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First joint meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism  
for Africa and the United Nations Development Group

Dakar, 25 and 26 March 2017

## **Report on United Nations System Support to Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth**



## I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

### A. Attendance

1. The eighteenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa of United Nations agencies and organizations (RCM-Africa), working in Africa in support of the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme, was held at the King Fahd Palace Hotel in Dakar on 25 and 26 March 2017, under the theme, "*United Nations System Support to Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth*". The session, which was jointly organized by the secretariats of RCM-Africa and the regional United Nations Development Group for Africa (R-UNDG), marked an historic first joint meeting.

2. The session was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission (AUC), Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, Acting Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Secretary-General, Chair of R-UNDG, and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

3. The agenda for the session was based on the draft agenda circulated in document ECA/RCM/18/1, as follows:

1. Opening of the session
2. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work
3. Plenary presentation and discussion on United Nations system support to harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth
4. Plenary discussion on enablers for employment and entrepreneurship
5. Plenary discussion on migration and youth in the context of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030
6. Plenary discussion on governance, rights and youth empowerment
7. Plenary discussion on strengthening the regional coordination mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) for effective harnessing of the demographic dividend through investments in youth:
  - (a) African Union - United Nations progress report on the work of RCM-Africa
  - (b) Update on implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030
  - (c) Discussion on the ten-year capacity-building programme (TYCBP) and transition to the Programme for Africa's Integration and Development Agenda (PAIDA)
  - (d) Adoption of the African Union - United Nations joint programme for 2017-2018
  - (e) Introduction of the monitoring and evaluation platform of Africa's development within the context of the renewed United Nations – African Union Partnership
  - (f) Update on the African Forum for Sustainable Development for follow-up to, and review of Agenda 2063/Agenda 2030

- (g) Culture as a priority for Africa: Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030

Other business

8. Presentation and adoption of the draft report of the meeting
9. Closing of the session

4. The session was attended by representatives of all agencies and organizations of the United Nations system working in support of Africa and R-UNDG Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa members, African Union Commission, African Development Bank (AfDB), NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) secretariat, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). The full list of participants is attached.

## **B. Opening statements**

5. In her opening statement, Ms. Francine Muyumba, President of Pan-African Youth, began by expressing appreciation to the African Union and the United Nations for giving African youth the opportunity to be a crucial part of the RCM-Africa session as well as making youth development a priority as indicated by the theme of the eighteenth session. Ms. Muyumba highlighted numerous gruelling challenges which are faced by African youth on the continent. Currently, Africa's youth constituted up to 60 per cent of unemployed Africans. Indeed, although many African countries had successfully increased access to basic education, the low quality of education of the youth contributed to the high rate of youth unemployment as they were not gaining the skills necessary for joining the workforce. The lack of access to credit, insufficient skills and lack of knowledge on how to start a business remained major challenges for youth in Africa. As such, they did not yet see themselves as the driving force they could be in propelling the continent's development.

6. Addressing the high levels of migration out of Africa, Ms. Muyumba pointed out that every year, young men and women were leaving their countries in search of better opportunities outside the continent. Many of these young people were unfortunately dying crossing the Mediterranean. She urged that the "Africa we want" must proactively respond to the needs of its large youth population. She reiterated the commitment of Pan-African Youth to participation in the efficient implementation and completion of Africa's development plans, including Agenda 2063. She called upon the 5<sup>th</sup> cluster of RCM, which focuses on Gender and Youth, to bring all the necessary agencies together towards resource mobilization for "Delivering as One" on youth development in Africa. She urged all United Nations agencies in Africa to support youth initiatives, and she commended the United Nations for its demonstrated commitment to youth. She further called upon the United Nations system to strengthen its support to the youth programmes within the African Union and provide associated support to member States. In closing, she stressed that the African youth were committed to working with all institutions to implement the African Union Roadmap effectively, and acknowledged the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the other specialized agencies which have been preparing the Roadmap on the demographic dividend.

7. The Assistant Secretary-General and Chair of the R-UNDG, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, in his opening remarks, stated that two principles were highly relevant to the meeting. First, how RCM could act with a sense of urgency, and second, the principle of working as one in the United Nations. He expressed his delight at being a part of the first joint meeting and added that RCM provided a platform for the African Union and the United Nations to

dialogue effectively on African issues. He stressed that the theme of the meeting was timely as Africa has the largest youth population in the world, with the youth comprising the largest percentage of unemployed persons.

8. He added that the meeting was also timely in terms of beginning to adapt to the new way of working introduced by the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres. This essentially meant working in a coordinated, integrated and coherent manner to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He commended the African Union for adopting the African Youth Charter in 2006 and for devoting the theme of the current session to harnessing the potential of the African youth. He noted that every 24 hours, nearly 33,000 additional young Africans were searching for jobs. As such, the eighteenth session of RCM-Africa presented a much-needed opportunity to take concrete action in turning Africa's youth bulge into a demographic dividend. Mr. Mar Dieye also highlighted 10 key action points, which should guide cohesive United Nations support, led by UNFPA, for implementation of the African Union Roadmap. Governments should:

- (a) Devote a sizeable percentage of their budgets to youth programmes.
- (b) Establish youth investment banks and youth investment windows in development banks, and scale up initiatives such as the African Development Bank-European Investment Bank joint programme, "Boost Africa", which supports the creation of innovative and highly scalable start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- (c) Promote youth entrepreneurship development programmes, combined with skills development, and programmes for connecting the young entrepreneurs to funding opportunities, investors, technology and know-how. The National Youth Service Scheme in Nigeria is a good example to highlight.
- (d) Provide incentives to private sectors for youth employment, including easing labour market entry.
- (e) Launch vast "Youth Rural Investment" schemes. The Songhai Initiative in Benin is a successful example to emulate and scale up.
- (f) Allocate a sizeable proportion of sovereign wealth funds to youth programmes; in Brazil, for instance, a law was passed to allocate 75 per cent of the royalties from new oil exploration contracts to education.
- (g) Promote youth political participation, by establishing youth representation quotas for securing a minimum percentage of youths in decision-making bodies, including parliaments. A new IPU report has found, that at a time when the global youth population is the largest it has ever been in history, young people continue to be chronically underrepresented in decision-making processes; only 1.5 per cent of African parliamentarians are aged below 30, compared to an already low world average of 2 per cent.
- (h) Develop a youth entrepreneurship portal for Africa to connect young innovators and entrepreneurs with mentors, apprenticeships, and funding opportunities. The Youth Connekt programme in Rwanda is a good example to mention. It has been fruitful in terms of connecting young people with peers and role models, skills development, and access to finance, entrepreneurship and self-employment. Within only three years, the Youth Connekt boot camp created about 1000 permanent jobs and 2700 temporary jobs.

- (i) Support the setting up of “youth markers” in public expenditures and systematically review them to see if they are “youth sensitive”.
- (j) Support the mapping and sharing of good practices in youth investment and youth development programmes in Africa and from outside.

9. Mr. Mar Dieye concluded by stating that he was convinced that the meeting would come up with even more ideas for harnessing the youth resource in Africa for the continental benefit.

10. Due to constraints beyond their control, H.E. Mr. Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of African Union Commission, and Mr. Abadalla Hamdok, Acting Executive Secretary of ECA delivered their statements on the second day of the meeting, 26 March 2017.

