



Home-grown aspirations drive Africa's implementation of sustainable development goals

New York - At the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that kicked-off this week, ECA's Special Advisor on SDGs Aida Opoku-Mensah, informed the delegates that the SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063 "provide an opportunity for Africa to recast its transformation agenda within the framework of sustainable development." Highlighting some levels of congruence between Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, she discussed a number of efforts underway to harness the synergies of both agendas. The result, she said, "is a synergy of the global sustainable development goals together with Africa's own development aspirations."

In her contribution to a session on the key drivers of change, Ms. Opoku-Mensah highlighted the efforts to increase intra-African trade through the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area whose negotiations are ongoing. She also stressed the need to "invest in human capital, in particular through harnessing the youth bulge, increasing manufacturing in the context of industrialization, managing natural resources and exploring the potential and advantages of the green economy."

Ms. Opoku-Mensah outlined a number of key implementation challenges, such as infrastructure gaps that she said, are hurting development. Noting that quality infrastructure is a prerequisite for trade, manufacturing and industrialization, she gave the example of air transport in Africa and stated that both shipping and travel are extremely low (excluding North Africa) and that in 2015, only 45 million passengers travelled by air in Africa. This is 23 times less than in East-Asia and the Pacific. Air freight volume was only 2.854 billion tons.

On statistical weaknesses and data gaps that limit reporting on progress, she said that only 37.8 percent of the 230 SDG indicators have full data and added that "limited disaggregation and timeliness of data adversely affect progress reporting and impact evaluation." In this regard, she called on African governments to prioritize investments in statistical capacity and tools for policy design. She also stressed the need to strengthen evidence-based policy formulation and sequencing; as well as assessing impact to optimize resources. Furthermore, she said, "relevant toolkits are required for the localization and integration of the development initiatives into national development plans."

Implementing the SDGs will require human and financial resources, as well as strengthened capacities for evidence-based policy which she stressed, would need to be based on well integrated methods for tracking performance and follow up. In addition, countries will need to ramp up domestic resource mobilization efforts through a number of possibilities, including broadened tax base.

The overall goal of the session was to consider sustainable development from a regional perspective, highlight key regional priorities, and promote inter-regional peer-learning. Experiences from across the globe were shared by sister Regional Economic Commissions, while sensitizing the global audience to regional contexts, specificities and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For more on ECA's initiatives in relation to the SDGs, download the African Sustainable Development Map <https://www.uneca.org/publications/african-sustainable-development-map> [1]

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