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**Economic Commission for Africa
Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa**
Twentieth Session
Third meeting organized jointly with the Africa
regional United Nations Sustainable Development
Group secretariat
Marrakech, Morocco, 23 and 24 March 2019

African Union

Aide-memoire

I. Background

A. The evolution of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

1. The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) derives its mandate from General Assembly resolution 32/197 on restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system in which the Assembly directed the regional commissions to exercise leadership and responsibility for cooperation and coordination at the regional level, taking into account the special needs and conditions of their respective regions. Additionally, in the Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, the Council indicated that the team leadership role of the regional economic communities calls for their holding regular inter-agency meetings in each region with a view to improving coordination among the work programmes of organizations of the United Nations system in that region. Accordingly, since 1999, the regional commissions have been convening regional meetings on policy and programmatic issues guided by regional priorities. This has led to the establishment of a formal process for system-wide coherence to further strengthen regional cooperation and coordination, and the adoption of more collaborative approaches to support African Union development initiatives through the diverse technical capacities and know-how of the United Nations system.

2. The Mechanism and its four subregional coordination mechanisms covering the five subregions of Africa have become the frameworks for the United Nations family to work together in supporting the priorities of the African Union and its organs, the regional economic communities and other regional and subregional organizations. The objective of RCM-Africa is to promote and enhance the United Nations system-wide policy coherence, coordination and cooperation at the regional level to “deliver as one” in response to the regional priorities and initiatives of the

African Union. Similarly, the subregional coordination mechanisms function as vehicles for United Nations agencies and organizations operating at the subregional level to work with regional economic communities and other intergovernmental organizations with a view to reducing fragmentation in their operations and increasing coherence, coordination and cooperation in supporting programmes and priorities. There are four subregional coordination mechanisms covering North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa.¹

3. The Mechanism and its four subregional coordination mechanisms have supported the African Union and its organs, including the African Union Commission, regional economic communities and other intergovernmental organizations. Following the adoption of the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001, the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/7 on the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and support for NEPAD called upon the United Nations system, within respective mandates, to align its activities in Africa with priorities of NEPAD. Accordingly, support was initially extended to the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency. Support was given to efforts aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals up to 2015, the target year. Over the period 2006–2016, support was also provided through the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union. More recently, following the adoption of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, these regional and global sustainable development agendas, have been the focus of support being provided within the framework of the renewed United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda for 2017–2027 (PAIDA). It should be noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/254 on the framework for a Renewed United Nations-African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017–2027 of 2016, preserves the tenets of General Assembly resolution 57/7 on support to NEPAD.

4. At the nineteenth session of RCM-Africa, held in Addis Ababa, on 12 and 13 May 2018, participants recommended that the work of the Mechanism and the regional teams of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group also be aligned with the United Nations-African Union Joint Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Over the years, the Mechanism has evolved from a consultative body of United Nations System agencies in support of the African Union to a joint African Union-United Nations mechanism for coordination of support to the African Union and its organs. The annual sessions of RCM-Africa are co-chaired by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission or his deputy. RCM-Africa and the subregional coordination mechanisms have been particularly effective in deepening consultations, refocusing on ways to strengthen the United Nations-African Union partnership and scaling up United Nations support to the African Union and other pan-African organizations, including the regional economic communities. The annual sessions of RCM-Africa and the subregional coordination mechanisms provide the opportunity to take stock of achievements, share experiences and good practices, identify and address challenges, and agree on ways to further improve United Nations support to the African Union and its organs.

¹ Eastern and Southern Africa is served by one subregional coordination mechanism covering three regional economic communities, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), considering the tripartite arrangement among the three of them in which coordination is already institutionally operational. The Office for Eastern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Office for Southern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa.

B. The African Union and United Nations reforms, and the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

6. Twenty years since it became operational, RCM-Africa is at a crossroads. At the eleventh extraordinary session of the African Union Summit, held in Addis Ababa on 17 and 18 November 2018, the Assembly of the African Union made major decisions pertaining to institutional reforms of the African Union. Meanwhile, through its successive reform programmes, the United Nations has been striving to create a more coherent, effective and efficient support and delivery mechanism. The Secretary-General, in a report delivered to the General Assembly in June 2017, proposed key actions and recommendations to reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.²

