

“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*

Summary

A. OPENING SEGMENT

Welcoming Remarks:

- Reaffirming the sustainable development of Africa as a priority for the United Nations and the international community, **the President of the 76th General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Abdula Shahid** opened the thematic dialogue with a call to increase support for and collaboration with the continent to ensure that “The Africa We Want” becomes a reality. The President commended Africa’s efforts at mapping its own development through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), as well as the adoption and pursuit of a transformational agenda towards sustainable development: Agenda 2063. He further stressed the urgency to invest in women, youth, and climate adaptation and suggested that leaders capitalize on the synergies of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 to tackle the long-standing constraint of lack of finance. Moreover, His Excellency invited participants to support the call to action jointly issued by the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the President of the General Assembly.
- In his opening remarks, **H.E Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council** reiterated the centrality of the continent of Africa for the United Nations, asserting that Africa’s special needs have always been at the center of the work of the organization. Speaking on the timeliness and relevance of this dialogue, His Excellency addressed the challenges faced by the continent, stressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, upward inflationary pressures and the war in Ukraine on African economies and vulnerable populations. The President underscored the importance of rebalancing the global economy and reducing dependencies on few countries for food and energy security, as well as the global supply chains. He stressed the need for collective action and solidarity amid heightened threats of food insecurity and famine globally and particularly on the African continent. Moreover, the President commended efforts to increase the role of Africans in international fora and called on policymakers to take part in implementing and advocating for reforms at the national and regional levels. H.E. Amb. Kelapile further touched on vulnerabilities vis a vis climate change, the need for empowering Africa’s youth and women and facilitating regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- While expressing support for the African Union and Agenda 2063, **Her Excellency Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations**, noted the polygon of crises faced by the continent, citing in particular, rising poverty and food insecurity. She expressed great concern for the 71 million people in developing countries who have fallen into poverty within the span of 3 months and urged countries to turn the

crisis into an opportunity to redesign reliable policy frameworks. She also suggested increased investment in technology for the digitization of African countries, and improving educational systems, facilitating the expansion of the youth's skillset to secure the development of the continent's future generations. Moreover, she urged to build upon the SDG's, highlighting the need to overhaul the financial sector and ensure that African countries have the opportunity to invest in sectors which promote development.

Keynote Remarks:

- **The President of the Republic of Botswana H.E. Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi** acknowledged the long-standing partnership between the United Nations and Africa, stressing the importance of pushing for the continent's development. He referred to both the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting the interconnectedness between the two and their primacy for moving towards a more sustainable future. He declared this to be a pivotal moment for Africa's development, expressing concern for the fate of the continent in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the growing climate emergency, food insecurity, governance crisis and the spread of terrorist activity on the continent. The President urged to increase investments in the region, paying close attention to vulnerable groups, promoting quality education and facilitating access to finance.
- **H.E. Mr. Paulo Cafôfo, Secretary of State for the Portuguese Communities** reiterated Portugal's strong commitment to prioritizing the development of Africa in the UN system. He recognized the important achievements of African communities and commanded the positive trajectory they have maintained. Highlighting some of the challenges the continent faces, Mr. Cafôfo cited the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and global conflicts in exacerbating existing challenges and vulnerabilities. He reaffirmed the need for multilateralism in putting an end to conflicts and international cooperation and efficient functioning of food and energy markets. He stressed the importance of keeping the needs of every African in mind, while emphasizing the fundamental roles that African women and youth play in building the future of the continent. By renewing commitment towards the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, he expressed hope in working with partner countries.
- During his remarks, **the Principal Secretary Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Kenya, Dr. Chis Kiptoo** highlighted that Africa represented the change and progress that needed to occur to ensure the success of 2030 Agenda. The continent is however currently dealing with the effects of global crises such as climate change and geopolitical tensions that have led to unsustainable rise in food and energy prices. There is need to urgently address these challenges with decisive and ambitious action, as they are posing a challenge to Africa's development and post-COVID-19 recovery. He also outlined Africa's priorities for COP 27 which include: closing the existing finance gap, especially on mitigation; loss and damage to the impacts of climate change; progress on Global Goal on Adaptation; keeping 1.5 degrees Celsius alive; and recognition of Africa's special needs and circumstances. He gave an overview of some strategies and policies that Kenya was deploying in order to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement, including Kenyan private sector entities joining the UN Global Compact and committing to 'net zero' by 2050 or earlier.
- **The Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission, H.E. Ms. Amani Abou-Zeid** spoke about the importance of energy in the health sector,

