



Economic Commission for Africa
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Third session
Addis Ababa, 17–19 May 2017

Concept note on the theme of the session: “Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all”

I. Background

1. Across the globe, the implementation of the universally applicable 17 Sustainable Development Goals that are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took effect in January 2016. In Africa, the Sustainable Development Goals are being implemented concurrently and in an integrated manner with Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the First 10-year Implementation Plan (2014–2023) of Agenda 2063, which refers to Africa’s 50-year strategic framework for socio-economic transformation. Agenda 2063 seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 are mutually reinforcing; together, they focus attention and consolidate efforts at regional, subregional and national levels in pursuit of inclusive and sustainable structural transformation and sustainable development in Africa.

2. The implementation of the two agendas rests squarely on individual member States. Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda takes place at global, regional, subregional and national levels, while Agenda 2063 is reviewed at national, subregional and regional levels. Follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level is a mandated responsibility of the high-level political forum on sustainable development established by the General Assembly by resolution 67/290. The high-level political forum on sustainable development provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, and follow-up to and review of progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments, and is expected to enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels. In its resolution 70/1, the Assembly reiterated that, under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the high-level political forum on sustainable development would have the central role of overseeing the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. Under its mandate, the high-level political forum facilitates the global sharing of experience, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. Three sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development have been held to date.

3. In line with the primary role of member States in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, annual voluntary national reviews are vital and integral tools that inform the work of the high-level political forum during its sessions under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The voluntary national reviews facilitate the sharing of experience, successes, challenges and lessons learned; promote the strengthening of policies and institutional frameworks; and help in

marshalling multi-stakeholder support and partnerships in order to accelerate the implementation of the Goals.

4. The Ministerial Declaration of the third high-level political forum in 2016 captured a number of elements consistent with priorities across the continent and inputs to the Forum. Among its salient elements, the Declaration: reaffirmed the importance of supporting Agenda 2063 and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to ensure that no one is left behind; highlighted the importance of participatory and inclusive implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at all levels; reaffirmed that the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls would make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets; and stressed that the availability and use of accessible, timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data underpinned efforts to leave no one behind, including by identifying inequalities. In that respect, the Forum argued that such data should measure poverty in all its forms and dimensions, together with progress on sustainable development, to reveal inequalities, gaps, progress and recurrent challenges, identify innovative solutions and inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels.

5. The 2017–2019 meetings of the high-level political forum will be held on selected themes and focus on specific Sustainable Development Goals (as set out in the table below), reflected in General Assembly resolution 70/299. This resolution provides that the high-level political forum, “without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, shall discuss a set of Goals and their interlinkages, including, if appropriate, with other Goals, at each session representing the three dimensions of sustainable development, with a view to facilitating an in-depth review of progress made on all goals over the course of a four-year cycle, with means of implementation, including with respect to Goal 17, reviewed annually.”

6. Accordingly, the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum will be held in New York from Monday to Wednesday, 17–19 July 2017, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and on the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world,” and will focus on the six Sustainable Development Goals highlighted below.

7. The theme of the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum reaffirms eradication of poverty as a preeminent priorities indispensable to the attainment of shared well-being and prosperity. Inevitably, poverty eradication and promotion of prosperity are challenged by constantly evolving situations around the world. Notable among these are rapidly growing populations, the changing climate, and resource constraints created by the depletion of natural resources and environment degradation, including pollution. These are important factors that shape – and must be taken into account in – efforts to eradicate poverty and promote well-being and prosperity. That said, there are other favourable changes in the world that present opportunities, such as technological innovations that could spur investments and interventions to eradicate poverty and promote shared prosperity.

8. The Sustainable Development Goals (see table below), for in-depth review at the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum, address the issue of poverty and promote that of well-being. The effective implementation of the Goals would significantly boost poverty eradication and the promotion of equitable prosperity. Thus, by focusing on Goal 5, attention is drawn to the fundamental importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in addressing poverty. Women are disproportionately disadvantaged by poverty and would benefit from empowerment and from enhanced access to social services and productive assets. In the same vein, Goals 2, 9 and 14 on sustainable agriculture, resilient infrastructure, industry, innovation and sustainable management of marine resources highlight the importance of investment in these key areas for poverty eradication.

