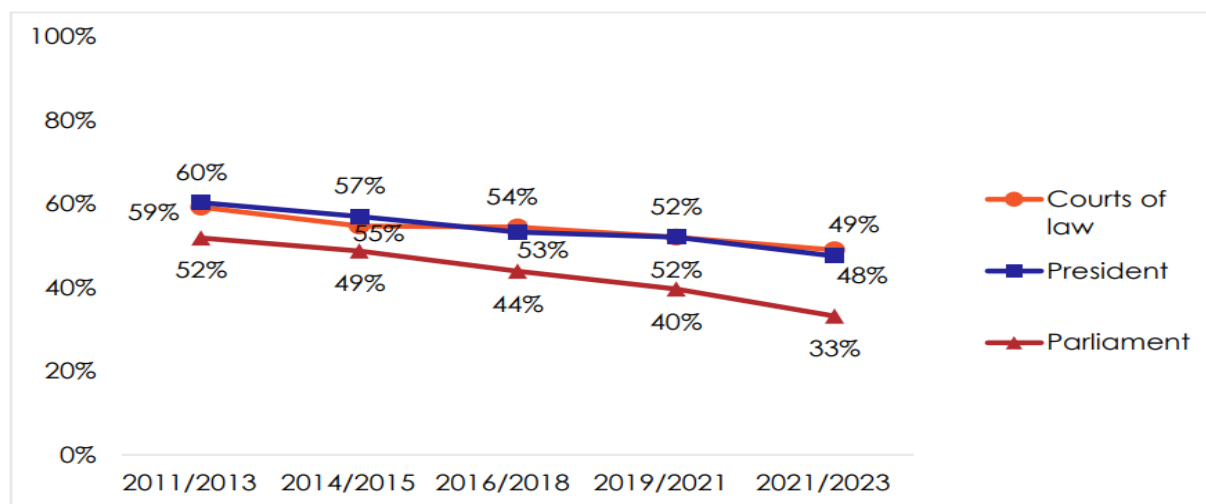
### Issue 1: Governance

Effective States are indispensable engines for achieving both durable peace and the SDGs in Africa. Across the continent, there has been a stark decline in trust in governments and their ability to deliver good governance and democracy. Afrobarometer surveys reveal that trust in national governments (presidency, parliament, and courts of law) across 30 African countries has dropped from an average of 57% in 2013 to around 43% in 2023,<sup>9</sup> indicating a significant erosion in public confidence.

This is partly due to the perceived ineffectiveness of public institutions in service delivery areas such as access to good healthcare, education, and public infrastructure. Similarly, trust in key institutions, including parliament, the judiciary, and the presidency shows a marked decline, with citizens assessing them as not being accountable, efficient, competent, fair, and honest. Figure 1 below shows the decline in popular trust for the 30 countries surveyed by Afrobarometer.

Figure 1: Change in popular trust in the President, Parliament, and Courts

| 30 countries<sup>2</sup> | 2011-2023



**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

Source: Afrobarometer 2024

<sup>9</sup> Across Africa, public trust in key institutions and leaders is weakening- [AD891-PAP20-Africans-trust-in-key-institutions-and-leaders-is-weakening-Afrobarometer-31oct24.pdf](#)

These results are in line with the key messages in the Secretary-General's Report 2024 (A/79/226-S/2024/550),<sup>10</sup> which call for governance reforms to enhance transparency, accountability, and institutional capacity to help rebuild trust and public legitimacy in the state<sup>11</sup>. These trends also underscore urgent calls for anti-corruption efforts, women and youth inclusion, climate-responsive strategies, regional cooperation, and long-term, coherent institutional building to foster state legitimacy and prevent democratic backsliding and a rise in unconstitutional changes of power.<sup>12</sup>

Natural resource governance is also central to the continent's sustainable development efforts. Yet, it remains undermined by weak oversight, limited transparency, and the persistent challenge of illicit financial flows (IFFs), which is estimated at \$88.6 billion annually.<sup>13</sup> Strengthening natural resource governance must go hand in hand with combating IFFs—particularly tax evasion, trade mis-invoicing, and profit shifting by multinational companies in extractive industries. The adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on international tax cooperation in December 2024<sup>14</sup> marks a significant step toward establishing a more inclusive and equitable global tax system that can help African countries recover lost revenues. To realize the full developmental benefits of Africa's vast natural wealth, it is essential to reinforce capacities at the state level for oversight and accountability, at the regional level for harmonized frameworks and peer learning, and at the global level for tax justice and cooperation. This coordinated approach will ensure Africa can capture, retain, and reinvest a fair share of the value generated from its natural resource endowments.