which is a prerequisite for reliable medical research and development. The COVID-19 pandemic and global geopolitical tensions revealed the importance of building resilience in Africa through promoting local and regional manufacturing. This will in turn enhance Africa's capacity to effectively prevent and respond to future health or other emergencies. There is need to promote regional and continental value chains in all sectors, as well as embarking on cross continental projects in energy, transport, and digital connectivity. Additionally, access to affordable energy, financing and technical know-how are issues that need to be addressed through multisectoral and multistakeholder actions to bridge the energy gap and accelerate production and industrialization. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) addresses the challenge of fragmented markets by creating single continental markets in energy, ICT, water, transport, and aviation.

- The **Director General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Mr. Gerd Müller** pointed to Africa as the center of UNIDO's efforts during his presidency. He highlighted that more needs to be done in the area of food security to harness Africa's potential in agriculture and agro-processing. The transfer of skills and technology between partners is an integral part of the solution, in addition to access to new global markets. In collaboration with the AU Commission, UNIDO has developed the pharmaceutical manufacturing plan for Africa to address the need to support local vaccine production. UNIDO also launched the global health industry development initiative in 2021. Africa needs substantive investments in energy technology and infrastructure to create renewable energy solutions of the future.
- The **Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency, Mr. Mariano Grossi** shared that IAEA had been working with its African Member States to increase their capacity to harness nuclear science and technology in key development areas including stronger agro-food systems and improved health systems. This included the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) initiative that strengthens preparedness in countries to rapidly detect and respond to outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. 43 countries so far have designated ZODIAC labs. Through the 'Rays of Hope' program, IAEA in collaboration with the AU is aiming to improve access to life saving radiotherapy services in a bid to address the cancer crisis on the continent. The IAEA is also working with African countries on climate adaptation strategies including using nuclear technology in the agro-food sector and assisting those looking to transition their energy system to low carbon production.
- Speaking on behalf of African youth, **Ms. Chido Mpemba, African Union Special Envoy on Youth** outlined her recommendations on concrete actions that can be taken to increase the participation and contribution of youth to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. She called on relevant stakeholders to increase their investments in the development of young Africans through capacity building. She also shared the steps that the AU had taken to concretize its commitment to the development of African youth. These include developing the African Youth Charter policy framework and the roadmap on harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth, as outlined in Agenda 2063, African Youth Decade Plan of Action. Additionally, the AU Commission's 1 Million Next level Initiative seeks to provide concrete opportunities for over 300 million young Africans in the areas of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement, and health and wellbeing.

B. ROUNDTABLE 1: PREPARING FOR COP27 – AFRICAN COP

The roundtable reaffirmed that the development of Africa is a priority for the United Nations. It focused on assessing the progress made on the climate agenda and how best to support the success of an “African COP”. It emphasized the need to frontload the interests of developing countries, particularly African countries, at COP27.

Thematic issues raised include:

Challenges facing Africa:

- The COVID-19 pandemic, the climate change crisis and the war in Ukraine were highlighted as major challenges facing the world and Africa in particular. Half of Africans are affected by these crises with food insecurity, energy poverty, debt burdens, and lack of fiscal space impacting on African Member States.
- The climate crisis is worsening, with Africa being the most affected continent despite contributing the least to climate change. It was highlighted that Africa accounted for only 3.3% of global GHG emissions despite representing 17% of the worldwide population. Against that backdrop, funding challenges and the financing gap of African countries for climate action was identified as a significant challenge: For instance, Africa needs US\$65-US\$86 billion annually for adaptation alone.
- It was highlighted that COP26 made significant progress towards agreement on phasing out fossil fuels and coal, acknowledging loss and damage and creating technical steps to address it, doubling adaptation finance, halting deforestation, finalizing the rulebook on article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and facilitating carbon trading.
- However, this progress has been insufficient and has not translated into action to halt the climate crisis. It is evident that inaction on climate change is costlier than taking action and threatens Africa’s progress in achieving the SDGs as well as the goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063. Furthermore, developing countries in Africa, which have contributed the least to this crisis, yet are the most affected by climate change, have not received the necessary support from developed countries to fight the crisis. Therefore, COP27 should deliver for Africa what COP26 failed to do.