Table

Themes of the high-level political forum and focus Goals up to 2019

Year	Theme	Focus Goals
2017	“Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”	Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
2018	“Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”	Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15
2019	“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”	Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16

9. The 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will be held under the theme: “Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all.” This theme is closely aligned with that of the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum. The theme of the Regional Forum is premised on a number of considerations and trends relating to poverty eradication. These include the now well-documented realization that economic growth in Africa has been inadequate to eradicate poverty. In addition, the growth generated has largely been unequal. Seven out of the ten most unequal countries in the world are in Africa. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in Africa therefore hinges on fostering inclusive and sustainable growth and the attainment of gender quality and women’s empowerment is a critical dimension of inclusion in the region. To restructure their economies and achieve sustained growth, African countries have identified agriculture, resilient infrastructure, industry, innovation, and sustainable management of marine resources as some of the priority areas for domestic and foreign investments.

II. Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

10. Regional forums on sustainable development provide inputs to the annual sessions of the high-level political forum and are integral pillars of the follow-up and review architecture for the 2030 Agenda. The regional forums are strategically placed to link the national and global discourse and serve as multi-stakeholder platforms to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. These forums have been set up pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 67/290, 70/1 and 70/299, which, among other provisions, acknowledge the importance of the regional dimensions of sustainable development; invite the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the work of the high-level political forum, including through annual regional meetings; and encourage member States to identify the most suitable regional forum, as a further means of contributing to follow-up and review at the high-level political forum.

11. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was established pursuant to the above resolutions. It operates in accordance with resolutions 930 (XLVIII) and 939 (XLIX) of the Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning

and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in 2015 and 2016, respectively, by which the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was requested to convene the Forum, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other partners, on an annual basis to follow up and review the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

12. At its 2016 session the Africa Regional Forum considered and adopted recommendations on some key elements to strengthen and facilitate its work. It stressed that a unified follow-up platform at the regional level was essential to realizing the integrated follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. It underlined that learning and sharing best practices among countries, within the United Nations system, and with other regional and subregional forums, major groups and organizations were important in accelerating the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The Forum thus recommended that its sessions should include mechanisms for learning and exchanging experiences. As such it is important that countries undertaking voluntary national reviews during the sessions of the high-level political forum should receive assistance in participating in the sessions of the Africa Regional Forum, so that they can also share their experience and lessons learned.

13. In addition, case studies should be conducted to support learning and exchange and African countries should be supported and encouraged to participate and contribute in the various learning and sharing forums. The Africa Regional Forum also recommended that the high-level political forum should promote processes and propose policy actions and recommendations, including on the provision of means of implementation that respond to both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

14. In the light of the above, the Africa Regional Forum therefore serves as an important mechanism not only for tracking progress in implementation, but also for keeping all the stakeholders in Africa mobilized and engaged to strengthen their commitment to concerted action and to garner international support for efforts to translate the Sustainable Development Goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063 into measurable and shared prosperity that benefits the planet and its people.

A. Organization and focus of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

15. Working jointly with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank and in collaboration with other United Nation agencies, ECA is organizing the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum in preparation for the 2017 high-level political forum.

16. As stated above, in line with the theme of the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum, the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum will be held under the theme: “Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all”, to ensure alignment between the two forums. In addition, the theme of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum also corresponds to that of the Tenth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa’s Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, “Growth, inequality and unemployment”, and chimes well with the African Union theme for 2017, “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth”. These four themes are mutually reinforcing and offer opportunities to catalyse actions towards sustained and sustainable growth, inclusiveness, equality and shared prosperity.

17. Aligning the deliberations of the regional Forum with the focus-Goal approach of the high-level political forum will also enable African countries to unpack each of the selected Sustainable Development Goals while at the same time taking into

account the interdependence and intricate connections among them and the 12 other Goals.

18. The 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum is being held during the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and third year of implementation of Agenda 2063. The Forum is, therefore, an opportunity to examine early results, share and reflect on the implementation experiences of African countries, and will trigger action towards implementation of the two agendas.

19. The focus Goals of the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum are of great relevance to Africa. As outlined below, the selected goals correspond with the region's persistent challenges and, thus, progress made would underpin and drive Africa's success in realizing sustainable economic structural transformation and sustainable development. In this respect, it is no coincidence that the selected Goals also match those priority areas in Africa where there has been heightened policy focus and strategic planning and programming at both national and regional levels.

1. Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

20. The situation of poverty in Africa is a matter of extreme and urgent concern. Africa remains the region with the largest share of poor people, as demonstrated by the report on the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.¹ Although poverty in Africa excluding North Africa declined from 56.9 per cent in 1990 to 42.8 per cent in 2012, the number of people living in extreme poverty in the continent is estimated to have increased massively, from about 280 million in 1990 to more than 330 million in 2012. This is attributed to rapid population growth. The World Bank also reports that poverty reduction has been slowest in fragile countries and that rural areas remain much poorer.

21. Africa also has a large share of the working poor, with relatively high income inequalities and unemployment rates, in particular for young people, remain high in the region. Even of those young people who were employed, 16 per cent were living below the poverty line in 2015, compared to 9 per cent of working adults. Young people aged between 15 and 24 are most likely to be among the working poor. Africa therefore remains the continent with the heaviest burden of poverty and this must be eliminated, thus ensuring that the promise of inclusive and sustainable growth and shared prosperity does not remain a mere pipe dream. To eliminate the high rates of poverty in Africa within the set timeframe, the countries of the region are therefore faced with the urgent challenge of crafting and adopting policies and measures that will increase the momentum gathered over the last two decades in efforts to combat poverty.

2. Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

22. Africa's food security and nutrition situation is worsening in absolute value. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reports that the number of undernourished people increased by 30 per cent over the period between 1990 and 2016, confounding the general worldwide trend of decline in food insecurity. The situation is particularly severe in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions, where up to 23 million people in 11 countries have been affected by acute food insecurity and are facing malnutrition.

23. The food insecurity situation is aggravated by the continuing conflicts in Central Africa and unfavourable weather conditions, including droughts and flooding, in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa. This brings into sharp focus the multifaceted nature of food and nutrition security, and the imperative need for

¹ ECA, African Union African Development Bank Group, UNDP, *MDGs to Agenda 2063/SDGs Transition Report 2016, Towards an Integrated and Coherent Approach to Sustainable Development in Africa*. Addis Ababa, 2016. Available from <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/ECAtransition.pdf>.

progress in all areas, including in peace building and climate resilience, if hunger is to be wiped out and food nutrition security achieved in Africa.

24. Sustainable Development Goal 2 seeks to promote sustainable agriculture, which is central to increased food productivity and production – a cornerstone for raising incomes, combating hunger and enhancing food security for the growing human population. Yet success in promoting sustainable agriculture is also key to realizing a number of other Sustainable Development Goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063. For instance, attainment of the targets on climate change (Goal 13), biodiversity (Goals 14 and 15), soil and land productivity (Goal 15) is contingent on the application of sound and sustainable agricultural practices. Adopting sustainable agriculture, including climate-smart farming methods, will generate options to double agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers by 2030, while at the same time reducing carbon emissions and enhancing the integrity and productivity of land, forests, and biodiversity resources. As a consequence, sustainable agriculture is also vital in raising farm income and eradicating poverty, in particular among the small-scale farmers that predominate Africa's agriculture.

25. African countries have already adopted regional frameworks that are closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 2. In the 2014 Malabo Declaration, African countries made commitments which, if met, could facilitate the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2, alongside other Goals. These commitments include a recommitment to the principles and values of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme; a recommitment to enhance investment finance in agriculture; a commitment to end hunger by 2025, including through at least a doubling of productivity; a commitment to halve poverty by 2025 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation; a commitment to boost intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services; a commitment to enhancing resilience in livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks; and a commitment to mutual accountability for actions and results. The focus on this goal presents an opportunity to gather momentum to give effect to these and other commitments on nutrition, food security and sustainable agriculture in the region.

3. Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

26. Health and well-being are cornerstones for productive lives free of poverty. Despite the progress made through efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Africa has a long way to go to ensure healthy lives and well-being. Stepped-up efforts are needed to improve reproductive and maternal and child health; end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and neglected tropical diseases; reduce non-communicable and environmental diseases; achieve universal health coverage; and ensure universal access to safe, affordable and effective medicines and vaccines. For example, notwithstanding Africa's commendable progress in combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, in 2015, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 89 per cent of all malaria cases and constituted almost half the world's population at risk of the disease. In addition, the incidence of HIV was highest in sub-Saharan Africa, with 1.5 new cases per 1,000 uninfected people. Moreover, the maternal mortality ratio remains very high in the region, with 19 African countries recording above 500 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015. Significant progress will be realized if countries fulfil their commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 3 to support research and development, increase health financing, and strengthen their capacity to reduce and manage health risks.

4. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

27. The need to ensure inclusive and people-centred development is underlined in both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. Pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls should lie at the heart of efforts to implement the goals set in both agendas, if poverty eradication and inclusive and sustainable development are to be realized.

28. The compelling case for enhanced action for gender equality and women empowerment is well documented. Women make immense contributions to economic and social progress in all countries of the region. For example, estimates show that, simply as a consequence of gender gaps in the labour markets, annual gross domestic product (GDP) losses averaged in excess of \$90 billion between 2010 and 2014. This clearly demonstrates the need to ensure gender equality across all domains of economic and social development. The contribution of women and overall economic and social progress will be enhanced if, among other measures, women were accorded adequate access to productive assets, including natural resources, secure property rights, social services and benefits equal to those of their male counterparts.

29. The focus on Goal 5 should, therefore, enable the Forum to reflect on key challenges and advance action in the region to achieve the set targets, including the need to hasten the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls and to ensure that women have better access to paid employment, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and real decision-making power in the public and private spheres. It presents an opportunity to assess progress and step up action on gender equality following the declaration of 2010–2020 as the African Women’s Decade; 2015 as the Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063; and 2016 as the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women, and also in the light of other global and regional frameworks that foster gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

5. Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

30. This Goal is concerned with infrastructure, industrialization and innovation, which are among Africa’s top priorities and recognized as central to higher economic growth and poverty eradication. These areas feature as part of the fast-track programmes and initiatives in the first 10-year-implementation plan of Agenda 2063. Progress in these areas is considered crucial for the realization of the goals of Agenda 2063. Propelled by regional frameworks such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), immense investments are currently being made to close the infrastructure gap. Challenges remain, however, in mobilizing domestic and international support for infrastructure investments.

31. For its part, industrialization has been embraced by African countries as the foremost strategy for diversifying and expanding growth and creating employment, in particular for the continent’s burgeoning youth population. The Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa serves as the regional framework designed to catalyse industrialization. In the context of the targets for this Goal and those of Agenda 2063, the Africa Regional Forum has a crucial role to play at its 2017 session in mobilizing investments, fostering public-private partnerships and enhancing technology development and transfer. These are vital to countries’ efforts to bridge the infrastructure gap, including the development of modern clean and low-carbon energy, and to harness the transformative and job-creating potential of industrialization and innovation for shared green growth.

6. Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

32. Africa has vast ocean, sea and marine resources that are fundamental to the realization of sustainable development in the region. In all, 38 out of 54 African countries are coastal States and the continent’s coastline stretches over a total length of some 40,000 km. Freshwater and ocean fish make a vital contribution to the food and nutritional security of over 200 million Africans and provide income for over 10 million. The sustainable management of marine resources is pivotal to poverty eradication, given that most of the poor rely on natural resources for their livelihood and poverty reduction strategies. Because of the opportunities that oceans provide for

human well-being and social and economic development, Africa's coastal cities have been growing by 4 per cent or more each year over the last two decades.

33. The potential of marine resources to eradicate poverty and to foster sustainable development in the region, however, is being undermined by multiple challenges that undercut livelihood opportunities, resulting in major economic losses and degradation of the very resources upon which the continent depends. Such challenges include overfishing and illegal fishing, and fishing that is unreported and unregulated. Other obstacles to the sound harnessing of the continent's marine wealth include pollution (both land and sea), unsustainable tourism, coastal erosion and flooding. Many of these factors are further aggravated by climate change.

34. There is an estimated flight of some \$42 billion per year from the continent due to illegal fishing and illegal logging, among other causes, and West Africa alone loses \$1.3 billion per year through illegal fishing. It is against this backdrop that Africa adopted its 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy. The vision of this strategy is to foster increased wealth creation from Africa's oceans and seas by developing a sustainable thriving blue economy in a secure and environmentally sustainable manner.

35. The concept of blue economy is akin to that of inclusive green economy: the aim is to promote economic growth, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and a focus on the strengthening of ocean ecosystems. The Africa Regional Forum will provide an opportunity to examine progress and articulate workable solutions to such pressing issues as, among others, the need to regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices; to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds; sustainably to manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts; and to increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources.