11. In his statement, Mr. Hamdok noted that the United Nations, with all its imperfections, remained a force for good. Partnering with the African Union, its agencies in Africa, through the regional and the subregional coordination mechanisms, had been supporting and advancing development efforts at both levels. He commended the work of the UNDG as unparalleled, in partnering with Governments for pushing forward development initiatives, through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) at the country level. He affirmed that through RCM, the United Nations would continue to support the African Union, the regional economic communities and member States in their efforts to achieve an “integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”.

12. Mr. Hamdok said it was extremely important that Africa fully exploit the demographic transition because of the potential economic and societal benefits. He reminded the meeting that the success of the “Asian Tigers” or the “Asian Miracle” was in part attributed to harnessing the demographic dividends in several countries in Asia. He further emphasized that the success in Asia clearly signalled that Africa's demographic transition, if positively utilized, would contribute to boosting future economic growth, shared prosperity and to making Africa a global player. Hence, to reap the demographic dividend embodied in youth, African countries need to put sound economic policies in place to support this accompanying demographic transition and create productive jobs for these young new workers, to support higher growth rates and rising income per person.

13. He cautioned that Africa should not wait for the demographic transition to take action. Over the long-term, there were opportunities for countries to institute policies to address some of the more critical constraints to youth employment, including basic education. He recommended that African countries should invest more in education, particularly secondary and tertiary education, to support innovations needed in the workforce. The low level of education of the African youth population was an important factor in youth underemployment as specific technical skills were needed in the fast-changing work environment. His recommendations for taking action included:

- (a) Enhance the comprehensive nature of existing programmes for youth so as to be more effective in addressing the constraints to youth employment and empowerment, capitalizing on best practices around the world. This would require the introduction of new programmes or reform of existing youth programmes by including measures to address the multiple constraints the youth face, such as access to credit, better information and networks, and female workers’ specific constraints.
- (b) Institute gender-sensitive and youth-targeted interventions within the context of the broader policies. Broader government policies

are needed to support the creation of businesses and employment, including those for the youth.

- (c) Create an enabling environment to allow for the participation of the private sector in the creation of decent and high-quality jobs.
- (d) Increase their investments in social infrastructure with a focus on improving human capital, promoting life-long learning and good health, and fresh opportunities for public participation and citizenship at all ages, within a framework of human rights.
- (e) Direct their macroeconomic policies to creation of decent and high-quality jobs to absorb new workforce entrants as well as increase overall productivity.

14. Mr. Hamdok ended by reminding the meeting that the Framework for a Renewed United Nations/African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017 - 2027 (PAIDA), which is anchored on Agenda 2063 and its ten-year implementation plan, was the new framework for the engagement between the United Nations and African Union. He recommended that PAIDA be the anchor for deepening the relationship between RCM-Africa and R-UNDG. He informed the meeting that, together, RCM and R-UNDG would take “development” to the people of Africa who deserve the best and who continue to call on the United Nations to “Deliver as One”.

15. H.E. Mr. Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of African Union Commission, called on African countries to embark on a policy of industrialization. The imperative for industrialization was paramount because of the global shift in production and trade patterns, the emergence of new growth poles, the revolution in information and communication technology (ITC), changes in demography and rapid urbanization. These changes were presenting African countries with tremendous opportunities. Industrialization would cause rapid economic transformation to ensure countries move into highly productive activities, especially manufacturing and modern services. Through this process, jobs would be created and millions could be lifted out of poverty.

16. Mr. Quartey emphasized that industrialization remained the cornerstone to Africa's sustainable economic development. However, industrialization hinged on countries effectively using science, technology and innovation. This was because the determinants of growth were attributed to capital formation and a skilled labour force. Recent productivity increases in a number of African countries could be attributed to a skilled labour force and greater efficiency in the use of science, technology and innovation. However, he emphasized that Africa had to consider investments in education as key to its development agenda. African children needed to be well prepared for the ever-changing labour market, which was increasingly demanding skilled labour, those with ability to innovate and embrace cutting-edge science and technology. For this to happen, he urged that a policy of “every African child in school by 2020” should begin now, because education was central to Africa's development, through investment in the youth.

17. He reiterated that Africa's development also rested on its ability to pursue programmes of regional cooperation and integration. The imperative for regional integration in Africa was particularly strong due to the size, structure and low level of development of the economies of continent. With the exception of a few, most of the economies in Africa were small and non-diversified, with very little trading relations between the countries. This market fragmentation was impeding industrial development. Markets in Africa should be integrated so that member States could overcome the constraints arising from their small domestic markets and reap the benefits of economies of scale, stronger competition and increased domestic and foreign investment.

18. Mr. Quartey underscored that for Africa to achieve its vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena” it was important to understand why the continent was so “disintegrated”. He reminded the meeting of the similarities in the cultures of African countries and how each and every day African people moved across “artificial borders” to visit their families who carried passports different from theirs. These borders were created by colonial masters who met in Berlin in 1844. He recommended that Africa should have access to the proceedings of the Berlin Conference of 1844 so as to have a full understanding of the rationale for the drawing of the borders on the continent. He observed that access to the proceedings of the Berlin Conference would inspire Africans to chart their path towards a united Africa.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work** [agenda item 2]

19. The eighteenth session adopted its agenda and programme of work.

## **III. Plenary 1: United Nations System Support to Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth** [agenda item 3]

20. The session was co-chaired by H.E. Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga, African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology and Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Secretary-General, Chair of UNDG, and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP. The panellists were: Mr. Haile Menkerios, Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union, and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union; Mr. Alberic Kacou, Vice-President, African Development Bank Group; Mr. Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director, West and Central Africa Regional Office, UNFPA; Mr. David Mehdi Hamman, Director, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSSA); Ms. Rosemary Museminali Kobusingye, representative to the African Union and Economic Commission for Africa joint programme on HIV/AIDS; and a youth representative, Mr. Jusvi Didier Mabika Ngassaki, Projects and Entrepreneurship Adviser, Youth Ministry of the Congo.

21. In the discussions that ensued, the following issues were highlighted:

- (a) The need to synergize efforts and response in the implementation of the Roadmap on the theme for 2017, “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth” in the context of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.
- (b) All actors at national, regional and continental levels have responsibility for popularizing and domesticating the theme of the year into national strategies and should put concrete programmes in place to this effect.
- (c) The need for the United Nations to “deliver as one” within the RCM system to implement the theme, in order to avoid duplication of efforts, and implement new pilot projects.
- (d) An accountability mechanism should be put in place at all levels.
- (e) Strategies to achieve the implementation of the theme for 2017 could include but not be limited to, an increase in the budget for education, establishment of youth volunteer programmes, and increased technical and vocational training.

