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Addis Ababa, 17 June 2015 (ECA) - "This is a momentous opportunity that the Africa region must seize to pave the way for its meaningful participation in the global institutional architecture for sustainable development," declared Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, ECA's Deputy Executive Secretary as he opened the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development conference in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Hamdok reminded delegates of the timeliness of the meeting of the Forum in that its recommendations "will guide the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs" and precedes three major events of the year. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development will be held in Addis Ababa in July; the adoption of SDGs in New York in September; and the Climate Change Conference in Paris in December.

Planning, deliberating and reviewing are necessary parts of this complex process of defining development priorities and "finding adequate means of implementation". Mr. Hamdok recognised that "development challenges are more profound in Africa" but indicated that "the achievement of sustainability in national development requires a strategic long-term and integrated approach which is sophisticated enough to meet the complex challenges of sustainable development".

Mr. Hamdok praised African states for their active participation in the consultations and drafting of common positions on development. However, he pointed out that the work is yet to be complete. "Africa should continue to be meaningfully engaged in the elaboration of an indicator framework for the SDGs".

He further suggested, "given that development aspirations and processes are context specific, African negotiators should ensure that this work takes into account regional and national contexts, as well as initial conditions of each country, to effectively convey the region's views and positions on the ongoing international consultations and negotiations at all levels".

To be able to draft and plan for sustainable development many African states will have to boost competencies in information management and effective monitoring. "National statistical capacities must be strengthened for data gathering, analysis and reporting to support timely reviews," suggested Mr. Hamdok.

The Forum is being held for the first time following its establishment by the eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in March 2015.

The Forum is jointly organised by ECA, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and

Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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