

# **Key messages and the Marrakech Declaration adopted at the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

## **A submission to the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**By**

**Her Excellency Nezha El Ouafi, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development, Morocco and Chair of the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

**held at United Nations Headquarters, New York on 16 July 2019 at 3–4 p.m.**

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*Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am honoured, as Chair of the Bureau of the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to present to you Africa's regional contribution to this meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

2. The fifth session of our Regional Forum was hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16 to 18 April 2019. It was organized by the Economic Commission for Africa and the wider United Nations system, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank.

3. Our Regional Forum conducted a follow-up and review of progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

4. The theme of the Regional Forum was “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, and focused on select Sustainable Development Goals for this High-level Political Forum together with the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063. Accordingly, the sub-themes of the Forum were: (i) ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education; (ii) promoting decent work and inclusive economic growth; (iii) ensuring reduced inequalities; (iv) scaling up climate action; (v) ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions; (vi) strengthening the means of implementation and the partnership for sustainable development.

5. During the Forum, countries benefited from peer learning and sharing practices, experiences and lessons learned in voluntary national reviews and implementing the two agendas in an integrated manner. The Regional Forum was informed by the outcomes of the Inaugural Africa Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation.

6. The Regional Forum adopted policy recommendations for Africa in the form of key messages and the Marrakech Declaration on Sustainable Development in Africa. These constitute the input of the African region to this meeting of the High-level Political Forum and the upcoming Summit meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals, to be held in September this year.

7. On behalf of the Bureau of the fifth session of the Regional Forum, I would like to express my gratitude to the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations system, together with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, for supporting African countries to articulate our priorities and unified voice, and for the continued support provided to member States to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

*Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

8. It is now my pleasure to highlight some of the key messages and the elements of the Marrakech Declaration on Sustainable Development.

### *Progress*

9. Four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and midway into the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, the following progress is notable on the sub-themes deliberated on by the Regional Forum:

(a) The number of children completing primary school has risen in some African countries. Nonetheless, two thirds of the countries in Africa have yet to reach the target of full completion of primary education;

(b) A number of countries have introduced national employment legislation and policies to support the creation of employment opportunities and mainstream employment creation objectives into macroeconomic and development policies;

(c) All African countries have signed the Paris Agreement and 48 of them have already ratified it and set ambitious nationally determined contributions to climate action, requiring approximately \$3 trillion of conditional and unconditional financing;

(d) African countries have adopted the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. This Agreement provides enormous opportunities for revenue mobilization and promoting inclusive growth including the empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable groups;

(e) Overall, governance in Africa continues on an upward trajectory. Improvements are being made regarding the rule of law, participation, rights, and transparency and accountability;

(f) By the end of the High-level Political Forum, 35 of the member States in the region will have completed their Voluntary National Reviews, which are vital in stimulating action.

10. The progress that has been made is due to the strong sense of ownership on the part of African countries that have domesticated and implemented the two agendas as integral priorities of their national development frameworks. The Economic Commission for Africa and the wider United Nations family, the African Union, the African Development Bank and other development partners have accompanied member States in these efforts. We call for more and stronger support by them to enable our countries to scale up the implementation of the two agendas.

## ***Challenges***

11. Despite the progress highlighted, African countries face substantial challenges that must be addressed in order to dramatically step up the pace and scale of action, with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063:

(a) The average economic growth levels for African countries in 2018 of 3.2 per cent are below those needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) To get on track to achieve the Goals, Africa needs to triple its 2018 gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth of 0.6 per cent, which is too low to mitigate to any significant extent the high levels of poverty and inequality;

(c) To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Africa needs to meet incremental financing needs estimated at between \$614 billion and \$638 billion per year;

(d) Globally, Africa has the lowest proportion of trained primary school teachers;

(e) The number of young people in Africa who are not in education, employment or training is expected to increase by more than 7 million, from 53 million in 2018 to 60.7 million in 2023;

(f) Climate change is a “threat multiplier” and its adverse impact is affecting the region as demonstrated by the recent example of the severe damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Idai in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe;

(g) In terms of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, there is a severe lack of data relating to tracking, evidence-based design and implementation.

## ***Measures for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa***

12. In the face of these challenges, several measures must be taken to step up the pace and scale of action to achieve the goals of the two agendas. Such measures include the following:

(a) National efforts and the mobilization of global support must be intensified, in particular for the least developed countries, small island developing States, and countries in or emerging from conflict that are facing major challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Efforts should also be intensified to strengthen the alignment of the two agendas with national development strategies, plans, budget allocations, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and bilateral and multilateral development cooperation frameworks;

(c) Efforts should be made to enhance the inclusiveness of education, in particular across gender, age, disability and location, through specific policy interventions, including through gender-sensitive and transport policies;

(d) It is crucial for countries of the region to implement business reforms promoting and unlocking greater private sector investment, which is vital for the generation of additional revenue and the creation of jobs;

(e) To realize the potential offered by migration in reducing inequalities, actions are urgently required to strengthen arrangements at all levels to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;

(f) Developed countries should support African countries with the means of implementation including capacity development, technology transfer and financing, in particular meeting the post-2020 minimum climate finance goal of \$100 billion annually;

(g) African countries need to implement integrated resource mobilization, budgeting and development planning processes and decentralized public financial management, and to intensify efforts to combat corruption and illicit financial flows;

(h) African countries are called upon to ratify and implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and thus develop national plans and strategies to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Agreement to mobilize revenue, enhance productivity and achieve inclusive growth;

(i) African countries and their partners need to invest in building appropriate technical competencies and institutions and creating the necessary environment to encourage youth innovation and optimally tap the dividends offered by technology advancement, to support the implementation of the two agendas.

13. In accordance with the Marrakech Declaration:

(a) African countries call for the strengthening of South–South cooperation and the sharing of experience among African countries with a view to tackling the multiple and complex challenges and building multi-stakeholder partnerships, plans and programmes of action at the regional and subregional levels needed to ensure the desired development that leaves no one behind;

(b) Africa also calls for the establishment of a solidarity fund for statistical development to support African countries in the collection, management and use of the necessary statistical data and statistics for compelling and evidence-based policy design, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

***To conclude, Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

14. The Regional Forum invites member States and development partners to consider the key messages and the Marrakech Declaration on Sustainable Development in the efforts at all levels, to empower people and ensure inclusiveness and equality; and to accelerate progress in Africa with implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.

I thank you for your kind attention.