- (f) A change of mind-set so as to inculcate a culture of youth empowerment, to see the youth as the demographic assets they are instead of as liabilities.
- (g) Unemployed youth are vulnerable and easily become instruments in the hands of perpetrators of crime, violence and extremism.
- (h) Trained but unemployed youth, in the absence of opportunities back home tend to migrate for "greener pastures" which constitutes a huge loss to the continent.
- (i) Governments have to create an enabling, conducive environment for trained youth to be retained on the continent, including respect for human rights, and an overhaul of the entire social fabric, that sees the youth as a problem, instead of as an opportunity.
- (j) A vision such as Agenda 2063 entails that Africans first and foremost count on themselves before looking to others outside the continent.
- (k) There is convergence between Agenda 2063, SDGs and the AfDB High 5. All three frameworks have similar emphasis and should guide action, with inbuilt, periodic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- (l) Young Africans need encouragement and training to become entrepreneurs in modern agriculture, underpinned by the use of ICT.
- (m) RCM should support the launch of the theme of the year in all member States and emphasize that the theme should go beyond 2017.
- (n) Harnessing the demographic dividend could be the blue print for implementation of SDGs in Africa.
- (o) The need to replicate and scale up successful initiatives on youth empowerment in Africa and harnessing of the demographic dividend in other African countries, and to borrow from international experience.
- (p) The challenge facing Africa to achieve positive outcomes on various fronts, with the existing marginalization of youth, who are more than 60 per cent unemployed.
- (q) Harnessing the demographic dividend requiring among other things, a change of attitude towards youth in the various policies.
- (r) The need to strengthen integration and the changed way of working within the United Nations, through inter-agency collaboration, so as to capitalize on each agency's value added for greater impact.
- (s) Children and youth, as the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Africa, among other youth health issues, should be mainstreamed into national, regional and continental programmes.
- (t) The need to involve the youth in all programmes concerning them and at all stages.
- (u) Public-Private Partnerships needed at national, regional and continental levels in support of youth programmes.
- (v) Facilitation of access to financing of youth-initiated SMEs through various instruments including micro –finance.
- (w) The need for youth employment to be tackled at the macroeconomic level, including involvement of ministries responsible for finance and economy.

### **Key Recommendations and Way forward**

22. After exhaustive deliberations, the following recommendations were made:

1. The United Nations is urged to support the African Union and its organs to synergize efforts and response in the implementation of the Roadmap on the theme for 2017, “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth” in the context of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development;
2. The United Nations, African Union and all other stake holders are urged to address the issue of population growth and its linkages to economic growth and as a key driver for migration, high unemployment rate, and many challenges facing the African youth ranging from education to health in terms of access and quality;
3. The United Nations, in collaboration with the African Union, is urged to support member State initiatives in encouraging young Africans to be entrepreneurs in modern agriculture underpinned by the use of ICT;
4. African countries are urged to involve the youth in all programmes concerning them and at all stages;
5. African countries are urged to facilitate access to financing of youth-initiated SMEs through various instruments including micro-finance;
6. The United Nations is urged to support the African Union and its organs in the creation of Public - Private Partnerships (PPPs), at national, regional and continental levels, in support of entrepreneurial development of the youth.

## **IV. Plenary 2: Enablers for employment and entrepreneurship [agenda item 4]**

23. The session was co-chaired by Mr. Engida Getachew, Deputy Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency. The panellists were: Dr. Moubarack Lo, Chief Economist, Office of the Prime Minister, Senegal; Mr. Aeneas Chapinga Chuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa, International Labour Organization; Ms. Oulimata Sarr, Regional Advisor on Women's Economic Empowerment, West and Central Africa, UN Women; and Mr. Alvin G. Odinukwe, African Union Youth Volunteer Corps; Mr. Li Yong, Director-General of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), one of the panellists, was not able to take part in the session because a change in the time of the session conflicted with a pre-committed engagement which was outside Senegal. However, he left behind his notes for inclusion in the records of the meeting.

24. The co-chairs set the tone of the session by indicating the need to understand the contextual situation. The global environment has changed since the era of industrialization in the nineteenth century. With a focus on the way forward, they emphasized the need to adapt to change, especially in terms of the education system. Taking the case of medium-size countries, it was underscored that the figures for youth unemployment were growing by up to 300,000 per year. Hence, industrialization in this type of country could not avoid going through agricultural transformation. This would essentially lead to increased productivity in agricultural production and further develop the rural space. It was also emphasized that government was not the sole creator of jobs. Rather, it should create the enabling environment for employment through the

private sector. The literature proved that entrepreneurship could be taught, and so all actors should facilitate the situation for “growing” entrepreneurs. The massive number of unemployed youth was noted (for example, 250, 000 in a country of 20 million). It was acknowledged that tackling youth unemployment required leapfrogging through technological development. The global environment was moving into knowledge economies. To ensure that Africa did not become marginalized, technological innovation and development were priorities. Reviewing governance systems was also critical because a continent where two-thirds of the population was under 25 could not be governed in the same way as a continent such as Europe where two-thirds of the population was over the age of forty.

25. The panellists called for public policy that ensured engagement of the private sector and urged that development strategies should focus on employment creation. Therefore, public policy and implementation should take development of enterprises into account, not only large firms but also small-scale businesses, which should also be incorporated into the national plans. It was observed that there was growing evidence in Africa that graduates constituted the largest number of unemployed youth. This should not deter African countries from continuing to train more university graduates. However, focus must be placed on aligning the demand for skills with the supply. Further, financing was also necessary to allow SMEs to create jobs. African countries were called upon to continue pursuing industrialization programmes with emphasis on creating industrial parks and incubators which in turn would spur more development. It was also noted that the administrative conditions and environment in Africa remained a challenge. Even when enabling reforms were made at the macro level they did not adequately trickle down to the micro level, which is where policy implementation takes place.

26. A panellist noted that the future of Africa in terms of job creation depended on the transformation of economies and on adding value to primary commodities. Although African economies grew sustainably, they had not adequately diversified, and continued to sell primary products without value addition. The essence of value addition was increased potential for higher level jobs which could provide young people with decent income. He summarized three key constraints. First, appropriate infrastructure: countries which are developing often invest above 20 per cent on infrastructure, especially on electricity, indicating that they cannot transform or industrialize based on use of generators. Second, the size of African economies: they are too small and the need to promote integration and trade is crucial. Regionalism must be adapted to ensure that large-scale investors have access to regional markets. Third, the issue of skills: in relation to industrialization, Africa lacked skills both in terms of quality and quantity. In order to absorb the large number of young people into the workforce, large-scale industries were needed. The mismatch in the skills being churned out by the education systems also needed to be addressed, with emphasis on digital economies. Further, as the formal economy could never absorb the entire unemployed population, self-employment and entrepreneurship should be encouraged, through education and training. Regional integration and cooperation must be deepened, not only in the area of trade but in the required skills development and infrastructure in support of value addition, especially to add value to natural resources. He noted that the lack of political commitment was hampering employment creation. While there was no shortage of development plans in Africa, they tended to fail on the implementation front. In part, this was due to the fact that the national development plans have been dependent on external funding. This situation must change, in favour of mobilizing resources domestically and reducing the leakage of resources from illicit outflows.

27. Mr. Li Yong, Director-General of UNIDO highlighted that the theme for this year’s meeting “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth” fitted very well with the aspirations of the resolution made by the

United Nations General Assembly in July 2016 proclaiming the period 2016-2025 as the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III). The IDDA III resolution aimed to continue creating jobs, reducing poverty and furthering progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

28. He further underscored the importance of strengthening the ability of African economies to absorb the youth labour force given that with 200 million people aged between 15 and 24 (African Economic Outlook), Africa had the youngest population in the world. In this regard, he showcased various UNIDO success stories implemented in several African countries such as Angola, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda and Uganda, introducing a practical entrepreneurship curriculum in schools with the aim of promoting positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and developing entrepreneurial competencies.