B. Objective and sub-themes of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

1. Objective

36. The overall objective of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum is to undertake regional follow-up and review and to facilitate learning, including the sharing of experience and lessons learned to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

37. With a particular focus on the Sustainable Development Goals selected for the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum and the corresponding goals of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063, the Forum has the following specific objectives:

(a) To carry out regional follow-up and review, deliberate on progress and address challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the two agendas;

(b) To provide a platform for peer learning and to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned to accelerate implementation of the two agendas; and

(c) To deliberate and agree on Africa's priorities and to formulate recommendations in the form of key messages as the region's collective input to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum.

2. Sub-themes

38. The activities of the Forum will be articulated around the following sub-themes, which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals selected as focus Goals for the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum:

(a) Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa;

- (b) Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa;
- (c) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all;
- (d) Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls;
- (e) Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation;
- (f) Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

39. Critical issues for discussion under each sub-theme will include the following:

- (a) Major trends and progress in implementation, including early results and promising approaches and practices that could be scaled up to achieve set targets;
- (b) Emerging issues, challenges and opportunities to enhance implementation;
- (c) Delivering on the means of implementation;
- (d) Role and status of data and statistics to track progress and to inform necessary policies and other measures to advance implementation;
- (e) Strategic policy recommendations and measures to speed up implementation and achieve the Goals and targets.

C. Format of the Forum

40. The Forum will comprise pre-Forum meetings and main sessions as set out in the following subsections.

1. Pre-Forum meetings and events

41. The 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum will be preceded by a number of meetings, as outlines below, whose outcomes will feed into the deliberations during the session.

(a) Tenth session of the Committee on Sustainable Development

42. The ECA Committee on Sustainable Development is one of the statutory and sectoral subsidiary bodies of the Commission and its outcomes feed into sessions of the Africa Regional Forum. The Committee, which meets on a biennial basis, serves as a forum of experts that provides advice to the Commission in integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in line with the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. In this regard, the Committee provides guidance to ECA in its work in the areas of new technologies and innovation, green economy and natural resources development, and management and climate change, which fall under the Commission's subprogramme on innovations, technologies and the management of Africa's natural resources.

43. The tenth session of the Committee on Sustainable Development will be held on 17 May 2017, at the same venue and back-to-back with the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum. The Committee will bring together experts and policymakers representing the three constituencies – economic, social and environmental – to review and provide guidance on the ECA subprogramme on innovations, technologies and the management of Africa's natural resources.

44. Specifically, the Committee will oversee and give guidance on the implementation of the 2016–2017 work programme, and also on the priorities of the subprogramme in the context of the ECA strategic framework and proposed programme budget for the 2018–2019 biennium. The Committee's tenth session is expected to result in clear guidance and direction on enhanced implementation of the 2016–2017 work programme and on priorities for the 2018–2019 biennium for the ECA subprogramme.

(b) **Regional workshop on preparations for the 2017 voluntary national reviews at the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum**

45. This workshop, which has been organized by the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ECA, will be held on 17 May 2017 at the same venue as the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum. The objective of the workshop is to strengthen preparations for the 2017 voluntary national reviews through a regional exchange of experience and lessons learnt among the volunteering countries in the region. The meeting will also be an opportunity to take stock of preparations, including early signs of progress, along with the challenges encountered, and it will provide a space for peer learning and the provision of mutual support.

(c) **Capacity-building workshop for major groups and other stakeholders**

46. This workshop has been organized by ECA in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and will be held on 17 May 2017, in parallel with the tenth session of the Committee on Sustainable Development at the same venue as the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum. The workshop will bring together representatives of African major groups and other stakeholders, with the objective of strengthening the capacity of these groups and stakeholders to engage effectively in the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the two agendas. The workshop will adopt an outcome that will feed into deliberations by the Forum.