Opportunities:

- There is increasing scientific evidence showing that investing in climate and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing and yield to positive spillover effects across a broad spectrum of SDGs.
- Furthermore, there is much greater attention today than ever before to the need to ensure just transitions, especially for African Member States. To that end, new metrics are being developed to accurately measure investment costs in adaptation and mitigation.
- This is supported by two accompanying trends (i) that the cost of renewables is coming down across the board with an increasing number of Africa’s development partners providing technical, capacity building and financial support in expanding this infrastructure, and (ii) that innovative financing mechanisms, including a move towards fairer and more equitable carbon pricing, are gradually emerging.
- The World Bank is committing 35% of its financing to climate action, split evenly between adaptation and mitigation. In 2021, the World Bank spent US\$25 billion on climate finance. The World Bank is finalizing Country Climate and Development Reports to advise countries on policy and programs that are most impactful in delivering development dividends and reducing GHG emissions.

- The European Investment Bank Global (EIB Global), with a regional hub in Nairobi, aims to increase the impacts of EIB's investments. EIB works with African banks and private equity firms to ensure firms access liquidity during challenging times. The Bank supports Africa's access to energy through low-carbon hydrogen and increasing financing for adaptation.

Africa's priorities at COP27:

- **Climate finance:** Africa expects an increase in long-term climate finance, a renewed pledge from developed countries to meet their commitments in line with the principle of solidarity and global responsibility, and a clear mechanism for developing countries to access these resources.
- **Loss and damage:** Africa expects concrete outcomes on financing for loss and damage, especially in the context of the Glasgow Dialogue.
- **Adaptation:** Africa expects good progress on the Glasgow/Sharm-al-Sheikh Work Program on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), including a clear understanding of the goal and its metrics of contribution towards the GGA. Africa also requires support commensurate with its responsibilities for carbon sequestration as the world's second-largest carbon sink. Africa, therefore, should not be left alone to bear these costs, but rather benefit from the provision of adequate financing and implementation support for adaptation.
- **Agriculture:** Africa requires financing to scale up adaptation in agriculture, which would also help with food and nutrition security, job creation and empowerment of its women and youth.
- The principles of global accountability, shared responsibility and action should underpin the long overdue equity in the transitions. In that regard, improved access for Africa to energy, in particular renewable energy, is critical to support the Continent's industrialization.

Proposed Solutions:

- A holistic approach to climate action, encompassing mitigation and adaptation to climate action can address the continent's major crises, including food insecurity, energy poverty, and debt sustainability. Such an approach should consider the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked LDCs (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), be aligned to SDGs as well as the goals and aspiration of Agenda 2063 and be inclusive by involving all societal sectors. Solutions should also capitalize on youth activism to bring new ideas and fresh energy to global climate action.
- Full and effective operationalization of the Paris Agreement Workbook is critical for implementation of climate action on the ground, including on agriculture, water resources management, and stakeholder engagement.
- Multilateralism is the key to ensure just transitions. Climate action cannot be achieved with a "zero-sum" mindset. Understanding that each country starts from a different point to achieve decarbonization and sustainable development is the key to effective climate action and the collaboration required on a global scale. This also requires understanding the common but differentiated responsibilities and the legitimate needs for Africa to achieve its economic development as well as empathy among countries to better understand the challenges facing other countries and best practices/experience-sharing to turn the challenges into opportunities.

- Africa must speak with clarity, unity, and scientific support to achieve its objectives at COP27. African resources must not be stranded but put to use for sustainable development.
- Developing fair and equitable carbon markets in Africa to enable the latter to leverage its natural resources for climate action. A policy mix of concessional financing to help de-risk investments and shifting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables in order to support Africa's transition to renewables would underpin a sustainable medium to long term solution.
- Climate change represents a US\$1 trillion investment opportunity in Africa. In this regard, engaging the private sector and creating an enabling business environment is critical to realizing this opportunity. This includes the availability of better informed and fairer country risk analyses to incentivize climate investment. Consolidation of existing financing mechanisms such as the Great Green Wall or the creation of new tools is needed to increase financial resources to Africa for climate action.
- Addressing religious and ethnic conflicts in Africa mainly over access to natural resources is the key to simultaneously addressing climate change and achieving the sustainable development goals, informed by the nexus between peace and security and sustainable development.