29. Mr. Li Yong reiterated UNIDO's readiness to provide technical assistance to African countries within the framework of the Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) which, under strong government leadership and ownership, convened various partners to rally their resources in particular areas of focus necessary for achieving higher development impact.

30. Mr. Li Yong concluded that investing in young people to build entrepreneurial skills and mindsets was fundamental for the development of countries.

31. It was indicated by Ms. Oulimata Sarr of UN Women that in order to create jobs and breed entrepreneurs, countries would need the following five things: adequate policies; skills development; access to finance; access to markets, and basic infrastructure including water, energy, technology, transport, etc. She noted the importance of affirmative action on behalf of the youth. For instance, affirmative public procurement could provide access to government procurement jobs for young people and women with the aim of encouraging economic participation. An example was given of Kenya where 30 per cent of public procurement is reserved for women, youth and the disabled.

32. She urged African countries to formulate policies that foster entrepreneurship for youth and women through access to finance, with the AFAWA Fund of AfDB representing a good example. Women and youth must not be confined to micro-financing but opportunities should be expanded to include private equity, and gender-sensitive lending and investment.

33. Ms. Sarr underscored that more must be done for women and young people to facilitate more access and ease of doing business. She said that doing business in Africa was still a challenge as the regulatory authorities were not factoring in the risks and learning phases of small businesses. Some policies to support these groups could include tax breaks for the first three years by which time the beneficiaries should be ready to assume citizen responsibilities. Further, she recommended that patent rights must be preserved to support the innovation and creativity of young people. Governments should invest in knowledge and research particularly focusing on skills development and skills retention.

34. A panellist representing the youth highlighted the need for research and for the United Nations to support the African Youth Volunteer Programme. Special emphasis should be given to raising the quality of education including education of girls, addressing the special health needs of young people, and integrating African youth into implementation of the AU Roadmap. A call was made for the African Union to appoint an AU Special Envoy for Youth.

35. The ensuing interactive discussion focussed on the following:
- (a) The challenge of youth unemployment impacts on all aspects of State and affects all social and economic sectors. Young people in Africa confronted with these challenges tend to emigrate and/or become radicalized;
  - (b) There is a need to encourage youth self-employment through entrepreneurship training and financing;
  - (c) The private sector has been identified as an enabler for job creation – in which case, there is need to involve the private sector in decision-making with a view to catalysing investment in the youth;
  - (d) Most African public policies have been designed by Governments, with the United Nations and relevant partners, and as such they continue to be a common responsibility. This responsibility should be expanded to include the private sector and civil society;
  - (e) TVET programmes must go beyond just basic skills. In a dynamic technologically developing world, there is need to ensure that TVET applies advanced technology in its teaching methods with a view to achieving the required skills;
  - (f) IMO has developed a Maritime Ambassadors programme which creates opportunities for young people;
  - (g) Data play a great role in evaluating progress, successes and lessons. Many United Nations agencies are collecting data and there is need to ensure that the collected data become useful to directing national planning and policy development.

#### **Key Recommendations and Way Forward**

36. After exhaustive deliberations, the following recommendations were made:
- (a) The United Nations is urged to encourage African countries to promote economic growth through value addition as well as the development of necessary skills and infrastructure.
  - (b) The United Nations, in collaboration with the African Union and its member States, is urged to continue to develop programmes in support of access to finance, and financial and domestic resource mobilization in support of entrepreneurship development for the youth.
  - (c) The United Nations is urged to enhance its support to African Union, its member States and the regional economic communities to pursue programmes that spur inclusive growth particularly for youth and women, and regional integration.
  - (d) The United Nations is urged to support African countries to develop policies that ensure that the future use of artificial intelligence, particularly robotics, in industries does not create more unemployment.
  - (e) The United Nations, in collaboration with African Union, is urged to support programmes on the investments in the training of women and girls.

## V. Plenary 3: Migration and Youth in the Context of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 [agenda item 5]

37. The session was co-chaired by H.E. Dr. Martial De Paul Ikounga, AU Commissioner for Human Resource Science and Technology and Mr. Mabungue Ngom, Regional Director, West and Central Africa Regional Office, United Nations Population Fund. The panellists were: H.E. Mr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs; Mr. Bukar Tijani, Assistant Director-General and Africa Regional Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO); Dr. Matshidiso Rebecca, Regional Director for Africa, World Health Organization (WHO); Mr. Marcel Alain de Souza, President, ECOWAS Commission; Ms. Maureen Achieng, Chief of Mission to Ethiopia, the African Union, Intergovernmental Authority for Development, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and Dr. Angela Gichaga, a youth representative from East Africa.

38. The main highlights of the panellists and the ensuing discussions were:
- (a) The root causes of migration should be tackled including the often overlooked urbanization factor.
  - (b) African economies need to industrialize and move away from the traditional commodity-based economies as a means of creating jobs for the youth.
  - (c) The African Union and the United Nations need to partner in bringing education and capacity-building to all African youth, as education, particularly technical and vocational education and training, is the key to finding lasting solutions to challenges facing the youth. The goal is “every child in school by 2020”.
  - (d) Africa needs to tell its own narrative about migration, which should not always be perceived negatively. Rather, this is an issue that presents both challenges and opportunities. For example, skills acquisition and remittances contribute significantly to development. Therefore, migration if well managed is highly desirable.
  - (e) Agriculture is the major sector that can absorb unemployed youth and therefore should be given considerable attention by decision-makers including youth access to financing. In addition, member States should aim to reduce their food importation by 50 per cent, and thus promote local production and create jobs for the youth.
  - (f) Because migrants are exposed to travel hazards that include diseases, sexual exploitation, and drug trafficking, it is imperative that national, regional and continental policies be developed that accommodate migrants including their access to health.
  - (g) Most migration in West Africa is within the region. There is a need for experience sharing among RECS in respect of the handling of migration.
  - (h) Some 70 per cent of migration takes place within Africa while 30 per cent takes place outside Africa, of which only 15 per cent is to Europe. The youth are in the majority.
  - (i) In order to facilitate intra-Africa migration, most of which comprises cross-border youth migration, the African Union is currently partnering with IOM and the International Labour Organization, to develop a protocol on the free movement of persons, right to residence and right to establishment, planned for completion by end of 2017. The launch of the African Passport in

July 2016 was also one of the major building blocks towards a visa-free Africa and an enabler for continental integration.

- (j) Among the key drivers for migration are the high population growth and high unemployment. In addition, youth are facing challenges in terms of access and quality education and health.
- (k) The youth are inventive, innovative and motivated. They are migrating in search of better opportunities which are not available in the respective countries. The majority of the youth are in rural areas. This situation calls for a strategy and policies to manage migration as an opportunity rather than a threat and harness its potential for development.