2. **Africa Regional Forum**

47. The principal components of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum will be as follows:

(a) *Opening*: The Chair of the 2016 Africa Regional Forum will deliver short remarks and preside over the opening of the session. The ECA Executive Secretary will welcome participants on behalf of the United Nations family, followed by representatives of the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission, who will deliver statements. The 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum will then be officially opened by the representative of Ethiopia;

(b) *High-level panel meeting on the theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving inclusive growth and prosperity for all”*: The meeting will feature interactive discussions by a panel comprising senior officials, including ministers from countries undertaking voluntary national reviews at the 2016 and 2017 meetings of the high-level political forum. The selected panellists will represent sectors related to the focus Goals for the 2017 high-level political forum and the meeting sub-themes;

(c) *Overview of the progress report on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063*: During this part of the session, a presentation will be given on the report by ECA and the African Union Commission on the Sustainable Development Goals. By spotlighting the focus Goals selected for the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum and the related targets of Agenda 2063, the presentation will give the Forum a snapshot of progress in implementation, existing and emerging challenges and policy recommendations designed to boost the pace, scale and quality of outcomes. During this overview session, attention will also be drawn to the support provided by ECA and the African Union Commission for implementation of the two Agendas;

(d) *Round table on learning and experience-sharing*: This event will comprise selected senior experts and policymakers from countries engaged in the 2016 and 2017 voluntary national reviews, countries that are frontrunners in implementation of Agenda 2063, major groups and representative of the donor community. These panellists will share their views, experience and lessons learned and highlight actions to enhance implementation of the two agendas. Outcomes of the various pre-Forum meetings will be highlighted during the round table;

(e) *Parallel panel meetings on the sub-themes of the Forum*: At this session, there will be six parallel panel meeting based on the sub-themes of the

session. The panel members will include country representatives, and representatives of major groups, ECA, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and UNDP, in keeping with their areas of interest and comparative advantage. Participants at the parallel meetings will consider the progress made in implementation, sub-theme by sub-theme, and agree on key messages on the various sub-themes to be presented to the plenary;

(f) *Report back to plenary from the breakout groups:* The parallel panel meetings will report back to the plenary, highlighting the key messages for each sub-theme covered by the respective meetings;

(g) *Consideration and adoption of key messages:* During this session, the Forum will consider, refine and adopt the key messages to be submitted to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as regional inputs by Africa to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum.

D. Expected outputs

48. The meeting will generate the following outputs, which will be disseminated widely:

(a) Agreed collective input by Africa to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum, including policy options, in the form of key messages on the theme and sub-themes of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum;

(b) Policy papers on the sub-themes of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum;

(c) Report of the deliberations of the Forum containing, among other elements, salient issues, priorities and recommendations on the theme of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum.

E. Expected outcomes

49. The 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum is expected to lead to:

(a) Increased understanding and enhanced capacity of member States, major groups and other stakeholders to design and implement policies and strategies to accelerate the pace of implementation and ensure effective follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Clear articulation of, and agreement on, Africa's collective inputs in the form of key messages to the high-level political forum at its 2017 meeting. The key messages will include regional priorities, policy options and recommendations on the theme and sub-themes of the Africa Regional Forum at its 2017 session.

F. Documentation

50. The documents for the meeting include:

(a) Pre-session documentation:

(i) Present concept note;

(ii) Africa regional report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063;

(iii) Report on support by ECA and the African Union Commission for the implementation, follow-up and review of the two agendas;

(iv) Reports covering the sub-themes of the session;

- (v) Reports and outcome documents of relevant past meetings and events, including the 2016 session of the Africa Regional Forum.
- (b) In-session documentation:
 - (i) Draft key messages of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum at its 2017 meeting;
 - (ii) Draft report of the deliberations of the session, containing, among other elements, salient issues, priorities and recommendations on the theme of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum.
- (c) Post-session documentation:
 - (i) Agreed key messages of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum at its 2017 meeting;
 - (ii) Final report of the deliberations of the Forum, containing, among other elements, salient issues, priorities and recommendations on the theme of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum.

G. Participants

51. The following are expected to attend:

- (a) All 54 member States of ECA (high level experts from ministries or agencies in charge of economic planning and finance, environment and social affairs, mining and mineral resources, and science and technology);
- (b) Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, including civil society, business and industry organizations, universities and research institutions;
- (c) African Union Commission;
- (d) African Development Bank;
- (e) NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency;
- (f) Regional economic communities;
- (g) United Nations and other international agencies and organizations;
- (h) Development partners.

H. Working languages

52. The meeting will be conducted in English and French with simultaneous interpretation in the two languages.

I. Dates and venue

53. The 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum will be held from 17 to 19 May 2017 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

J. Contacts

54. Enquiries on the organization of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development should be directed to:

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