7. Regarding African Union reforms, the following are of particular relevance to RCM-Africa: (a) the reorganization of the structure and portfolios of the senior leadership of the African Union Commission, as it is expected to help sharpen the focus of the Commission and further guide the support to be provided by the Mechanism; (b) approval of the mandate of the African Union Development Agency following the decision made in January 2017 on the transformation of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (the transition implies institutional building and strengthening, which could involve the Mechanism); (c) institutional reform of the African Peer Review Mechanism. Given that the African Peer Review Mechanism is being considered as a platform for promoting peer review and learning related to the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, strengthening it will be instrumental to accelerate efforts to better coordinate the implementation to the two agendas in the region; and (d) the establishment of an effective division of labour among the African Union, regional economic communities, ECA member States and continental organizations. This division of labour is in line with, and complements the ongoing rationalization of United Nations assets at the regional, subregional and national levels to facilitate more coordinated and coherent support.

8. The aforementioned report of the Secretary-General on the repositioning of the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda responds to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and elaborates on proposals first outlined in the Secretary-General's report of June 2017. On 31 May 2018, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/279 in support of the Secretary-General's reform agenda to reposition the United Nations development system as a key partner in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Among the key provisions in the resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and underlined the need to continue to make them fit for purpose in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to revamp the regional structures. In the resolution, the General Assembly also emphasized the need to address gaps and overlaps at the regional level and endorsed a phased approach to revamping the United Nations development system at the regional level.

9. Specifically, in resolution 72/279, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to do the following: implement, as part of the first phase, the proposed measures to optimize functions and enhance collaboration at the regional and subregional levels; and provide options, on a region-by-region basis, for longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of the regional assets of the United Nations to the Economic and Social Council at the operational activities for the development segment of its 2019 session. In the concept note for the first phase of regional-level optimization, it was emphasized that actions carried out during that phase should make it possible to deliver the mandates effectively and efficiently at the regional

² A/72/684-E2018/7.

level to member States in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at country and regional levels. This is expected to contribute towards strengthening regional- and subregional level development priorities, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development and ensuring visibility of the regional and subregional dimensions of sustainable development.

10. The actions in the first phase relevant to RCM-Africa are the following: (a) a more thorough and integrated analysis of regional and transboundary issues and the country activities of the regional commissions that contribute to its outcomes. This requires active engagement of the regional coordination mechanism, including regional economic commissions, and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups;³ (b) regional commissions, in consultation with relevant regional directors, invite resident coordinators with an active role to participate in regional conferences and platforms; (c) holding regional coordination mechanisms and regional Sustainable Development Group meetings jointly or back-to-back, with agendas informing one another and strengthened cooperation between the regional coordination mechanism and regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group secretariats;⁴ and (d) strengthening the participation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the regional coordination mechanism.⁵

C. Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa response to the ongoing African Union and United Nations reforms

11. In October 2018, the RCM-Africa secretariat commissioned two studies, one on strengthening subregional coordination in support of the African Union and NEPAD and the other on enhancing monitoring and evaluation in RCM-Africa.

12. The overall objective of the first study was to investigate how the subregional coordination mechanisms can be strengthened to ensure efficient and effective support to regional economic communities and other African Union intergovernmental organizations, taking into account current and emerging issues and challenges faced by the mechanisms. The study is designed to contribute towards leveraging the momentum of the African Union and United Nations reforms to attain better coordinated and fit-for-purpose support at the subregional level, while ensuring effective linkages with national and regional level United Nations coordination mechanisms, including the United Nations Country Teams, RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms, and the Africa regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group platforms.

13. The second study entailed conducting a comprehensive review of issues pertaining to the development of a user-friendly operational results-based monitoring and evaluation framework for RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms that is compatible with existing electronic platforms. An expected result of the study is the development of a framework that would allow the mechanisms to track progress and results achieved in implementing agreed priority activities in support of the African Union and its organs, including the regional economic communities. The draft study reports were reviewed by two ad hoc experts group meetings, held in Nairobi, on 3 and 4 December 2018 and on 5 and 6 December 2018, respectively. The meetings identified gaps, provided comments and inputs and proposed recommendations, including revisions. Both study reports have been finalized and will be made available at the twentieth session of RCM-Africa.

14. On 10 December 2018, ECA held a joint meeting in Addis Ababa with the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups for Eastern and Southern Africa and for Western and Central Africa. The overall objective of the meeting was

³ Ibid., para. 99.

⁴ Ibid., para. 100.

