



**The President  
of the  
Economic and Social Council**

**“The Africa We Want: Reconfirming the Development of Africa as a Priority of the United Nations System”**

*Special High-Level Dialogue of the Presidents of  
the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council*

*20 July 2022, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Trusteeship Council, United Nations Headquarters*

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**BACKGROUND**

The President of the General Assembly and the President of the ECOSOC are jointly organizing a special High-Level Dialogue (HLD) dedicated to assessing progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063, as well as the delivery of the commitments made towards Africa’s development. This HLD will consider the sustainable development of Africa as one of the established eight priorities of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup>

Building on the 2030 Agenda and the continent’s Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the dialogue will discuss best policy practices and lessons learned and reflect on actions needed to close gaps and accelerate progress on meeting commitments towards Africa’s development. Against the backdrop of Agenda 2063’s First Ten-Year Implementation Plan drawing to a close in 2023 and the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the HLD will provide another opportunity to discuss how to advance Agenda 2063 and the SDGs as part of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, also considering the multi-faceted adverse impacts of the current geopolitical crisis in Ukraine on the global economy and the African continent’s deteriorating food, nutrition, and energy security prospects.

The dialogue will build on the outcome of the annual Africa Dialogue Series organized by the African Union and the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) during the month of May 2022. The Africa Dialogue Series provides a global platform for examining and debating critical issues for Africa’s sustainable development, peace, and security. Furthermore, the HLD will be informed by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the Ministerial Segment of the ECOSOC that precedes it and will, in turn, feed into *inter alia*, the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27) to the UNFCCC, which will be organized in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022.

**OBJECTIVES**

The HLD will provide Member States and other relevant stakeholders a platform to:

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<sup>1</sup> As recalled by the General Assembly, in its resolution A/C.5/75/L.14, Section 11, Paragraph 51, which also reaffirmed its commitment to address the unique needs of Africa.

1. Renew the commitment to Africa’s development including on supporting key actions in the context of recovering and building back better from the health and socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, while taking into account the impact of the current geopolitical challenges on the continent’s food and energy security;
2. Share country experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including as part of the recovery;
3. Highlight successful strategies and initiatives at the subregional and regional levels, including through the expansion of social protection measures, to promote inclusive and sustainable recovery; and
4. Mobilize greater support and partnerships for accelerated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs while recovering from the pandemic.

Thematic roundtables will be organized around the following topics, in support of these objectives:

***Roundtable 1: Pharmaceutical manufacturing, energy, and productive capacity development as entry points to Africa’s recovery***

About half of Africa’s 1.1 billion people lack regular access to even the most essential medicines, according to the World Health Organization. Lack of access to medicines each year contributes to millions of deaths in the continent, and the burden falls mainly on the poor, women, and children. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined recent progress on access to HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis medicines as well as to reproductive, maternal, and newborn treatments and medicines. In many African nations, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, imports of pharmaceuticals comprise as much as 70% to 90% of all those consumed. This leaves citizens paying higher prices and leaves them vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions. Those disruptions were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic because several countries in other regions of the world that produce medications and supplies curbed exports, triggering an Africa-wide crisis.

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA), established by the African Union Development Agency, created a business plan in 2005 to boost local pharmaceutical production and improve public health outcomes, while the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention’s more recent Partnerships for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM) from 2021, which was approved at the African Heads of State level, introduced a number of programmes to unlock Africa’s potential to grow and scale vaccine development and manufacturing over the next two decades.

In-country drug production could help ensure access and affordability, but Africa has very few local or regional pharmaceutical manufacturing companies. The continent has only about 375 drug manufacturers serving Africa’s 1.1 billion people. By comparison, India has 10,000 drug manufacturers and China has around 5,000 drug manufacturers, each serving populations of about 1.4 billion people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Inside Africa’s Push to Make its Own Medicines”, Alison Buckholtz, International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group), June 2021.