### **Key Recommendations and Way forward**

39. After exhaustive deliberations, the following recommendations were made:

1. The United Nations, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities, is urged to assist African countries to identify and tackle the root causes of migration including high population growth and the pressure on the limited resources as well as the implication on urbanization factor.
2. The United Nations, jointly with the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities, is urged to support African countries in embarking on commodity-based industrialization and move away from the traditional commodity-based economies, as a means of creating jobs for the youth.
3. The United Nations, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities, is urged to support African countries in formulating and implementing sound migration policies that address the health of migrants. They face travel hazards, including diseases, sexual exploitation, drug trafficking and dangerous travel arrangements.
4. The African Union and the United Nations are urged to enhance their partnership in bringing education and capacity-building to all African youth so as to address the challenges facing them, the majority of the African population.
5. The United Nations and African member States are urged to invest in family planning, as is reflected in the African Union Roadmap, to address population growth as a root cause for migration.
6. African countries are urged to increase their investment in agriculture, particularly agri-business, with a view to absorbing the youth work force, as well as the global response to food insecurity and to eliminating the root causes of migration.
7. The United Nations and the African Union are urged to undertake research on the root causes of migration, the outcome of which should inform African countries in formulating and implementing sound policies on migration, as well as contribute to a positive narrative on migration.
8. The United Nations, African Union and all stakeholders are urged to provide coherent and effective response to current migration challenges by addressing the root causes through all-embracing intervention approaches, and by implementing the Roadmap.
9. The United Nations is urged to encourage African countries to respect all existing laws and conventions on migration so as to ensure that migrants benefit from all legal provisions, including

- access to health facilities and services, and protection from abuse, exploitation and physical violence.
10. Development partners are urged to enhance their partnerships with African countries to address the challenges of migration and youth unemployment, including the protection of young girls who are migrating in large numbers.
  11. African countries are urged to make issues of particular importance to youth an integral part of urbanization policies.
  12. Development partners and African countries are urged to address the challenges of migration and youth unemployment within the holistic framework of social protection.
  13. The African Union and United Nations should work together to expedite finalization of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Right of Establishment for adoption by the African Union Assembly in January 2018 which is planned to come into effect in all member States immediately upon adoption. All African Union member States were urged to issue the African passport to their citizens at national level.

## **VI. Plenary 4: Governance, Rights and Youth Empowerment [agenda item 6]**

40. This session was co-chaired by Mr. Tete Antonio, Head, African Union Observer Mission to the United Nations, and Mr. Haile Menkerios, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the United Nations Office to the African Union. The panellists were: Prof. Eddy Maloka, CEO, African Peer Review Mechanism; Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochi, United Nations Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative and United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Ethiopia; Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenouko, Director and Regional Representative, Africa Office, United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP); Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, Regional Director for West and Central Africa Region, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Prof. Okey Onyejekwe, Special Adviser to the Minister of Mines and Steel Development, Nigeria; and Ms. Laura Harivola Rakotonandrasana, Pan-African Youth.

41. In his opening remarks, Mr. Tete Antonio reminded participants that the guiding principle for the plenary session was that African youth formed a huge segment of the population and their exclusion from economic empowerment was detrimental to the entire society. Recalling the Malabo Youth Summit of 2011, he echoed the young peoples' voices, and reminded the meeting that the youth did not want to be considered as the future but rather as part of the present. He underscored the implication of the sentiments to mean that young people were yearning to get actively involved in the design, planning and implementation of development policies. Mr. Antonio highlighted that good governance was key to realization of such inclusion, likening it to software without which the hardware would be dysfunctional. In that regard, he called upon development stakeholders, and particularly the leadership of the African Union, to get the youth involved in the design and implementation of development instruments geared towards their empowerment, and also to include the youth in governance structures, to achieve effectiveness and accountability on their behalf.

42. Mr. Haile Menkerios observed that Africa was still developing and was subjected to many influences and interventions. He underlined that a critical function of setting the right development trajectory would be the institution of adequate and effective governance structures that prioritize social rights. Based on global historical experiences, he cautioned that democracy was a product of

development and not vice versa. He further noted that in various aspects, Africa had gone steps ahead of the United Nations by adopting commendable collective positions such as the African Standby Force (ASF), a multidisciplinary peacekeeping force with military, police and civilian contingents that acted under the direction of the African Union, to be deployed in times of crisis. He further noted that bad governance and related issues such as unconstitutional changes of government could result in wars, which have the potential to obliterate social and economic gains. Hence, he noted the need for the ASF.

43. Mr. Eddy Maloka, Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism, reiterated the need to elevate the African Union's governance agenda, in particularly to shift the outlook on the youth from vulnerable people to strategic players in the continent's development agenda. He noted that to achieve this, both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 required strategies devised to integrate the youth as a demographic opportunity, not a liability. He re-emphasized that member States needed to strengthen their capacity to create more jobs, and should provide access to credit to foster entrepreneurship. In addition, he underscored that the participation of women in development activities was a fundamental aspect of functional governance systems. He also reminded participants that peace and security initiatives such as 'Silencing of the Guns' should include young people at the core of the agenda. For this purpose, Mr. Maloka pointed out that the African Peer Review Mechanism had been mandated to track the governance agenda in Africa through the monitoring and evaluation process. Lastly, he called upon the new AUC leadership to take stock of governance at the national level and periodically report on related matters.

44. Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochi, United Nations Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative and United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Ethiopia, also gave introductory remarks on the theme of the session. She highlighted that the African culture and mindset might not adequately accommodate the concept of youth as leaders or as significant components of development. She thus called for a paradigm shift in the mentality of the broader population to reflect youth as productive elements of the population. Ms. Eziakonwa-Onochi further reminded participants that the emergence of civil uprisings such as the Arab Spring were loud manifestations of the discontent faced by the youth. On the less extreme side, mass migration out of the continent by the youth could be viewed as a direct consequence of disregard for their economic, social and civil rights. She praised RCM-Africa for including youth as panellists to the plenary sessions, underscoring that they bring rich perspectives on how to reposition youth for development. Lastly, she extended her appreciation to the African Union for its institution of the African Union Youth Volunteers Corps and called for partners to provide support for its upscaling.

45. On her part, Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenoupko, Director of the Regional Office for Africa, UNEP, recalled the rights of all citizens to participate actively in governance matters. She reminded the meeting that young people comprised over 50 per cent of the population in Africa. It was therefore crucial to build on their potential of being a creative force, and a source of innovations. She recalled the fact that throughout history, young people have participated, contributed and even catalysed important political processes, power-sharing systems and economic opportunities, to ensure their right to be represented and to participate in governance.

46. Ms. Koudenoupko shared the experience of UNEP on youth engagement at corporate, national and regional levels, as well as Africa wide through awareness raising and education, project-based initiatives and outreach work. She noted that while the recommendations from the ensuing discussions were relevant, development practitioners must move from rhetoric to action. She

further called on RCM-Africa to institute a culture that would, at the beginning of every meeting, take stock of progress made with regard to the theme of the day. She emphasized the need to have youth influence policies and called upon development practitioners to provide platforms where young people's voices could be heard. She emphasized that hearing their voices was still not enough. Subsequent assistance was needed to have their ideas transformed into concrete action.

47. In her remarks, Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, Regional Director for West and Central Africa region, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), noted that the demographic dividend could occur as fertility rates drop, accompanied by a greater proportion of the African population becoming working-age, and by the relative share of dependents among the population declining. She reminded the meeting that today's children would be tomorrow's leaders, and that investing in children and young people today would confirm Africa as an economic, social and political power. However, that meant having healthy, highly skilled, dynamic and entrepreneurial young men and women who were productively employed. She then shared a few lessons learnt by UNICEF working with children and adolescents in key programmes such as peacebuilding and education, with a special focus on out-of-school children, and on child marriage in Africa.

