



---

**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**  
Third session  
Addis Abeba, 17-19 May 2017

## **Africa report on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063**

### **Issues Paper**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. Since the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 came into effect in 2016, African countries have been adopting the two frameworks into their national development plans and designing for their implementation, monitoring and reporting. Most countries have yet to prioritize targets and indicators, or set the baselines, as the data requirements have been enormous. The joint *Agenda 2063/Sustainable Development Goals 2017 Progress Report* (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) *et al.*, forthcoming) assesses the level of adaptation of the two development frameworks into national development plans and progress being made, where data exists. The report underscores the systems being put in place by African Governments towards implementing, monitoring and reporting progress on these global and regional development frameworks.

2. Following the global economic recovery from the 2008–2009 downturn, Africa's real gross domestic product (GDP) grew steadily, at close to 4 per cent, during 2010–2015, well above most other regions (World Bank, 2017), which has contributed to poverty reduction and other socioeconomic improvements. While in 2016 the growth rate tapered off to 1.7 per cent due to adverse weather conditions and low oil and other commodity prices, it is projected to rebound to 3.2 per cent and 3.8 per cent in 2017 and 2018, respectively (ECA, 2017). Long-term prospects remain positive, based on strong fundamentals with growing demand for commodity exports and demographic factors. Given the ageing global population, Africa's youthful population will be a boost for its growth – over the next 20 years, Africa will have a labour force of close to 1.1 billion, larger than that of China or India. The potential demographic dividend that African youth population presents, requires adequate human capital development policies and systems to ensure their productive engagement: and education and skills development opportunities; health systems that can meet the needs of young people; ...

#### **II. Progress of implementation**

3. As a more expansive and ambitious development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 are building on the legacy of the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. It is only the second full year of

implementation and thus not much progress has been achieved, either in the adoption of the Goals or in their actual implementation. The present progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 focuses on six of the Goals: 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; and Goal 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. This is consistent with and aim to contribute directly to the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.

4. It will be noted that, during the Millennium Development Goals era, Africa made much progress in the socioeconomic sectors – especially in terms of increased school enrolment; gender equality; reducing infant and child mortality; reducing maternal mortality; reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases; and increasing access to safe water and sanitation – as well as environmental sustainability.

## **A. Poverty and food insecurity**

5. Poverty and food insecurity remain widespread, especially in Africa, excluding North Africa. Additional measures to create sustainable progress are needed. By 2013, poverty rates (using the income measure of US\$ 1.90/day) in sub-Saharan Africa had been reduced by 15 per cent from the 1990 rates of 56.9 per cent to 41 per cent (World Bank, 2017), with the fastest reductions occurring between 2002 and 2012. Notwithstanding reductions in poverty in Africa, excluding North Africa, the pace has been slower than anticipated, due to the region’s structural challenges and its lack of resilience to shocks, which makes the region susceptible to many reversals (ECA et al., forthcoming). Globally, by 2012 poverty had been reduced to 13 per cent (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), 2016). Africa’s progress in reducing poverty, hunger and food security remains vulnerable to natural and man-made crises, ranging from droughts and floods leading to crop failure to inter-tribal conflicts, civil wars and low investment in agriculture.

6. Based on the Agenda 2063/Sustainable Development Goals 2017 Progress Report (ECA et al., forthcoming), 26.1 per cent of Africa’s population faced severe food insecurity in 2015, up from 25.3 per cent in 2014. Around 355 million people in Africa (excluding North Africa) are moderately or severely food insecure. About 217 million people were undernourished during 2014–2016, an increase of 6 per cent compared with 2010–2012. Low agricultural productivity, high population growth rates and climate change contribute to high rates of food insecurity in Africa. In addition, man-made conflicts such as those in South Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia exacerbate food insecurity in Africa.

## **B. Malnutrition**

7. Between 2000 and 2014, Africa made some progress in reducing malnutrition, but at a much lower rate than other regions. Stunting<sup>1</sup> among children under five years of age in Africa (excluding North Africa) declined to 35.2 per cent in 2014 from 43.3 per cent in 2000, a decline of 18.7 per cent. In North Africa, the decline was 25.7 per cent. The prevalence of undernourishment dropped from 30 per

---

<sup>1</sup> Proportion of children with height-for-age below two standard deviations from the median (World Health Organization Child Growth Standards (HAZ <-2)).

cent in 2000 to 22.9 per cent in 2016 in Africa (excluding North Africa), while that in North Africa remained low, at below 5 per cent.