Moreover, regulatory reform for pharmaceuticals is important for investors. Attention to regulatory standards is especially important in Africa, which accounts for around 42% of the world's cases of counterfeit drugs. In addition to contributing to more stable health systems and supporting a domestic manufacturing sector that addresses issues of access and affordability, a stable regulatory environment can help attract long-term financial support.<sup>3</sup>

Energy capacity is another limitation for boosting manufacturing in Africa. Africa's economic development is heavily intertwined with its energy development and universal access to modern energy service, more reliable electricity and less volatile energy pricing would all contribute to accelerating Africa's economic development. Access to clean, secure, and affordable modern energy services has not kept pace with the continent's expanding needs. The continent is home to nearly 18% of the world population yet accounts for less than 6% of global energy use. Universal access to affordable electricity, if it is to be achieved by 2030 under Sustainable Development Goal 7, requires bringing connections to 90 million people a year, triple the rate of recent years. At present, 600 million people, or 43% of the total population, lack access to electricity, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Electricity supply remains very unreliable in many parts of the continent, impeding socioeconomic development, and driving businesses and households to rely on costly diesel generators. Africa faces enormous challenges to build the infrastructure required to meet those energy needs, while also transforming the energy system to address climate and other environmental goals. Energy investment has fallen far short of what is required to put Africa on the path to universal access to secure and affordable energy. Over 2015 - 19, energy investment in Africa declined by more than a fifth, due mainly to less spending on export-driven oil and gas projects.<sup>4</sup>

Roundtable 1 will deliberate on concrete actions for building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa by enhancing productive capacity in the continent, especially in the critical fields of energy and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

*Guiding questions:*

1. What measures are needed to address health and economic emergencies and socio-economic challenges facing African countries in relation to the accessibility of essential medicines and the creation of fiscal space?
2. How can the African continent tackle market obstacles hindering growth in healthcare sector to stimulate local production and facilitate coordinated national and regional regulatory schemes to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063?
3. How can private sector investment be galvanized in manufacturing across the continent to support local production of medicines and products to improve health outcomes in Africa?

*Roundtable 2: Preparing for COP27 – an “African COP”*

African countries have clear priorities for COP27. The first priority is advancing the implementation of the National Determined Contributions (NDCs), including adaptation and mitigation efforts and delivery of finance to enhance implementation. Implementing the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Africa Energy Outlook 2022, International Energy Agency

NDCs is critical to meet Africa's needs for better jobs and services as well as the global pressure on African countries to follow a carbon neutral path to development.

The second priority is to push for tangible, nuanced and implementable action for Africa's access to reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy. Energy is the foundational building block to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals and in building Africa's resilience, especially as the continent struggles to adapt to the impacts of climate change. However, even though Africa is home to 17% of the world's population, the continent represents only 3.3% of global primary energy consumption, 1.1% of electricity generation and 3% of global energy use in industry. Failing to support Africa's equitable path to energy access, with balanced energy mixes, could be catastrophic not just for the continent but can also undermine all the efforts underway to cut back on global greenhouse gas emissions.

The third priority is reaching a concrete decision on the global goal for adaptation. Building resilience and responding to climate related disasters is expected to cost African countries 3–5% of their GDP annually by 2030, but in certain scenarios this can rise to over 15% of GDP<sup>5</sup>. In 2019, African countries were already spending 2–9% of their respective GDPs in responding to climate events and environmental degradation. In terms of financing for climate adaptation, the latest IPCC Working Group report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability highlighted the annual cost of adaptation in developing countries, which will be \$140 billion to \$300 billion by 2030. In the lead up to COP26, the COP Presidency announced that the long-pledged goal of mobilizing \$100 billion annually for climate change would only be met in 2023. The spiraling inflation due to the ongoing geopolitical crisis in Ukraine means that the 2023 target will most likely be missed.

Furthermore, increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and more extreme weather are threatening human health and safety, food and water security, and climate change impacts have been felt most severely in Africa for some years now, in particular, rural communities who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, and mostly rainfed agriculture. Agriculture sector employs over 60% of Africa's population and yet increasingly, streams and rivers, which used to be their lifeline, are drying up and no longer able to sustain them.

Financing for all these priorities remains a key negotiation point for COP27. Even before the turmoil introduced by COVID-19<sup>6</sup>, Africa's ability to access financing for its development was severely constrained. The pandemic has had a severe impact, contracting the GDP of the continent by up to 3.4%, with an estimated loss of between \$173.1 billion and \$236.7 billion for the years 2020–2021.<sup>7</sup> Without significant investment and redoubled efforts in availing promised climate financing, African countries face an uphill battle in implementing the commitments and ambitions expressed in their NDCs and climate adaptation plans.