48. She highlighted the need to shape a new narrative and policy advocacy that called for maximizing opportunities for young people and adolescents in particular. Instead of emphasizing the "young people at risk" discourse, it was important to unpack the motives and aspirations of the many young men and women who were confronted with deep-seated societal constraints.

49. She pointed out that UNICEF's work on peacebuilding and young people showed that risks for their marginalization were linked to breakdown in the continuity of education. In contexts where young people were subject to negative framing, it was particularly effective to instead recognize them and offer them opportunities to fulfil their need for self-respect, empowerment and social recognition.

50. UNICEF and UNFPA programmes that focus on young people at risk of child marriage and those already in unions had also demonstrated the importance of enforcing laws and policies that protect and promote young people's rights, as well as of using robust data to inform policies targeted at adolescents' needs. Ms. Poirier ended by sharing the UNICEF conviction that programmes should be designed and implemented with young people at the centre but should also include all stakeholders including parents, teachers, communities, authorities, and role models, to ensure harnessing of the value and potential of young people in the society.

51. On his part, Mr. Okey Onyejekwe, Special Adviser to the Minister of Mines and Steel Development, Nigeria, noted that problems concerning rampant youth unemployment were not new. He applied the Malthusian theory of population in addressing the problem. The theory proposed that population increase be kept at sustainable low levels supported by various checks on population growth. Further, he echoed earlier remarks made regarding youth unemployment adding that the national educational curriculums should be restructured to address the skills gap. He called for critical analysis and deeper understanding of what was demanded by the job market. Further, he reminded participants of the threat posed by extremist and militant groups such as Boko Haram and Al Shabaab which were attracting the youth with the high wages they offered compared to the legitimate and formal sectors. Mr. Onyejekwe then called for a reconfiguration of African States, to shift from the current status quo which did not place emphasis on high standards of collective integrity to a value system that embraced such standards and would address the challenges.

52. Ms. Laura Harivola Rakotonandrasana, a representative for the Pan-African Youth Union, Southern Africa region, urged that young people should be facilitated with more opportunities to learn the process of decision-making. She identified useful examples such as the African Youth Volunteer Corps, Model United Nations activities, and the African Union Youth Clubs among others, which have been instrumental platforms to that end. On harnessing the demographic dividend, Ms. Rakotonandrasana pointed to initiatives such as the pharmaceuticals plan of the African Union, implementation of which would provide multiple jobs as well as career development for the youth. Further, she underlined that youth participation and advocacy at the local and at all levels of government was a critical concern. She noted that some of the issues of concern to the youth included reproductive health, the protection of women and girls against violence, and against harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as slow implementation of laws and decisions. Addressing these challenges could change the lives of millions of Africans. In closing, she acknowledged the organizers and UNFPA for providing the opportunity to young people to participate as panellists in such an important session.

53. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- (a) The need to understand that both economic and political governance are fundamental to the provision of basic human needs. The Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union should facilitate a meeting to have deeper discussions on this matter.
- (b) Infrastructure also plays a key role in leveraging economic governance. The African Union has projects which integrate infrastructure and access to energy which could considerably reduce the cost of investment and of spurring private sector investment.
- (c) The youth also need to dialogue among themselves and be more organized in their engagement with policymaking and other relevant institutions.
- (d) Building on some of these ideas, the African Union in collaboration with the United Nations could assist the continent to deepen the demographic dividend by exploring opportunities provided for in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and also in the African Peer Review Mechanism both of which champion youth empowerment and gender mainstreaming.
- (e) Society should harness the youth's capacity in targeted development activities. Mapping of such engagement is necessary to fill gaps and avoid overlaps.
- (f) Retirement should not be the end of active participation in development matters; retirees could offer mentorship and volunteer services.
- (g) Following the model whereby United Nations Member States from developed countries sponsored their youth to Junior Professional Programmes in international organizations, African Union member States could replicate similar approaches under the AUYVC programme.
- (h) Inclusion of youth in the development agenda was a basic right rather than a privilege.
- (i) In addition to improving the quality of education, rights-based, quality learning and social cohesion were also important.

- (j) Current State structures and institutions need to be transformed to deliver on the demographic dividend.
- (k) Commitment to the public good should be a shared value entrenched in value systems.
- (l) Member States should implement the African Charter on Youth which advocate for the inclusion of youth in policy and decision-making structures.
- (m) Job market information should be made available to the youth so they can know where to get jobs and what are the possibilities.
- (n) Critical consideration should be placed on Malthusian perspectives which advocate for preventive measures of population control.

### **Key Recommendations and Way Forward**

54. After exhaustive deliberations, the following recommendations were made:

1. The United Nations and African Union, in collaboration with the APRM Secretariat, are urged to facilitate a workshop for key stakeholders on economic and political governance and its implications for the youth so as to have a deeper reflection on both issues, with the view of enriching human rights in African countries.
2. The United Nations and the African Union are urged to assist African countries to implement infrastructure such as roads, energy, water and sanitation, for advancing the development agenda, improving economic governance, reducing the cost of investment, and spurring private sector investment.
3. The United Nations, in collaboration with the African Union, is urged to support the APRM Secretariat to track the performance of African Union member States in promoting youth empowerment and gender mainstreaming with a view to encouraging countries to implement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance fully.
4. Society must harness the youth's capacity in targeted development activities. Mapping of such engagement is necessary to fill gaps and avoid overlaps.
5. The United Nations is urged to support African Union member States in improving governance by increasing young people's agency and access to information, services, resources and opportunities and strengthening policies, systems and services that specifically respond to the needs and aspirations of young people both at central and decentralized levels.
6. The United Nations is urged to support African Union member States in creating and funding Junior Programme Officers (JPOs) for attachments with a view to addressing youth unemployment.
7. The African Union Commission is urged to enhance its African Union Youth Volunteer Corp (AUYVC) with a view to addressing youth unemployment.
8. Member States are urged to implement the African Youth Charter which advocates for the inclusion of youth in policy and decision-making structures.

## **VII. Plenary 5: Strengthening the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa for the Effective Harnessing of the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth [agenda item 7]**

### **A. African Union-United Nations progress report on RCM-Africa and the AU-UN Joint Programme for 2017-2018**

55. A representative of the RCM-Africa Secretariat made the presentation. She noted that RCM had been playing a major role in strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. Under the reporting period from April 2016 to March 2017, RCM-Africa had achieved a lot, particularly in deepening consultations and refocusing on ways of strengthening the partnership and scaling up United Nations support to the African Union and its organs. Substantive issues addressed during this period related to: (a) Strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership; (b) strengthening the United Nations internal coordination for a stronger mechanism; and (c) improving coordination, collaboration and the coherence of United Nations support to thematic programmes and priorities of the African Union.

56. With regard to strengthening this partnership, the Secretariat noted that the mechanism was the chief means through which the United Nations system operating in Africa coordinated their strategies and activities for programme delivery in support of the African Union and its organs. The mechanism periodically reviewed progress made in improving cooperation, collaboration and coordination between the two partners with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations support to Africa's development. The African Heads of State and Government, through their Decision, Assembly/AU/Dec.587 (XXV) of 2015, adopted the Framework for a Renewed United Nations-African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027 (PAIDA), as the successor to the 2006 United Nations-African Union 10-year capacity-building programme. PAIDA was serving as an overall platform for cooperation anchored on Agenda 2063. Accordingly, PAIDA was now the framework for "delivering as one" and for enhancing coordination and coherence of United Nations support to the African Union, its organs and organizations.