⁵ Ibid., para. 100.

to reach a common understanding on the implications of the ongoing United Nations reform initiatives on the functionality of the entities and to deliberate on strategies for deepening collaboration for greater effectiveness and efficiency at the regional level. The meeting agreed on modalities for the follow-up to and implementation of phase I of the regional optimization actions of the United Nations reforms, which were used in the preparation of a joint workplan for implementation during 2019.

15. Moreover, the meeting agreed to integrate and harmonize the seven strategic priorities of the Africa Union, (see above), the seven strategic initiatives of the Africa regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group,⁶ the framework of the renewed United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda for 2017–2027 (PAIDA), the United Nations-African Union Joint Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also agreed to jointly convene the twentieth session of RCM-Africa with the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups for the third consecutive year.

D. The twentieth session of the Regional Coordinated Mechanism for Africa

16. The twentieth session of RCM-Africa is being organized jointly with the secretariats of the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Eastern and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa. The session will be held on the theme “United Nations system support for the African Union in commemorating 2019 as the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa”, in Marrakech, Morocco, on 23 and 24 March, on the margins of the fifty-second Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Prior to the session, a retreat of RCM-Africa will be held in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, in February 2019. The retreat will give organizations participating in the Mechanism the opportunity to deliberate on key implementation issues, including revising its 2019 workplan, taking into account the African Union and United Nations reforms and the African Union strategic priorities. Also during the retreat, organizational arrangements for the upcoming session will be discussed.

II. Objectives of the twentieth session of Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

17. The objectives of the twentieth session of RCM-Africa are twofold. The first is to deliberate on the functioning of the Mechanism and its subregional coordinated mechanisms, and to assess their achievements and challenges and the way forward towards strengthening the coherent and efficient delivery of support to the African Union and its organs in the context of the African Union and United Nations reforms. The second is to provide a platform for high-level panel discussions on issues pertinent to its theme with the view to promote interactions and generate solutions that will contribute towards tackling issues related to refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa.

⁶ Strategy of support to middle-income countries; *Strategic Framework to Support Resilient Development in Africa*; Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework; Sahel strategy; strategy of support to small island developing States and Indian Ocean countries; Horn of Africa Initiative; and migration mapping initiative.

18. The panel discussions will be informed by the issues paper on the subject matter circulated at the present event.

III. Format

19. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union will co-chair the session.

20. The first day of the session will comprise high-level panel discussions on strengthening RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanism and on the theme. The second day will commence with the fourth and final high-level panel discussions on the theme, followed by a discussion the work and functioning of the Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms in delivering coherent and effective support in the context of the African Union and the United Nations reforms at regional and subregional levels.

IV. Expected outcomes

21. The session is expected to result in the following outcomes:

(a) Consensus on strengthening the functioning of the Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms in the context of the African Union and United Nations reforms;

(b) Enhanced understanding, and appreciation of the refugee and internally displaced Persons situation in Africa;

(c) Agreed action-oriented recommendations on United Nations system support to the African Union, its organs and member States in addressing the challenge of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons;

(d) Consensus on aligning the work of the Mechanism with the United Nations –African Union Joint frameworks for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

(e) Adoption of the 2019-2020 workplan of RCM-Africa, taking into account the African Union and United Nations reforms and the African Union strategic priorities.

V. Expected outputs

22. The session outputs will include the following:

(a) Report of the meeting embodying key outcomes;

(b) Media releases;

(c) Web publications.

VI. Documentation

23. The session documents will include the following:

(a) Aide- memoire;

(b) Issues paper on the theme of the session;

(c) Draft progress report on the activities of the Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms;

(d) Draft proposed revised 2019-2020 joint workplans of the RCM-Africa clusters;

(e) Publications and promotional materials on United Nations system-wide support for the African Union.

VII. Participants

24. The following organizations are expected to attend the session: African Development Bank (AfDB); African Peer Review Mechanism; African Union Commission; Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); East African Community (EAC); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD); NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency; specialized institutions of the African Union; Southern African Development Community (SADC); RCM-Africa participating agencies; United Nations Sustainable Development Group for African members; and World Bank.

VIII. Dates and venue

25. The twentieth session of RCM-Africa will be held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 23 and 24 March, 2019.

IX. Working languages

26. The meeting will be conducted in English and French with simultaneous interpretation.

X. Administrative arrangements

27. An information note providing details of administrative arrangements and logistics relating to the session will be made available.

XI. Contacts

28. For further information about the session, please contact:

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