In the lead up to the African COP, Roundtable 2 will provide a timely and inclusive platform to assess progress and make recommendations to redouble efforts to make the most of this opportunity.

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<sup>5</sup> ECA, African Climate Policy Centre, as featured in WMO, State of the Climate in Africa 2019 (Geneva, 2020). Available at: [https://library.wmo.int/doc\\_num.php?explnum\\_id=10421](https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=10421)

<sup>6</sup> Downgrades in credit ratings, risk of debt default, loss of income to name a few.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/triple-planetary-crisis-green-recovery-top-agenda-african>

Guiding questions:

1. In light of the enormous challenges that climate change presents to Africa, what are some of the key priorities for COP27 that can support climate adaptation, strengthen Africa's resilience to climate change and promote a sustainable trajectory for Africa's inclusive growth and development?
2. Given that the long-pledged \$100 billion per annum would not be sufficient for Africa's adaptation and mitigation needs, and given the likelihood that conditional funds will not be available at the required scale, what can Africa do to mobilize its own resources to support climate action?
3. Africa's contribution to cumulative greenhouse concentrations in the atmosphere is a negligible 4%. This also means that the continent is relatively underdeveloped and under-industrialized. Given the low levels of investment in fossil fuel driven industrialization, how can the continent embark on carbon neutral industrialization trajectories without compromising its own sustainable development agenda? In particular, how can the continent negotiate space for investment in the development of its gas resources as an interim source of energy?
4. As agriculture productivity continues to decline and traditional coping mechanisms are no longer adequate against climate extremes, what must be done to support African countries to adapt, cope, and build resilience to climate change impacts?

***Roundtable 3: Domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing and global partnerships for recovery and progress on the SDGs and Agenda 2063***

Access to finance has long been identified as one of the major constraints holding back Africa's sustainable development. Typically characterized by their shallow financial sector, African economies have struggled to scale up investments in social and productive sectors and in enacting institutional reforms to increase both their capacity for revenue collection and the quality of public expenditures. The poor quality of public expenditure in African countries diverts much-needed resources away from the budget that could have been utilized to finance priority expenditures as well as respond to emerging challenges. Without addressing this challenge of the high level of inefficiency in public expenditure, increasing allocation of budgetary resources may not achieve desired outcomes.

Furthermore, a substantial amount of institutional savings (pension, assurance, and sovereign wealth funds) is left idle and not harnessed towards financing the region's development. Africa was also hit hard by the socioeconomic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, with real GDP contracting by 2.2% in 2020. Although growth has since recovered to 3.8% in 2021, the projections remain well below the required 6% for the region to return to its pre-pandemic growth trajectory, thus representing a significant setback to development gains achieved before the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> External financing such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Official Development Assistance (ODA), which were already on a slow decline prior to the pandemic, suffered a further setback. Meanwhile, remittances continued to be

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<sup>8</sup> UNDESA, World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022.

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2022\\_CH3\\_AFR.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2022_CH3_AFR.pdf).

resilient despite the economic downturn<sup>9</sup>. The ongoing geopolitical crisis in Ukraine has triggered a food and energy crisis owing to the disruption of global trade supply chains. The pandemic has significantly reshaped the financing for development landscape in Africa by exacerbating some of the existing challenges and vulnerabilities, including debt sustainability, but at the same time created some new opportunities.

Against this challenging backdrop, Africa still has a long way to go to optimize its domestic revenue mobilization. Tax revenue as a share of GDP rose steadily in the past decade, reaching 16.6% in 2019, yet Africa consistently lags behind other developing regions. The low tax to GDP ratio translates into limited financial resources to invest in medium to long-term socio-economic measures, such as improving infrastructure, healthcare, and education. The impact of COVID-19 has reinforced the need to enhance the quality of public spending, diversify economies and the sources of financing for development, including by leveraging tools of innovative finance for development and by further strengthening national, regional, and global partnerships to deliver on the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Roundtable 3 presents a timely opportunity to explore concrete actions to secure financial resources and transformative partnerships to underpin Africa's sustainable development and to achieve the internationally agreed development goals with the aim of leaving no one behind.