57. With a view to strengthening the internal coordination mechanism, the United Nations Liaison Team (UNLT) composed of the agencies and organizations based in Addis Ababa, served as a complementary forum to RCM-Africa for articulating and addressing common opportunities and challenges facing the agencies in their interaction with the African Union organs and organizations, and with the goal of promoting a conducive environment for effective collaboration among its members. The UNLT had played a catalysing role in harmonizing approaches, operations and actions within the United Nations system, with the aim of promoting strategic partnership and effective, coordinated support to the strategic priorities of the African Union, in close collaboration with the secretariat of RCM-Africa, hosted and resourced by ECA. Through its well-attended monthly meetings, the UNLT aimed to enhance internal coherence, convergence and synergy within the United Nations system organizations and agencies based in Addis Ababa, to play a more effective role in strengthening the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the context of RCM-Africa.

58. In its efforts to strengthen United Nations internal coordination beyond Addis Ababa, the RCM-Africa Secretariat held a historic meeting with the Regional UNDG (East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa) in December 2016. A common call for action during the meeting was the desire to

deepen collaboration. One key outcome of this meeting was a proposal to hold joint policy dialogues to discuss thematic priorities for moving forward.

59. Although there has been success in many areas, the secretariat noted such recurring challenges as:

- (a) Resources constraints or the absence of dedicated resources
- (b) Weak information and communication
- (c) Planning constraints
- (d) Lack of an effective monitoring and evaluation framework
- (e) Difficulty in showing tangible results and achievements.

60. The meeting was informed that the full progress report of the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and SRCMs was available from the secretariat.

61. The secretariat reminded the session that the Mechanism's work was delivered through nine clusters, namely:

- (a) Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade, agriculture and agro-processing, and regional integration
- (b) Infrastructure development
- (c) Human capital development, health, nutrition, science, technology and innovation
- (d) Labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility
- (e) Gender equality, women and youth empowerment
- (f) Humanitarian matters and disaster risk management
- (g) Environment, urbanization and population
- (h) Advocacy, information, communications and culture
- (i) Governance, peace and security

62. The 2016-2018 programme of work of the clusters was fully aligned to the goals identified in the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the priorities of the African Union Commission.

## **B. Update on Implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030**

63. The representative of the African Union Commission highlighted the progress made in domestication and establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism for Agenda 2063. He highlighted the convergence between Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, which informed the development of a common M&E platform. Within this framework, he underlined the fact that 63 co-indicators cutting across the two agendas had been identified. With respect to domestication, the meeting was informed that 32 member States had so far been visited. The impression gathered was that apart from senior officials in the Ministries responsible for planning, ordinary African citizens had little or no knowledge of Agenda 2063 as opposed to the Sustainable Development Goals. Similar visits were also paid to three regional economic communities, namely, ECOWAS, ECCAS and SADC as well as NEPAD. In the same vein, there had been internal domestication at the level of the African Union Commission. Under the leadership of NEPAD, an M&E framework and a draft Handbook had been developed and would be presented at the next meeting of the Ministers of Finance and Planning. The North and Central Regions of the continent were urged to show greater participation and

involvement in the development of the tools. As a matter of priority, regional economic communities needed to align their strategic plans with the First Ten-Year Plan (FTYP) of Agenda 2063. The Economic and Social Council would also be involved in the domestication process. The African Union Commission would continue to provide oversight in the domestication process while NEPAD and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) would continue to provide capacity- building for implementation of the two frameworks.

### **C. Discussion on the Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme and transition to the Programme for Africa’s Integration and Development Agenda**

64. The introductory remarks to the discussion were made by a representative of the RCM-Africa Secretariat. He explained that at the level of the General Assembly, the United Nations had always provided support to the African Agenda. In 2015, a Resolution was passed for the establishment of PAIDA as a programme that would enable the United Nations to partner more effectively with Africa in its development. PAIDA superseded the Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme. In 2006, RCM-Africa was mandated to review the Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme. This first review recognized that there was no clear development programme, no coherence and no leadership. A number of recommendations were made with the aim of overcoming these shortcomings and these had yielded good results. The second review in 2010 lauded the results. It also recommended that within the RCM-Africa clusters, the regional economic communities, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), and the African Union should strengthen assistance with human and material resources, and the design of programmes, among other needs. More than 40 United Nations agencies and programmes had been participating in the work of the clusters. PAIDA provided a framework based on African Union priorities. The framework of cooperation was strongly supported by both the African Union and the United Nations, with “buying in” prevailing on the basis of priorities anchored on Agenda 2063. Challenges included funding and joint planning.

65. In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized the need to move from rhetoric and meetings to concrete action. The following issues were also highlighted:

- (a) The Secretariat sought guidance on how to move the process forward with the priorities listed in the clusters.
- (b) Clarification was sought on whether the Subregional Coordination Mechanism (SRCM) was still functioning, the extent to which regional economic communities were involved in RCM, and the role of such actors as non-governmental organizations, which were not United Nations or African Union.
- (c) The need to review the timing of RCM meetings which were currently being held on the margins of the Conference of Ministers.

66. It was explained that although they faced many challenges, the five SRCMs were still working, supporting subregional initiatives and the programmes of work of the regional economic communities. Although RCM-Africa was the most active level, it was noted that the SRCMs use pragmatic approaches to undertake specific thematic projects with intergovernmental organizations rather than using the thematic clusters. RCM supported the regional economic communities as well. Non-governmental organizations could assist RCM but were not members.

**D. Update on African Forum for Sustainable Development for follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030**

67. The meeting was informed that the Africa Regional Forum was to take place in Addis Ababa from 16 to 19 May 2017 under the theme “Eradicating poverty in a changing world”. It would be an opportunity for Africa to evaluate its performance with implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, share experience, and domesticate Agenda 2063. The outcome of that forum was expected to fit into the upcoming meeting of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

**E. Introduction of the Monitoring and Evaluation Platform of Africa’s Development within the context of the renewed United Nations – African Union Partnership**

68. Representatives of UNDP, NPCA and the APRM secretariat made a presentation on a platform being developed by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), UNDP, NPCA, AUC, ECA, AfDB and APRM on monitoring and evaluating Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The presenters noted that the complementarity between Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda facilitated coordination and joint planning between the African Union and the United Nations. Joint implementation and reporting was critical, to avoid duplication of effort and resources, as well as allow for easy reporting to the African Union Assembly and to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

69. The presenters affirmed that the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation platform was needed to gauge the development agenda of the continent. The platform would integrate real-time data on the key performance indicators (KPIs) of the 2030 Agenda, the African Union’s Agenda 2063, as well as other international commitments for Africa’s development, in order to track the progress of their implementation and impact. The platform would also foster harmonized data for preparing and reviewing Africa-related reports and inputs in support of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

70. Lastly, the presenters indicated that the platform outcomes would feed into existing monitoring and advocacy on Africa’s development agenda provided to the United Nations Secretary-General by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, as well as other monitoring mechanisms (AUC, ECA and NEPAD Agency). It would enhance the coherency of support for Africa’s development and help the United Nations to recognize Africa’s special development needs in key processes and outcomes. Moreover, the platform would serve as a mechanism to monitor the mutual support and collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union to advance Africa’s development. Further, it would also serve as the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of RCM-Africa.

