Reporting on Regional Forums to the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Synopsis of Key Messages from the Fourth (2018) Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held from 2 to 4 May 2018

Presented by His Excellency Mame Thierno Dieng, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal and Chair of the Fourth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

16 July 2018, 3-3:30 p.m., New York, USA

Mr. President, excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

1. In Africa, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are being implemented in an integrated and synergistic manner with the Regional Goals of “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.”

2. The African Union Commission in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa of the United Nations, African Development Bank and the United Nations system deliver support to member States in areas including (i) Capacity development to align national development frameworks with and to implement the two Agendas; (ii) Tracking implementation of the two Agendas through the annual Sustainable Development Report on Africa; and (iii) Integrated follow-up and promoting sharing of good practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the two Agenda’s through the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and National Voluntary Reviews.

3. The fourth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was hosted by Senegal and held from 2 to 4 May 2018 on the theme “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.”

Mr. President, excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

4. The following are some of the key messages on the theme and subthemes, agreed upon by the Regional Forum:

A. Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

5. Resilient structural transformation in Africa, in line with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, require integrated national frameworks including sectoral strategies and
approaches that mainstream and prioritize inclusion, climate change-proofing, disaster risk reduction and the value of natural capital.

6. The momentum to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation should therefore be increased alongside the achievement of the SDGs.

7. Effective and inclusive land use and spatial planning and management policies, backed by commensurate legislation and governance mechanisms are essential to ensuring that the evolving urban form of Africa’s growing cities is sustainable and resilient.

**B. Clean water and sanitation**

8. African countries need to invest more in providing potable water access points in urban and rural communities, improved sanitation facilities and ensure appropriate waste management.

9. Ensuring the conservation and integrity of water catchment ecosystems is central to maintaining the stability of the hydrological cycle and crucial to guaranteeing steady stream flow in transboundary water resources. African countries need to strengthen collaboration and share experiences to ensure integrated and sustainable water resources management.

10. Governments should prioritize investment in sanitation and hygiene including initiatives that keep girls in schools such as providing access to sanitation facilities for better menstrual hygiene management.

11. The effective inclusion of young people, women, people living with disabilities, indigenous communities and all marginalized groups in decision-making is essential to the full achievement of access to water and sanitation.

**C. Affordable and clean energy**

12. Given the policies that are currently in place, it is unlikely that access to affordable and clean energy for all will be achieved in Africa by 2030. Governments should therefore facilitate investments to diversify and secure clean energy technologies to ensure access to energy.

13. Although a few countries have made significant progress in electrification, less progress has been made with respect to clean cooking, and increasing the share of modern renewables in the overall energy supply.
14. Countries should promote national investments in strengthening the grid for greater efficiency and the increased penetration of variable renewable power to promote cross-border connectivity to accelerate access to electricity.

15. To achieve impact and sustainability, countries should implement policies to ensure that deployed energy technologies meet high standards and are fit for purpose, and that energy project developers fulfil their corporate social responsibilities.

D. Sustainable cities and communities

16. Urbanization is a multidimensional enabler of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and as such plays a role in the achievement of many other SDGs.

17. More efforts need to be undertaken to ensure that urbanization is integrated into national development planning from a strategic and multi-sectoral perspective that is linked to socioeconomic and sectoral priorities, including creating decent jobs and harnessing rural-urban linkages.

18. Climate change and disaster risk-informed urbanization policies, strategies and investments, including disaster risk-informed national and local development strategies and plans, are critical to the creation of inclusive, sustainable, safe and resilient cities and human settlements.

19. Major efforts should be made to enhance the process of decentralization undertaken in many African countries by increasing access to national resources and enhancing the potential of resource generation at the local and city levels.

E. Responsible consumption and production

20. Member States should strengthen the implementation of their sustainable consumption and production strategies, especially towards resource efficiency and cleaner production, sustainable lifestyles, resource-efficient cities, sustainable public procurement and sustainable tourism.

21. The safeguarding and implementation of responsible management of Africa’s natural resources, on which most growth is predicated, should remain a priority.

22. There is a need to accelerate the implementation of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes within Africa.

23. Governments should develop and implement programmes for skills development
at all levels of education that support sustainable consumption and production and green industrialization.

**F. Life on land**

24. Funding, capacity development and technology support linked to achieving on-the-ground outcomes need to be scaled up to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans, land degradation neutrality targets, and national plans and programmes for sustainable forest management.

25. Tools and processes for integrating the sustainable use and management of natural capital into strategic regional, subregional and national development policies and other frameworks need to be strengthened and implemented.

26. Rights and access to land resources and participative approaches for the management of land, freshwater, forests and biodiversity need to be strengthened to ensure equitable benefit-sharing.

27. High-level political commitment should be enhanced to achieve ecosystem-related targets and develop a new and ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

**G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the partnership for sustainable development**

28. It is important for Africa that the global community effectively address illicit financial flows and the negative consequences that arise from them. It is estimated that $72 billion leaves the continent in illicit financial flows annually.

29. Innovation, science and technology are vitally important and Africa needs to fully exploit them to address many pressing sustainable development challenges in the region. In this regard, a multi-stakeholder Africa forum on science and technology innovation for the SDGs, should be held in the margins of the Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development to identify and address Africa’s science and technology innovation needs and prepare for the annual Global-level multi-stakeholder forum on the same.

30. Revitalizing the Global Partnership is indispensable for the achievement of the sustainable development goals. To fully revitalized global partnership, it should be supported by the concrete policies and actions outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.
31. National statistics offices, supported by development partners, need to strengthen their data and statistical systems to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in a harmonized and integrated manner.