## Issue 2: Human Capital

Investing in human capital is essential for African countries to unlock inclusive and sustainable development. By prioritizing health (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and decent work (SDG 8), governments can empower individuals and communities to drive their own socioeconomic advancement. Investments in healthcare, education, and social protection not only improve well-being and productivity but also build resilience, enabling societies to better withstand economic shocks.

Specifically, on quality education, STEM will help address the skills mismatch and a general lack of prospects that push an estimated 83% of youth entering the labor market

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<sup>10</sup> (A/79/226-S/2024/550) Report of the Secretary-General; Promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa [n2421929.pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Africa Governance and Development Outlook 2024 | United Nations Development Programme](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Africa Governance Report 2023 - Unconstitutional Change of Government in Africa | African Peer Review Mechanism \(APRM\)](#)

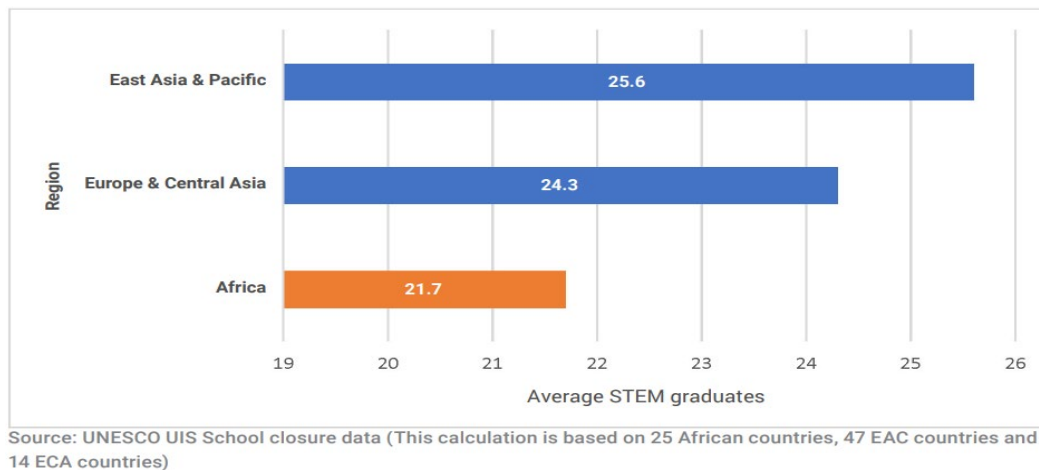
<sup>13</sup> UNCTAD (2020) as featured in UNOSAA (2022) Flagship Report on 'Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19: The Primacy of Domestic Resource Mobilization' -

[https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/Reports/2022/osaas\\_flagship\\_report-english.pdf](https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/Reports/2022/osaas_flagship_report-english.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Promotion of inclusive and effective international tax cooperation at the United Nations [n2442722.pdf](#)

in Africa (excluding North Africa) into joblessness.<sup>15</sup> Even though most African national plans reference STEM, effective policy implementation remains a challenge, with the African continent producing the least number of graduates compared to other regions of the world. Figure 2 below shows the average percentage of STEM graduates from 2015-2020.

Figure 2: Average Percentage of STEM Graduates (2015-20)



To fully harness innovation and drive transformation, African countries must strengthen intellectual property rights (IPR) systems that protect and reward local creativity, research, and traditional knowledge. A robust IPR framework encourages inventors, entrepreneurs, and artists to innovate by ensuring that their ideas and products are legally protected and economically valued. This is especially vital as Africa's youth-led startups, digital platforms, and cultural industries continue to grow. Based on patent applications, a common proxy for measuring innovation, Africa accounted for only 0.5% of the world's patent applications in 2023, with just 19.5% originating from residents.<sup>16</sup> This indicates that most patent activity in Africa is driven by foreign entities, reflecting limited local capacity to generate and protect intellectual property (IP).

Moreover, Africa's share of global patent applications has remained stagnant over the last decade, fluctuating between only 0.5% and 0.7%.<sup>17</sup> Efforts are necessary to increase innovation across the continent and protect indigenous knowledge through tailored IPR mechanisms. Developing continent-wide IPR frameworks, aligned with the African

<sup>15</sup> Africa Development Bank, Web Article: Jobs for Youth, / <https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors-sectors-human-capital-development/jobs-youth>

<sup>16</sup> WIPO, "World Intellectual Property Indicators 2024," (2024), page 26. [https://www.wipo.int/web-publications/world-intellectual-property-indicators-2024-highlights/assets/69723/941EN\\_WIPI\\_2024\\_WEB2.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/web-publications/world-intellectual-property-indicators-2024-highlights/assets/69723/941EN_WIPI_2024_WEB2.pdf).

Compared to 68.7% for Asia, 17.8% for North America, and 10.3% for Europe.

