



Economic Commission for Africa
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development:
Preparatory and capacity-development workshop for
major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region
Addis Ababa, 17 May 2017

Major groups: concept note

I. Introduction and rationale

1. Major groups and other stakeholders¹ play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development. For instance, their involvement is vital to enhancing inclusion by representing voiceless, marginalized and vulnerable populations; engaging in capacity-building activities; and strengthening the participation in and ownership of development processes by diverse communities, in particular at the national, subnational and local levels. Clearly, major groups have attributes essential to enhancing the reach, effectiveness and durability of development initiatives and outcomes.
2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development thus recognizes the imperative need for the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the Agenda requires participation and partnership of major groups with Governments, the private sector and the United Nations system in the context of a revitalized global partnership to deliver on the ambitious goals and targets that are at its core.
3. The Agenda stipulates that the high-level political forum will support the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the follow-up and review process and enjoins them to report on their contribution towards the implementation of the Agenda. Agenda 2063, which is being implemented in coordination with the 2030 Agenda, requires that African citizens, civil society organizations, women and youth groups and other stakeholder groups be engaged in connection with the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the African development agendas.
4. It is therefore evident that effective implementation of the two agendas requires a range of stakeholders to work together and strengthen their collaborative and integrated approaches with major groups and other stakeholders. Accordingly, the full and effective contribution and participation of major groups and other stakeholders, designed to ensure successful implementation of the two agendas, requires among other inputs, building their knowledge on the processes and procedures for engagement. These groups need access to information so that they better understand their roles and platforms and can engage more effectively with one another, and with governments and

¹ “Major groups and other stakeholders” comprise the following: women; children and youth; indigenous peoples and communities; non-governmental organizations; workers and trade unions; scientific and technological community; business and industry; farmers; local authorities; handicapped people; and the elderly.

other development partners. In this regard, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, has organized workshops to strengthen the capacity of these groups to participate and articulate inputs to the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals at regional and global levels.

5. Through such capacity-development workshops, since 2015 African major groups and other stakeholders have been fully engaged in work on sustainable development as one of the mechanisms providing inputs to the follow-up and review process at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development has a critical role to play in the follow-up and review architecture for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. It ensures that planning, implementation and follow-up mechanisms at regional level are inclusive of all stakeholders, including those from civil society; takes a gender perspective; and is fully conducive to learning and sharing.

6. In their consolidated statement to the 2016 session of the Africa Regional Forum, African major groups and other stakeholders highlighted their important roles in ensuring effective, inclusive and integrated implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The roles identified include strong mobilization of capacity to increase awareness of the two agendas; facilitating the sharing of innovation, knowledge and good practices; making available and promoting the use of citizen-driven data; generating local-level solutions and opportunities for scaling up initiatives with Governments and development partners; and strengthening opportunities for follow-up and review processes that are wider than merely between Governments.

7. In addition, the major groups and other stakeholders called on ECA to facilitate strong connections and continuous engagement between the major groups, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and policymakers. They recommended that member States should integrate major groups and other stakeholders into national multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, committees and commissions for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The major groups and other stakeholders also called on the pan-African regional institutions to support the institutionalization of the major groups and other stakeholders at the regional level and within the regional economic communities to ensure their strategic position in the closer engagement and capacity-building of their constituencies, rather than acting on a merely ad hoc basis and only when such meetings as the sessions of the Africa Regional Forum were taking place.

8. Against this backdrop, the current preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region is being organized by ECA, in collaboration with the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, as part of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The Africa Regional Forum will be held from 17 to 19 May 2017 under the theme “Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all”, to prepare African countries for the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

II. Objectives of the workshop

9. The workshop will be held on 17 May 2017 on the eve of the main meetings of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum and is intended to achieve the following objectives:

(a) To brief major groups and other stakeholders on the follow-up and review process of the Sustainable Development Goals in the light, among other issues, of the approach to the Goals identified for the period 2017–2019;

(b) To promote mutual learning through the exchange of experience, lessons learned and promising approaches and practices in the joint implementation and tracking of the Sustainable Development Goals and goals of Agenda 2063, with special emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals selected for the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum;

(c) To share experience, lessons learned and best practices in civil society engagement in voluntary national reporting processes;

(d) To promote dialogue and consensus among the major groups and other stakeholders on their approaches to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including through the institutionalization of major groups and other stakeholders in regional bodies.

III. Format of the workshop

10. The workshop will comprise an opening session to be addressed by representatives of ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and a plenary session during which presentations will be delivered and discussed. The presentations will focus on the Sustainable Development Goal follow-up and review processes and progress in the implementation in Africa of the Goals and those of Agenda 2063, with particular emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals selected for the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

11. An interactive panel session will follow, to enable the major groups and other stakeholder representatives to share and discuss experiences, lessons learned and promising approaches and practices in the implementation of and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. The panel session will be followed by parallel breakout groups to enable major groups and other stakeholders to articulate their views on advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063 in Africa. The concluding plenary session will enable the groups to consolidate and reach consensus on a joint statement to be delivered during the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and to identify opportunities for better engaging the Africa Regional Forum and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

IV. Expected outcomes

12. The workshop is expected to lead to the following outcomes:

(a) Increased understanding and capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to design and implement approaches and practices to advance implementation of, follow-up to and review of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063;

(b) Articulation of and consensus on perspectives of major groups and other stakeholders to enhance implementation of, follow-up to and review of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063;

(c) Strengthened capacity of major groups and other stakeholders actively and effectively to engage in the follow-up and review processes of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063;

(d) Enhanced cooperation among major groups and other stakeholders, and also between them and other stakeholders, including national, subregional and regional policymakers, practitioners and experts, and United Nations entities;

(e) Strengthened regional coordination mechanism for major groups and other stakeholders to enhance their effective engagement with regional organizations and other stakeholders.

V. Expected outputs

13. The workshop will generate the following outputs, which will be disseminated widely:

(a) Joint statement of major groups and other stakeholders, to be delivered during the 2017 meeting of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;

(b) Communiqué by the major groups and other stakeholders on the workshop and the 2017 meeting of the Africa Regional Forum;

(c) Summary report of the workshop.

VI. Key documents

14. The documents for the workshop include:

(a) The present concept note;

(b) Concept note, agenda and programme of work for the 2017 meeting of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;

(c) Regional report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063;

(d) Background papers on the sub-themes of the 2017 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development:

(i) Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa;

(ii) Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa;

(iii) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all;

(iv) Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls;

(v) Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation;

(vi) Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

VII. Participation

15. The workshop will be attended by representatives of the major groups and other stakeholders, as outlined in the introduction above.

VIII. Working languages

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

IX. Venue and date

17. The workshop will be held on 17 May 2017 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa.

X. Contact

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

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