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Regional Coordination Mechanism

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I. Background

A. Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms

1. The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa was established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/46, which mandated the regional commissions of the United Nations to hold regular inter-agency meetings in their respective regions with a view to improving cooperation and coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system. The first annual session of the Mechanism was held in 1999. Since then, the Mechanism has sought to ensure cooperation, coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes working in Africa in support of the African Union in the context of global and continental development frameworks, as well as United Nations-African Union cooperation frameworks.

2. The Mechanism functions through thematic clusters whose configuration has evolved over time. The current configuration comprises nine clusters addressing various thematic areas relevant to the development agenda of Africa¹ and four subregional coordination mechanisms covering the five subregions of Africa. These subregional coordination mechanisms, in order of their establishment, cover Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, West Africa and North Africa. The Mechanism is supported by a joint secretariat with offices located at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union Commission, while the subregional offices of ECA provide secretariat functions for the subregional coordination mechanisms in close coordination with the regional economic communities. The annual sessions of the Mechanism are co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission. The Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms have supported the

¹ (a) Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade agriculture and agroprocessing and regional integration; (b) infrastructure development; (c) human capital development, health, nutrition, science, technology and innovation; (d) labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility; (e) gender equality, women and youth empowerment; (f) humanitarian matters and disaster risk management; (g) environment, urbanization and population; (h) advocacy, information, communications and culture; and (i) governance, peace and security.



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African Union and its organs and agencies, including the African Union Commission, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency (now referred to as the African Union Development Agency), regional economic communities and other intergovernmental organizations.

3. Support was initially provided within the framework of the NEPAD programme of the African Union and the Millennium Development Goals up to 2015. Over the period 2006–2016, the United Nations Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union served as the framework for support. At present, support is being provided in the context of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within the framework of the renewed United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda for 2017–2027. Furthermore, the work of the Mechanism has been aligned with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and African Union strategic priorities.² Following this alignment, the Mechanisms have placed particular emphasis on achieving results and having an impact through joint implementation guided by joint workplans.

4. Since 2017, the sessions have been organized jointly with the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups for Eastern and Southern Africa and for West and Central Africa. In the context of the United Nations reforms, the Mechanism, currently in its twenty-first year of operationalization, has been working with the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group platforms to strengthen coherent regional engagement in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of support to the African Union, particularly within the framework of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

B. United Nations reforms

5. In his report to the General Assembly of June 2017, the Secretary-General proposed key actions and recommendations to reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. On 31 May 2018, the 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 and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In that resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system. It 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.

6. Implementation of the first phase of the reforms, which started in the second half of 2018, focused on optimizing regional mechanisms and structures. It identified nine specific deliverables, all of which have either been completed or are in advanced stages of implementation. The second phase of the reforms focused on "options, on a region by region basis for the longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of the regional assets of the United Nations". This phase was managed by the internal review team established by the Secretary-General and led by the Special Adviser on Reform, under the oversight of the United

² (a) Regional integration with a focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Single African Air Transport Market and free movement of persons, goods and services; (b) the Silencing the Guns initiative; (c) climate change; (d) gender and youth; (e) capacity-building; (f) division of labour between regional economic communities, Member States and other international actors; and (g) addressing the African Union theme of the year.

Nations Sustainable Development Group Chair, the Deputy Secretary-General. The work of the internal review team was complemented by consultations in all five regions organized by the International Centre for Strategic Thinking (CEPEI), an independent think tank, to make recommendations for strengthening the regional architecture based on the assets and value proposition of regional United Nations entities. The conclusions confirmed the invaluable nature of United Nations assets and expertise at the regional level, but stressed the need for a more optimal deployment of regional assets.

7. Building on the work of the regional review, the Secretary-General, in his report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, made the following five recommendations to guide the longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of United Nations development system assets at the regional level: (a) create a unified mechanism for coordination in each region – a United Nations regional collaborative platform – to subsume the regional coordination mechanisms and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group platforms; (b) establish knowledge-management hubs in each region; (c) initiate a process to enhance transparency and results-based management at the regional level; (d) initiate a region-by-region change management process consolidating capacities on data and statistics; and (e) identify administrative services that could be provided more efficiently to regional offices through common back offices (see A/74/73-E/2019/14, sect. III.B).