8. While agriculture plays a key role in reducing hunger and food insecurity, public investments in the sector remain low, with limited progress in research and development, irrigation and developing value chains. None of the subregions achieved the target of allocating 10 per cent of national budgets to agriculture as per the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol).<sup>2</sup>

### **C. School enrolment**

9. By 2013, 9 of 40 countries (22.5 per cent) with data achieved the target, while 19 others came close, with annual net enrolment rates of 80–94 per cent. However, while primary school completion rates have improved in most countries, progress is still low, and structural bottlenecks hamper learning and skills acquisition (ECA et al., 2016).

### **D. Gender equality**

10. Disparities between men and women have narrowed in recent years: more girls are now enrolling in school; women's access to health care is improving, with better health outcomes, including lower maternal mortality ratios across most of Africa; more women are seeking employment in the formal and informal sectors. However, several challenges remain: limited access to education and health services, conservative norms and traditions continue to relegate women and girls to unpaid housework, and women and girls continue to be victims of violence both in the household and in public spaces.

### **E. Child and maternal mortality**

11. Africa, excluding North Africa, has made excellent progress in reducing under-five mortality, faster than all other regions. Excluding North Africa, the under-five mortality rate declined to 83 per 1,000 live births in 2015, from 154/1,000 in 2000. Globally, the under-five mortality rate in 2015 was estimated at 43/1,000. Remarkable progress has been recorded in reducing maternal mortality in Africa, excluding North Africa, to 546 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015 from 846/100,000 in 2000. In North Africa, the figure remained at about 70/100,000. However, maternal mortality in Africa (excluding North Africa) remains high compared with other regions, in part due to limited access to skilled health attendance during pregnancy and at birth and limited access to family planning services. Only 52 per cent of births were attended by skilled health-care personnel in 2015 in Africa, excluding North Africa. Between 2015 and 2030, contraceptive prevalence is projected to continue increasing, particularly in countries where less than half of married or in-union women of reproductive age currently use contraception. Prevalence is projected to increase from 17 to 27 per cent in Western Africa, from 23 to 34 per cent in Central Africa and from 40 to 55 per cent in Eastern Africa.

### **F. HIV and AIDS**

12. Africa has made strong progress in combating the spread of HIV and AIDS. The latest figures show that HIV and AIDS prevalence was 1.48 for every 1,000 uninfected people aged 15–49 years in 2015, down from 3.87/1,000 in 2010. There is wide variation in the prevalence of HIV in the region: Western and Central Africa

<sup>2</sup> Adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in July 2003.

have rates of 2.2/1,000 uninfected people, in Eastern and South Africa prevalence is 7.1/1,000 and in Northern Africa it is <0.1/1,000. And compared with the global prevalence rate of 0.8 per 1,000 uninfected people, the incidence of HIV remains highest in Africa, excluding North Africa. This underscores the importance of ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexuality education, integrated reproductive health services, especially for young people.

## **G. Infrastructure development**

13. Quality infrastructure is an important prerequisite for trade, manufacturing and industrialization. The latest data show that both air shipping and air travel remain extremely low in Africa, excluding North Africa. In 2015, only 45 million passengers travelled by air in Africa, 23 times less than in East-Asia and the Pacific, and air freight volume was only 2.854 billion tons. While value addition through manufacturing is essential for bringing about transformation and prosperity for all, as underscored in Agenda 2063, it remains extremely low in Africa. As a percentage of GDP, manufacturing value added in 2015 was only 10.5 per cent in Africa, excluding North Africa, and 11.3 per cent in North Africa. This is in part due to low investments in research and development: during 2000–2013, Africa's expenditures on research and development as a share of GDP increased marginally, from 0.28 per cent to 0.51 per cent in North Africa, and 0.40 per cent to 0.41 per cent in Africa, excluding North Africa, respectively.

14. Excellent progress is being made on telephone connectivity and Internet access, especially through mobile networks: by 2014, 53.2 per cent of people in Africa, excluding North Africa, were using 3G mobile network (74.8 per cent in North Africa), which compares favourably with 50.1 per cent among the Least Developed Countries.

## **H. Life below water**

15. Data for most of the indicators of Goal 14 are not available. In 2010, 7 of the 28 coastal African countries had a protected area coverage of over 20 per cent.