71. The presenters concluded by inviting the participants to lend their support to development of the platform.

**F. Culture as a priority for Africa: Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030**

72. The presentation highlighted the fact that culture played a critical role and contribution to Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda as both a driver and an enabler. It contributed to addressing global development challenges through its role in economic growth, social cohesion, quality education, environmental sustainability, sustainable cities and inclusive and resilient societies. The

presentation also raised awareness on the importance of culture and creativity in providing employment, youth empowerment, and gender equality.

73. UNESCO strongly supported the need for greater coordination and invited United Nations agencies and organizations to join hands in the spirit of “Delivering as One”, to address the cultural priorities of the continent and the integration of culture transversally in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and Africa Vision 2063 through the proposed sub-cluster.

### **Discussion**

74. The discussion following the presentations yielded important outcomes. Participants:

- (a) Lauded the progress made in RCM, its continuous relevance and encouraged its joint meetings with UNDG.
- (b) Endorsed the configuration of the clusters.
- (c) Called for urgent implementation of the work plans derived from the clusters, with the involvement of AUC, AU organs and the regional economic communities.
- (d) Further called for resources to be made available to RCM programmes.
- (e) Took note of the Africa Regional Forum, scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa, from 16 to 19 May 2017.
- (f) Took note of the progress made with domestication of Agenda 2063 as well as the ongoing work on the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.
- (g) Supported the creation of a monitoring and evaluation platform of Africa’s development agenda.
- (h) Agreed on the need to build a quantitative and qualitative database on culture that would enable support to evidence-based developmental policies.

### **Key Recommendations and Way Forward**

75. After exhaustive deliberations, the following recommendations were made:

1. RCM-Africa and R-UNDG are urged to institutionalize the joint meetings of the sessions of RCM-Africa with a view to deepening collaboration.
2. The secretariats of RCM-Africa and R-UNDG are called upon to develop a mechanism of cooperation and collaboration between the two mechanisms.
3. The secretariat of RCM-Africa is called upon to finalize joint programmes of work for the Clusters for 2017-2018, based on the priorities set out by the clusters and aligned to Agenda 2063 no later than the end of May 2017. The Clusters are urged to implement the joint programme of work immediately once finalized by the secretariat.
4. The United Nations is urged to support the African Union Commission in the domestication of Agenda 2063 in the national development plans of African Union member States, as well as the ongoing work on the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.
5. The United Nations and the African Union are urged to support OSAA, UNDP, NPCA, AUC, ECA, AfDB and APRM in the

creation of a platform for the monitoring and evaluating of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda with the aim of tracking progress made by African countries in advancing the development agenda of the continent.

6. The United Nations, led by UNESCO, is urged to develop a quantitative and qualitative database on culture that supports evidence-based development frameworks of the continent, including Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.
7. The request of UNESCO to co-lead with African Union's Culture section a sub-cluster on culture under the cluster on Advocacy, information, communications and culture should be approved.

## **VIII. Any Other Business [agenda item 8]**

76. Two issues were raised under this agenda item. The first was a request from UNESCO to co-lead a sub-cluster on culture which was approved. The second was a reminder to the meeting of the presence of the Centre for Sustainable Development Goals in Kigali. The representative of the Centre called for the support of the United Nations and African Union, so it could execute its mandate more effectively. The meeting took note of the activities of the Centre

## **IX. Presentation and Adoption of the Draft Report of the Meeting [agenda item 9]**

77. The session report was adopted in principle. The secretariat was called upon to submit the report electronically to participants for their comments, after which the report would be considered fully adopted.

## **X. Closing of the session [agenda item 10]**

78. In a statement read on her behalf at the closing session, H.E. Ms. Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, indicated that empowering Africa's youth was vital to unleashing the full potential of the continent. She noted that investments in the youth was critical for achieving structural economic transformation and lifting Africa from the trap of low growth, high unemployment, poverty and susceptibility to conflict. Investing in youth, she said, was not only a fundamental issue of human rights but also smart economics. She urged African countries to equip their youth with the right skill sets for entrepreneurship so as to achieve rapid development. She cautioned that a disengaged population of youth would be prone to large-scale migration and susceptible to radicalization. She called for Governments to tackle the large youth unemployment, particularly for young women and girls. Closing the gender gap, she affirmed, was a fundamental matter of human rights and justice. She noted that bridging the global gender gap required leadership as well as investment on the part of the public and private sectors.

79. Ms. Mohammed also called for the closing of the education gap for females and males alike. She emphasized that the lack of quality, relevant education and training was an unsustainable loss of human development potential. Uneducated youth were being driven out of rural areas into urban centres and between countries. To change these trends, she called for countries to work together in a more integrated and coordinated manner, using existing frameworks such as Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development.

80. The Deputy Secretary-General further emphasized that for the United Nations to support African countries in achieving the overarching principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ and to deliver on their ambition of building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, it must overcome silos, and instead apply a comprehensive approach, focusing on integration, and a common understanding and vision. She also called on the United Nations to come together to strengthen its capacity for collective analysis, programming and funding, as well as joint implementation, monitoring and evaluation. She reminded the meeting that the United Nations Secretary-General had declared conflict prevention his top priority. This would require countries to address the root causes of conflicts and create resilience to financial shocks, natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. It entailed ensuring that the youth could participate at all levels of society’s decision-making and have access to economic opportunities.

81. She ended by calling on the participants to scale up their joint efforts at the country, regional and global levels by moving from ‘joint planning and programming’ to ‘joint implementation’, taking note that the delivery of quality results was central to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

82. In his closing remarks, H.E. Dr. Anthony Maruping, African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs, thanked the participants for their commitment to the RCM-Africa process. He thanked the RCM-Africa secretariat and the UNDG for facilitating the session which had yielded sound recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of the mechanism. He called on the participants to move from meetings to the implementation of programmes.

83. On behalf of the secretariats of RCM-Africa and R-UNDG, Mr. Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director, West and Central Africa Regional Office, United Nations Population Fund, closed the eighteenth session of RCM-Africa and the first joint meeting of RCM-Africa and R-UNDG. He noted the rich discussions that had taken place and the commitment of RCM-Africa and R-UNDG members to work in lock-step for advancing the continent’s development agenda, including the issues of youth.

84. He called on the United Nations to work collectively in implementing the Roadmap on the African Union theme for 2017, “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth” in the context of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. He further noted that reaping the demographic dividend would require, among other things, a change of attitude towards the youth in the various policies. There was need to involve the youth in all programmes concerning them and at all stages. PPPs should be created at national, regional and continental levels in support of youth programmes. He urged all stakeholders to apply a comprehensive approach and avoid silos, focusing on integration, common understanding and vision, speaking with one voice and delivering as one in implementing the African Union Roadmap.

85. Mr. Ngom ended by thanking all the participants for their attendance and the secretariats of RCM-Africa and R-UNDG for organizing the meeting. He then declared the meeting closed.

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The Eighteenth Session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa  
(RCM-Africa)

The First Joint Meeting of RCM-Africa and UNDG

**Dakar, March 25 and 26 2017**

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