8. On 8 July 2019, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2019/15,³ in which it called for, among other actions, further efforts to identify and address gaps and overlaps at the regional level, as well as inclusive, intergovernmental consultations, for finalization and implementation of the regional review, on a region-by-region basis. In response to this request, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Advisory Group on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, in its deliberations on 30 July 2019, requested that the internal review team be reconvened to implement the requests made by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2019/15. The internal review team met on 4 September, 8 November and 16 December 2019 to detail and identify the functions and governance structure of the regional collaborative platforms and oversee and ensure consistency in the inputs provided by working groups in the five regions on the second through fifth recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243. The five recommendations will be resubmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration.

9. In the context of the United Nations reforms, the internal review team assigned task teams constituted at the level of each region to undertake consultations on the second through fifth recommendations of the Secretary-General. In the Africa region, the consultations were co-chaired by the Executive Secretary of ECA, Vera Songwe, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Director for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa. The following proposed O-IBCs resulted from the consultations: (a) strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development; (b) ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management, and accelerated economic transformation and diversification; (c) harnessing demographic dividends, gender and youth for development; (d) leveraging new technologies and enabling digital transitions for inclusive growth and development; (e) fostering action on climate change, strengthening natural

³ Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/15 on progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

resources governance and enabling energy transitions for sustainable development; (f) towards peace, security, and the respect of human rights; and (g) displacement and migration. African Union organs and agencies will be consulted on the OIBCs.

C. Support for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

10. Advancing the integrated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals in a manner that ensures the realization of concrete results and impact on the ground is at the core of the work of the Mechanism. The *2018 Africa Sustainable Development Report* states that Africa is making steady progress towards building the critical ingredients for sustainable and resilient societies, but the pace has been slow. Furthermore, the aggregate performance of the continent masks wide disparities among countries. In this regard, the report asserts that effective implementation of the two agendas requires evidence-based policymaking to ensure the realization of multiple policy objectives through catalytic investments in key sectors. Undertaking such evidence-based policymaking calls for strengthening statistical systems to ensure better-informed policymaking. Strong institutional coordination within countries and among development partners is also considered vital. In this context, the United Nations system pledged to continue to work in partnership with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to leverage and optimize the use of financial and human resources to advance the development objectives of member States.

11. In this regard, with only 10 years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the Secretary-General of the United Nations in September 2019 called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action on three levels: (a) global action to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals; (b) local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities; and (c) people action, including by young people, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations. The United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges, including tackling poverty, gender inequality, climate change and closing the finance gap. In this regard, the Secretary-General considered as priority actions investment in poverty eradication, social protection, health, education, energy, water and sanitation, sustainable transport and infrastructure, and Internet access. Equally important are actions to improve governance, tackle illicit financial flows, stamp out corruption and develop effective, common sense and fair taxation systems. A particular emphasis is placed on peace and security and building economies for the future and ensuring decent work for all, especially young people, with a special focus on women and girls. The United Nations development system and development partners have all geared up to respond to the Secretary-General's call to advance the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals at the speed and scale required.

D. African Union theme for the year 2020

12. Under the leadership of the African Union, supported by the United Nations, the number of conflicts in Africa has significantly declined over the past two decades. Civil wars in Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone have stopped. Nevertheless, there are still many areas throughout the continent where the guns have yet to be silenced. There are ongoing armed conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. The United Nations has peacekeeping missions in several of those countries. As is often the case, the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, bear the brunt of the ill effects of armed conflict. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from gender-based violence and other abuses and violations of their human rights, both during and after armed conflict. In this context, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, during the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization of African Unity-African Union in 2013, adopted "Silencing the Guns by 2020" as a flagship project of Agenda 2063. The vision underscored that conflict is one of the biggest challenges to the implementation of Agenda 2063. In January 2017, the Assembly of the African Union adopted the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020. The Thirty-third Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union will be held in Addis Ababa on 9 and 10 February 2020 under the theme of "Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa's development".