## **I. Glaring inequalities**

16. The continent-wide and regional picture, however, masks large disparities at national and subnational levels, as well as by age and gender. For example, across all regions, the burden of poverty is much higher among youth and women and more vulnerable to fall into poverty, despite declining trends over time. Reducing inequality through increased attention to the most vulnerable population groups including ensuring access to education/skills training and health services will generate broader results and help to achieve inclusive outcomes in education, health care and other sectors. Addressing data gaps, especially on the structure of the population will help to strengthen evidence-based policymaking, and effectively implement and monitor relevant policies and programmes.

17. Building partnerships for sustainable development largely is still a work in progress, and Africa's share in global merchandise remains very low, at about 2.4 per cent in 2015. As a group and individually, most countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development consistently fall behind on their official development assistance commitments to provide at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national incomes to developing countries, as agreed by the Organization's Development Assistance Committee.

### **III. Emerging issues, challenges and opportunities to enhance implementation**

18. Some key elements for successful mainstreaming of sustainable development into national, subnational and sectoral development plans and strategies have been identified in the literature and in practice (Federe, 2016; Tessama et al., 2013). Based on the conceptual framework work by Federe (2016), ECA is developing a toolkit for harmonizing the domestication of Agenda 2063 and SDGs into national development plans and progress reporting.

#### **A. Political commitment**

19. The leadership of national Governments must fully assume the role of envisioning and spearheading development planning as well as owning the agreed priorities, policies and strategies. Stewardship at the top level is critical for providing direction for long-term inclusive economic growth and development. Appropriate technical teams should then be put in place and facilitated to design sound plans that are costed and lend themselves to evaluation.

#### **B. Clear plans, strategies and policies**

20. National and sectoral plans and policies should build on broad stakeholder consultation and set out clear short- and medium-term goals, with a view to ambitious longer-term targets. More investments in strengthening data systems within countries to enable evidence-based planning, implementation and reporting are required. “Reaching the last mile” and “leaving no one behind” require increased availability of information on the poor, their gender, age group, geographical location and their binding constraints.

#### **C. Institutional framework**

21. Strong institutional and coordination frameworks are required to bring together all relevant State and non-State actors. Strong institutions are critical to implementing the separation of powers doctrine of good governance, promoting accountability and ensuring inclusive participation in economic, political and social life (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012, 2008; Easterly, 2001; Landes, 1998; North 1990). Strong institutions help to ensure that the population participates in debates on issues of common concern – such as property rights, taxation and trade – that are important for sustaining inclusive growth and development. A strong coordination framework is important to ensure that all key actors play to the agreed priorities, have adequate information and resources, and are able to report progress and results of their activities.

#### **D. Financing mechanisms**

22. Well-functioning medium- to long-term financing is essential, with appropriate ways to leverage new financial resources. Strategies for mobilizing domestic and external resources to finance development plans should be designed and adhered to. The first priority should be domestic resources so that implementation of the plans and policies is not derailed by changes in external priorities.

23. In addition, awareness by key economic actors and the general public of both Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, and what they stand for, as well as capacity for implementation and reporting, is important. All players need to understand the critical importance of the integrated and balanced approach to sustainable development and socioeconomic and environmental transformation

underscored by the Sustainable Development Goals through improving the quality and inclusiveness of growth. It is also important to understand the importance of peace and security and home-grown solutions to economic and social governance underscored by Agenda 2063. Translation of the development frameworks into the main national and local languages will help to ensure they are available and understood at the local levels.

## **E. Entry points**

24. The best entry point for mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 into national and sectoral plans is when countries are designing new plans or reviewing current ones. At any time, the 54 African countries are at different cycles of designing, implementing or evaluating/reviewing their development plans. As of 2016, at least 34 African countries had a long-term development plan, and all but 4 had a medium-term development plan (ECA, 2016). The coverage and level of integration of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals of these national development plans differ. Thus, it is important to support the countries in mapping Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals and convergence with the national development plans in terms of goals, targets and indicators, at every stage of the current planning cycle.

25. It is important to take stock of progress in mainstreaming the two agendas among African countries to identify the stages at which countries are in adapting and domesticating the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, and identify strengths and gaps. Such a stocktaking exercise should also identify which agencies and partners are involved in the Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals alignment and domestication, as well as the tools being used. This is important for defining suitable approaches and toolkits, as well as resources required to support the countries' efforts to mainstream the two frameworks.

26. Currently, there are several tools attempting to provide such measures, including:

(a) The Mainstreaming Acceleration Policy Support (MAPS), which aims to localize Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans, but does not include Agenda 2063;

(b) The Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development toolkit, which aims to identify clear targets and international community accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals; and

(c) The Integrated Green Economy Implementation Programme, which supports planning for green economies at national and decentralized levels.