<sup>17</sup> WIPO, IP indicators 2011-2024, Publications: World Intellectual Property Indicators (WIPI)

Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and supported by institutions such as the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) are key to fostering a vibrant innovation ecosystem that drives development, inclusivity, and global competitiveness.

Finally, investing in social protection is essential for African countries to reduce poverty, address inequality, and build inclusive societies. Despite this growing recognition, coverage remains alarmingly low across the continent. In 2023, only 19.1 percent of Africans had access to at least one form of social protection benefit, leaving the vast majority without unemployment insurance, pensions, or child and disability support.<sup>18</sup> Robust social protection systems—such as cash transfers, pensions, health insurance, and unemployment support—are therefore necessary to provide a critical safety net for vulnerable populations, especially women, youth, and those working in the informal economy. These systems not only enhance human dignity and economic security but also promote social cohesion and political stability. Expanding investment in social protection is a strategic priority for achieving the SDGs and unlocking long-term development in Africa. Opportunities also exist to build on traditional and indigenous social protection, emphasizing their role in reducing poverty, inequality, and exclusion. Such systems underline traditional, community-based mechanisms rooted in kinship and mutual aid. By integrating these traditional systems into more formal systems, African countries can better build resilience against economic crises, climate change, and instability.<sup>19</sup>

### Issue 3: Science, Technology, and Innovation

Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) are critical to Africa's transformation, serving as powerful enablers for sustainable development, economic diversification, and resilience to global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and food insecurity. The African Union recognizes STI as a cornerstone of its development agenda, as reflected in its Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024).<sup>20</sup>

African countries have seen significant increase in the development or revision of STI policies. Out of the 55 member states of the African Union, at least 41 have either developed or revised STI policies, with 24 doing so since the establishment of the STISA-24 in 2014<sup>21</sup>. Many African countries' STI policies give prominence to investment in R&D, with a specific commitment to increase gross expenditure on research and development

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<sup>18</sup> [World Social Protection Report 2024-26: In figures | International Labour Organization](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Indigenous Social Protection Schemes as Building Blocks for Extending Social Protection Coverage in Africa | Office of the Special Adviser on Africa](#)

<sup>20</sup> Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 [STISA-Final.indd](#)

<sup>21</sup> African Innovation Outlook (2024) - <https://www.nepad.org/publication/african-innovation-outlook-iv-aio-2024>



(GERD) to at least 1 per cent of GDP.<sup>22</sup> However, the implementation of this commitment has remained a persistent challenge for Africa. In 2023, Africa's average R&D investment was approximately 0.45% of GDP compared to the global average of 1.7%.<sup>23</sup> By investing in R&D, digital infrastructure, and skills training, Africa can leapfrog outdated models and harness homegrown solutions.

Strengthening STI systems also supports Africa's participation in the global knowledge economy, ensuring the continent is not merely a consumer of technology but a creator and innovator in its own right. Deploying digital technologies such as AI-powered tax systems, geospatial analytics, and real-time financial data can help strengthen revenue collection and close the estimated \$70 billion tax gap (2.5 % of GDP) caused by outdated incentives.<sup>24</sup> Utilizing STI is critical to build the digital backbone needed for fiscal resilience.

On the energy sector, STI enables African States to tailor energy solutions through renewable energy technologies (solar, wind, mini-grids), which are key to expanding modern energy access efficiently. Moreover, incorporating smart grids, energy storage, and off-grid analytics improves system reliability. These gains underscore how STI-driven energy solutions can amplify both social and economic outcomes. STI also support smart agriculture and food systems and empowers food security through precision farming, using drones, sensors, and data insights to boost yields. In addition, agri-tech platforms can connect farmers to markets, pricing information, and supply chains. These innovations enable African farmers to leverage existing arable land, closing the gap between agricultural potential and actual food production.<sup>25</sup>

## **Format and participation**

**The multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held in person on July 21<sup>st</sup> from 3 to 6 p.m. in Conference Room 2, United Nations Headquarters, New York.** It will consist of an opening segment, a panel discussion, an interactive session, and a closing segment. The meeting will be webcast on UN Web TV.

The panel discussion will feature key stakeholders with prior experience working on Africa's development. It will be followed by statements from Member States and interventions from other relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>22</sup> UNECA (2021) Course Brief on Accelerating the implementation of the "Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024" - <https://archive.uneca.org/node/27763#>

<sup>23</sup> World Economic Forum (2023), Innovative approaches for unlocking R&D funding in Africa, Nov 2023 - <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/11/innovative-approaches-for-unlocking-research-and-development-funding-in-africa/>

<sup>24</sup> SOLVING PARADOXES OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (Financing, Energy and Food Systems) [2023-nepad-report\\_en.pdf](#)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid



There will be no pre-established list of speakers. Those wishing to take the floor will be invited to do so by pressing the microphone button in the room.

**Contacts**

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