C. ROUNDTABLE 2: DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, INNOVATIVE FINANCING AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR RECOVERY AND PROGRESS ON THE SDGS AND AGENDA 2063

Building on the deliberations of the roundtable 1, this second roundtable explored finance and partnership issues in great detail providing a platform for sharing experiences between Member States in their resources mobilization efforts with a focus on domestic resources, widening the tax base and creating an enabling environment for business, as well as scaling up innovative finance and partnerships against the backdrop of the Decade of Action for SDGs 2020-2030 and the Agenda 2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan 2013-2023, which drawing to a close next year. Laying out the set of challenges facing Africa, the roundtable highlighted opportunities and presented a set of concrete solutions to mobilize resources to achieve the Africa We Want.

Challenges facing Africa:

- Africa is facing a three-pronged crisis leading to exogenous shocks due to (i) the COVID-19 pandemic, (ii) the climate crisis and (iii) the impact of the war in Ukraine. These resulted in a sharp economic slowdown and rising food and energy prices. None of these are challenges that stem from within Africa. However, the continent is impacted disproportionately by their knock-on effects. The cumulative effect of these triple crises has led to the worsening of the debt situation in Africa, which needs to be addressed with urgency and with a long-term horizon.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and aggravated the existing vulnerabilities such as climate change and armed conflicts. The socio-economic impact of the pandemic has reversed progress made over the past years in the implementation of the SDGs and attaining development objectives, including on reducing poverty and inequalities.
- Peace, security and development are inextricably linked. Conflict negatively affects economic growth and sustainable development. It's imperative to bridge the silos between humanitarian action, peace and development to promote a comprehensive approach to address the challenges facing the continent.

- Africa's development must no longer be perceived as about charity or aid. Rather it should be seen as about investing in our collective future. Therefore, enhanced partnerships are needed to revitalize international cooperation. These partnerships should be transformative and more ambitious to ensure that no one is left behind.
- In many cases, alignment between national political frameworks and institutions have proven challenging with respect to providing the necessary governance architecture for African countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the goals of Agenda 2063. In the absence of strong institutions and the requisite infrastructure, domestic resource mobilization, including efforts to stem illicit financial flows, and scaling up financing for development, in particular from complementary and additional innovative finance mechanisms, has proven difficult.
- Especially in post-conflict reconstruction scenarios, initially too much focus was placed on short-term tax collection. The emphasis on the amount of taxes collected rather than on broadening the tax base has proven unsatisfactory and unsustainable, often resulting in a bulging informal economy, increased tax evasion, money laundering and other illegal commercial practices. Furthermore, anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and anti-tax evasion frameworks have often operated in silos reducing their overall effectiveness.

Opportunities:

- It is imperative to re-examine development financing architecture in order to shock-proof the Continent's development journey. Strengthening domestic resource mobilization and scaling up innovative finance is a means of overcoming constraints in access to finance.
- However, this should not come at the expense of existing traditional instruments, such as the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, whose resources should be shored up. The synergy between existing instruments and the innovative ones should be exploited to engage the private sector internationally.
- Some successful examples include Tax Inspectors without Borders (a UNDP – OECD joint initiative) and UNDP's SDG Finance Hub in Pretoria, South Africa, which focuses on diaspora bonds, carbon trading, climate finance, green and blue bonds.
- Rwanda has demonstrated the opportunities to increase domestic resource mobilization (DRM) by lowering taxes and decreasing the number of taxes imposed with a view to focusing on job creation. Rwanda focused on institutions to create an enabling business environment based on the rule of law. This, in turn, led to economic stability and successfully broadened its tax revenue base by creating jobs. In doing so, Rwanda also built effective and transparent tax collection institutions. Today, 84% of the country's government budget is financed by domestic resources.
- By strengthening a free and open international economic system (through addressing a sometimes-opaque development finance system), stakeholders work to ensure stable and resilient societies in Africa. In this connection, the voices and representation of African countries must be amplified to improve the global economic governance system.
- To build back better and stronger, it is encouraging that six African countries will be receiving the technology needed to produce mRNA vaccines on the continent.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provides an excellent opportunity for African countries to enhance regional cooperation, promote economic diversification, and boost African productive capacity, industrialization and value addition. The AfCFTA offers massive potentials to the development of regional value chains and reducing Africa's

reliance on primary commodity exports. AfCFTA envisages a continent-wide single market covering 1.3 billion people with a combined GDP of US\$3.4 trillion.

- On the back of the roundtable 1 that was dedicated to discussing at length, the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (CoP27) in Egypt, this African Conference of the Parties ('African CoP) was identified as a opportunity to focus on the continent's specific climate vulnerabilities and address the climate finance gap, not only by delivering on past commitments, but also by increasing the ambition and scaling up innovative finance tools to help crowd in private investment and complement the traditional climate finance.
- Getting the carbon prices right presents a huge opportunity. Africa has sequestered the most carbon, hence the carbon pricing should be set at realistic levels and take that into account in order not to penalize Africa unfairly.