27. Others, such as the US National Reporting Platform: National Statistics for Global SDGs, are emerging.

## **IV. Delivering on the means of implementation**

### **A harmonized approach to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals is required**

28. The integrated nature of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals calls for an integrated approach to their implementation and reporting. Thus, development policy should address not only universal access to basic goods and services (education, food, health care, housing, water and energy, and social protection) but also the quality of such services and impact on outcomes. For example, much of the progress noted in terms of school enrolment during the Millennium Development Goals era did not consider transition to secondary level and beyond,

nor learning achievements. Similarly, socioeconomic policies at national, subnational and sectoral levels should take adequate consideration of their distributional impacts to better understand their contribution to reducing inequalities. It is also important to undertake impact evaluations of policies to generate lessons for scaling up what works and addressing negative impacts.

29. ECA is spearheading support for an integrated toolkit to harmonize the domestication of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 to reduce transaction costs of reporting on both strategies. A web-based Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 alignment tool has been developed and is being pilot tested with select countries to confirm its usefulness and identify areas to fine-tune before it is rolled out. A conceptual framework and Excel template of the toolkit was prepared by a consultant.

30. The Harmonized Agenda 2063, Sustainable Development Goals and Planning Toolkit has four key attributes that are major improvements over other existing toolkits:

(a) Comprehensive, with the ability to capture all dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063; it can be used to assess not only the extent of mainstreaming across dimensions, but also the quality of mainstreaming at different levels;

(b) Multi-layered, allowing for assessment of the extent of mainstreaming Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 at different levels, including subnational, national, and regional levels;

(c) Dynamic and flexible, allowing for reporting progress on adaptation and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, as well as the dimensions of sustainable development;

(d) Forward-oriented and able to help identify gaps in the mainstreaming efforts at different levels. It is therefore suitable for designing capacity support programmes, at subnational, national and regional levels. The toolkit allows for entry of national data for relevant indicators of all goals and targets, and can support progress reporting as well as comparison between countries.

## **V. Conclusion and strategic policy recommendations**

31. Structural transformation, which is given priority in both the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, and harnessing the demographic dividend in Africa are more urgent than ever to ensure inclusive growth; reduce poverty, inequality and susceptibility to shocks; as well as expand and realize potential through education and skills training, health services and employment opportunities for the bulging youth population.

### **A. Enhance efforts for poverty reduction**

32. More effort and focus on poverty reduction and eliminating extreme hunger are needed towards realizing Sustainable Development Goals 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) and 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). Efforts in reducing poverty are linked with and should be aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries. Studies have shown that reducing inequality by buttressing the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable helps to reduce poverty faster. Policies on job creation, increasing household income, secure property rights, infrastructure development, and enhancing human capital and labour productivity are important for expanding domestic markets to promote demand and economic growth.

## **B. Increase investments in agriculture**

33. Increasing investments in agriculture will help to contain extreme hunger and feed into processing industries and export trade. Despite the commitments for targeted investments in agriculture under the Maputo Protocol, the sector remains highly underinvested; no African subregion met the target of allocating 10 per cent of the national budget to agriculture. Increased investments in research and development for climate-resistant breeds and appropriate technology – for example, irrigation and developing value chains, as well as other proactive measures, such as investor-friendly policies and regulations – are required to expand both agricultural output and productivity.

## **C. Expand employment opportunities**

34. With the rapid population growth and youth bulge in most African countries, capacity development and skills training to enhance employment opportunities are needed more than ever before. More attention to labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture and processing is needed to promote employment and for faster reduction in poverty and inequality compared with growth in capital- and skilled labour-intensive sectors such as mining, finance and real estate.

## **D. Expand fiscal space for equitable spending**

35. To realize the breadth and depth of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important for African Governments to design measures to expand fiscal space. Some of the areas to consider include improving tax administration, broadening the tax base and eliminating loopholes for tax avoidance, especially among the rich; prioritizing expenditures with the biggest impact on the less privileged (such as access to education, health services, infrastructure, etc.); monitoring the reach of public spending to intended purposes; and fighting illicit financial flows. Domestic borrowing for critical priority spending such as education, health care and infrastructure development should be considered as a first option. Concessional external financing and debt issuance should also be sought for large investments.