#### *Guiding questions:*

1. Closing the SDGs financing gap in Africa will require a disruptive approach that promotes domestic resource mobilization, innovative finance, and long-term investment. What are some of the most urgent constraints that prevent African Member States from realizing their full potential for domestic resource mobilization to finance the continent's sustainable development? How can African countries be supported to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their public expenditure, promote value addition, and reduce wastages, while strengthening their revenue collection efforts, widening the tax base and stemming illicit financial flows?
2. What role can innovative financing tools play to bridge the financing gap to achieve the goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs during the Decade of Action 2020-2030? What are the more promising innovative and sustainable options to scale up public financing, crowd in private sector financing on favourable terms, leverage climate financing and facilitate trade finance?
3. How can African countries utilize their special drawing rights more effectively?
4. What type of global partnerships are needed to fast-track efforts to build back better from COVID-19 and achieve these multilaterally agreed goals and aspirations?

#### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES:**

- Increased awareness and accelerated action on key areas requiring domestic resource mobilization, enhanced policies and international cooperation and collaboration to

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<sup>9</sup> World Bank Group and KNOMAD. Migration and Development Brief 35. November 2021, pg. 58. [https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Migration\\_Brief%2035\\_1.pdf](https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Migration_Brief%2035_1.pdf).



achieve Africa's development priorities in the context of COVID-19 and the rapidly deteriorating global geopolitical context.

- Strengthened dialogue among African policy makers and stakeholders acting at the continental, regional and national levels, UN system entities and Africa's development partners on common challenges, including food and health security, poverty, environmental and climate challenges, and successful implementation strategies towards Africa's sustainable development, peace, and security.
- Enhanced sharing of strategies amongst African countries and development partners on addressing and leveraging responses to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to ensuring a sustainable recovery guided by the SDGs.

### **KEY OUTPUTS:**

A joint summary of the event, including key recommendations, will be produced, and disseminated among participants, policy makers, stakeholders, and the public. A call for action by the President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC will also be issued in support of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

### **PARTICIPANTS:**

The HLD will be a multi-stakeholder event that will engage Heads of State and Government, Ministers, and other high-level officials, and will be open to all stakeholders, including representatives from African regional and sub-regional institutions, the UN system, other multilateral partners, representatives from women and youth groups, civil society, the private sector, academia, and the media.

### **FORMAT:**

The High-Level Dialogue will be a one-day in-person event featuring keynote remarks from leaders, and three interactive multi-stakeholder roundtables.

### **CO-ORGANIZERS:**

The event will be co-organized by the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the Office of the President of the Economic and Social Council, with technical support from the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

## PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME:

<p><b>10:00 - 11:00 a.m.</b></p>	<p><b>OPENING</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly during its 76th session</li> <li>2. H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council 2021-2022</li> <li>3. H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General</li> </ol> <p>Other speakers: <i>Heads of State and high-level officials TBC</i></p>
<p><b>11:00 a.m. - 12:20 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b>ROUND TABLE 1: Pharmaceutical manufacturing, energy, and productive capacity development as entry points to Africa’s recovery</b></p> <p><i>Moderated roundtable discussion with keynote address, and lead speakers, followed by Remarks from Round Table participants, to include Member States and Observers, United Nations System entities, International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, Private Sector, Civil Society and other stakeholders.</i></p>
<p><b>12:20 - 3:00 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b>Lunch Break</b></p>
<p><b>3:00 - 4:20 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b>ROUND TABLE 2: Preparing for COP27 – an “African COP”</b></p> <p><i>Moderated roundtable discussion with keynote address, and lead speakers, followed by Remarks from Round Table participants, to include Member States and Observers, United Nations System entities, International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, Private Sector, Civil Society and other stakeholders</i></p>
<p><b>4:20 - 5:40 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b>ROUND TABLE 3: Domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing and global partnerships for recovery and progress on the SDGs and Agenda 2063</b></p> <p><i>Moderated roundtable discussion with keynote address, and lead speakers, followed by Remarks from Round Table participants, to include Member States and Observers, United Nations System entities, International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, Private Sector, Civil Society and other stakeholders.</i></p>
<p><b>5:40 - 6:00 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b>CLOSING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the Economic and Social Council 2021-2022</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly during its 76th session</li> </ul>