Proposed Solutions:

- In the case of Rwanda, the government realized that it alone could not finance the country's development. Therefore, the country's strategy has been to use some government funds act as an incentive (de-risking) for more investment by the private sector (facilitation).
- Vaccine equity needed to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, African public health institutions (Africa CDC, African Medicines Agency) must be strengthened, to be ready for all present and future health emergencies. To build back better, more concessional loans and grants needed to enhance national health resources to be able to combat pandemics and other health emergencies.
- The international community must combat illicit financial flows (IFFs) and ensure return of assets to countries of origin. It is estimated that Africa has lost US\$800 billion in IFFs since 1970. The current international frameworks for combating IFFs remain uncoordinated – an overarching global framework for combating IFFs was called for in the 2015 report of the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa. The frameworks for anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and anti-tax evasion that continue to operate in silos must equally be coordinated. Multinational enterprises need to demonstrate more responsible business practices, including paying their fair share of taxes in Africa, from where a substantive part of their profits is derived.
- Similarly, the 2021 conclusions of the High Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda (FACTI Panel) should be considered and implemented – that efforts to create systems of financial integrity for sustainable development would be furthered by initiating a process for a United Nations Tax Convention and establishing an inclusive global coordination mechanism at United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to address financial integrity on a systemic level.
- In addition, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) agreed to a resolution in May 2022 on curbing IFFs and recovery of lost assets, which underscored the need for international solidarity, global cooperation and enhanced multilateralism through eliminating base erosion, profit shifting, tax evasion, including capital gains tax, and other tax abuses as critical elements for scaling up financing and leveraging partnerships.
- Regarding climate finance, it is important to find a balance between the resources earmarked for adaptation and those for mitigation. Among the particular solutions proposed to enhance climate finance are:
 - Creation of an enabling environment for climate action – green stimulus measures for recovery without increasing debt level, i.e. green resilient recovery

- Acceleration of climate innovation with a focus on climate resilient agriculture in Africa as well as local entrepreneurs
- De-risking projects – co-financing and risk sharing could render otherwise unbankable projects feasible.
- Strengthening domestic financial institutions to incorporate climate risk into all decisions
- It was highlighted that supporting low emission and climate resilient investments would underpin inclusive development pathways.
- Against that backdrop, the importance of scaling up resources to address desertification, land degradation, and drought and support existing programs such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara, Sahel, and Southern Africa as well as strengthen the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, and Sub-regional Action Programmes to combat desertification were highlighted.
- In building back better, peace and security funding and programmes should move back to a focus on prevention efforts – in recent years, investments had shifted to reactive (humanitarian), but preventive efforts are more effective and efficient. For instance, 25% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) by OECD-DAC members is allocated to emergency humanitarian assistance, which comes at the expense of long-term sustainable development projects. However, enhanced peacebuilding financing and investments in prevention with a diversified donor-base would help address the root causes of conflict and help bring Africa back on track towards meeting goals on poverty, hunger, inequality, food and energy security. Among the other solutions proposed is the imperative to provide long-term and predictable financing to women and youth-led initiatives.
- The multilateral system should be better aligned with Africa’s needs and priorities. Increasing Africa’s voice and representation in the global economic governance architecture would increase the relative share of Africa in future issuances of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). In the short term, reallocation of the recent SDR issuance to give Africa a more equitable access should be considered.
- Whilst longer term structural reforms will take some time to be implemented, a strong case was made in favour of extending the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) for another two years and deferment of interest payments for five years as this would create the liquidity and policy space to address more systemic issues.
- Similarly, UN Global Crisis Response Group was commended for its successful short-term response and initiatives, and it was observed that the international community needs to unite behind the imperative to tackle the systemic issues together.

D. CLOSING SEGMENT

- In his closing remarks, the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, H.E Mr. Collen V Kelapile, expressed his gratitude to all participants for their contribution in the dialogue and their support of the Call to Action. He conveyed his hope that the call would galvanize priority attention to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. Furthermore, H.E Mr. Kelapile, stressed the need for the concretization of action at all levels, ensuring vaccine equity, debt sustainability, as well as adequate climate adaptation mechanisms. As he concluded, he reiterated ECOSOC’s commitment to continuing to provide a platform to explore the opportunities and challenges facing the African region.