## **E. Promote trade above aid**

36. Africa's share of global merchandise exports remains low and declining, 2.4 per cent in 2015<sup>3</sup>. While the unfavourable commodity prices, which dominate the bulk of Africa's exports, are responsible for this, Africa can do more to benefit from the ever-growing international value chains:

(a) Eliminating barriers to trade – including addressing infrastructure bottlenecks, removing non-trade barriers, securing property rights, technology transfer, skills acquisition, etc. – is necessary for expanding opportunities for increased growth;

(b) Strengthening South–South cooperation with and among emerging economies will create opportunities for learning, low-cost labour and technology. Stronger bilateral and regional integration, as well as regional development forums (including regional development banks), will help to improve regional trade and promote manufacturing;

(c) Continuing dialogue with the rich nations will open trade opportunities with African countries and meet their obligations for official development assistance,

---

<sup>3</sup> Data based on WTO International Trade Statistics (WTO, 2016).

on the understanding that equitable international distribution is important to reducing inequality.

## **F. Strengthen capacity and systems for data**

37. For timely policy decisions and adequate comparison within and between countries, the national statistics offices across the continent require stronger capacity for gathering and analysing data on a broad range of socioeconomic issues including demographic profiles. It is important to generate data for baselines and to continuously analyse the impacts of different macroeconomic and microeconomic policies on trends in poverty and inequality, education, health, labour, social protection, etc. In addition, it is important to analyse expenditures on different sectors of the economies and their impacts on overall economic growth and progress in reducing poverty and inequality, outcomes in education, health care, etc. Disaggregated data by age, gender, income and geographical location are needed to ensure accurate assessment of progress in various areas, as well as identification and categorization of gaps and issues, so that they can be addressed by the relevant authorities. The national statistical offices, supported by development partners, need to update their statistics development systems and data gathering plans in support of the reporting requirements of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **G. Harmonized framework for progress monitoring**

38. To be able to efficiently and effectively measure impact, Governments require a harmonized framework for monitoring and reporting progress on both Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. A dynamic platform or toolkit is needed that helps to first assess the degree of integration between Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, on the one hand, and the national development plans, on the other, and at the same time lends itself to measuring progress on the two frameworks.

## **H. Strengthen institutions**

39. Successful implementation of both agendas requires an effective institutional architecture for an integrated and coordinated approach to problem-solving and policymaking. The role of stronger and capable national and subnational planning agencies and personnel is paramount in ensuring that the various sectors work together to ensure that the three dimensions of sustainable development are reflected in all aspects of development programming. Long-term planning and policy coordination, and ongoing progress monitoring, as well as impact evaluation, are needed to identify what works, and to address policy failures and gaps.

## References

- Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J.A. (2008). “The role of institutions in growth and development”. Working Paper No. 10. Commission on Growth and Development. Washington, D.C. The World Bank.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2012). *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York. Crown Business, Crown Publishing Group.
- ECA (2017). *Economic Report on Africa 2017: Urbanization and Industrialization for Africa’s Transformation* (United Nations publication, sales No. E.17.II.K.1). Addis Ababa.
- ECA, African Development Bank, African Union Commission and United Nations Development Programme (2016). *MDGs to Agenda 2063/SDGs Transition Report 2016: Towards an integrated and coherent approach to sustainable development in Africa*. A joint annual publication of ECA, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Programme. Addis Ababa.
- ECA, African Development Bank, African Union Commission and United Nations Development Programme (forthcoming). *Agenda 2063/ Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report 2017*. A joint annual publication of ECA, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Programme. Addis Ababa.
- Easterly, W. (2001). *The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists’ Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics*. Cambridge, MA. MIT Press.
- Federe, T. (2016). Supporting African governments in development planning and the integration of globally agreed sustainable development frameworks into national development frameworks: An application of mainstreaming toolkit to Ethiopia. A report submitted to ECA. Unprocessed.
- Landes, D.S., (1998). *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor*. New York. W.W. Norton and Company Inc.
- North, D.C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. New York. Cambridge University Press.
- Tessama, Z., M. Davis, P. Tella and F. Lambe (2013). “Mainstreaming sustainable energy access into national development planning: the case of Ethiopia”. Stockholm Environment Institute. Working Paper 2013-09. Stockholm.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2016). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* (United Nations publication, sales No. E.16.I.10). New York. Available from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202016.pdf>.
- World Bank (2017). World Development Indicators database. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>.
- World Trade Organization (2016) World Trade Statistical Review 2016. Available from: [https://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/wts2016\\_e/wts2016\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/wts2016_e/wts2016_e.pdf).