13. With regard to United Nations support, the Security Council adopted resolution 2457 (2019) on 27 February 2019, in which it expressed strong support for the African Union initiative. On 4 March 2019, the Standing Principals' Group agreed that a working group should be created, led by the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, to coordinate the different work streams to support the implementation of the initiative and present a coordinated response to the African Union and the Security Council. This led to the launching of a United Nations task force on 10 April 2019 to support the African Union initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa. The main objective of the task force is to serve as the main platform to coordinate within the United Nations system the different work streams in support of the African Union initiative, including through strengthening strategic coherence and operational collaboration. A core group comprising the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Development Coordination Office (DCO), UNDP and the United Nations Office to the African Union will be set up to steer action and support the effective use of the task force. One main activity undertaken by the task force is a mapping exercise in the form of a matrix to identify the ongoing and planned activities of United Nations entities supporting the African Union initiative for the period 2019-2020. The United Nations family has also undertaken to prioritize the establishment of an African human security index, a tool for identifying vulnerability and development of integrated frameworks that could contribute to the Silencing the Guns initiative. The development of the index is aimed at promoting regular monitoring of progress on the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. The special session

14. The special session is being organized by ECA and DCO jointly with the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups for Eastern and Southern Africa and for West and Central Africa. The session will focus on leveraging the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable

development in implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. To that end, it will discuss, among other things, the role of the United Nations development system, African Union organs and agencies and other stakeholders. Given the significance of the African Union theme for 2020 of "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development" for United Nations collective and coherent support to the continental body, the special session will also deliberate on that theme.

15. The special session will be held on 24 February 2020 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, back-to-back with the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which will be held from 25 to 27 February 2020. The rationale for linking the two events is to facilitate the translation of the outcomes of Forum sessions into programmatic responses by the United Nations development system. Additionally, this will provide the opportunity for collective activities of the United Nations development system to be showcased at sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which, among other things, reviews progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the realization of its Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the Forum has dedicated an agenda item to the work of the United Nations development system and partners in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. Participants of the Mechanism are expected to attend and provide substantive contributions to the Forum deliberations.

III. Objectives of the special session

16. The session has two main objectives. The first is to explore ways of accelerating the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of Agenda 2063 in Africa in the context of the United Nations decade of action with a focus on the role of the United Nations development system, African Union organs and agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. Second, it will provide a platform to deliberate on the African Union theme for the year 2020 on "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development", with a view to garnering collective and coherent support for the implementation of the related African Union road map.

IV. Format

17. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union will co-chair the special session. The format will include a dialogue between the African Union and the United Nations on the focus of the session, breakout sessions to allow for in-depth discussions on the African Union theme for 2020, the Sustainable Development Goal data gateway, and young people and the United Nations decade of action, and plenary sessions for interactive discussions and consensus building. These will be preceded by an opening segment which will set the tone for the session and be followed by a closing segment which will highlight the main issues arising and provide guidance on the next steps.

V. Expected outcomes

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

(a) Consensus and recommendations on concrete actions required on the part of the United Nations development system, African Union organs and agencies and other stakeholders to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing Agenda 2063 in the context

of the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development;

(b) Improved knowledge and understanding of the Sustainable Development Goal data gateway and action-oriented recommendations for its effective operationalization in Africa;

(c) Enhanced appreciation of the significance and role of young people in implementing the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, and concrete action-oriented recommendations for their effective engagement in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of Agenda 2063;

(d) Enhanced awareness and appreciation of the African Union theme for the year 2020, “Silencing the Guns”, and concrete action-oriented recommendations on collective and coherent support of the United Nations development system for the implementation of the African Union road map on the theme.

VI. Expected outputs

19. The session outputs will include the following:

- (a) Report of the special session;
- (b) Media releases;
- (c) Web publications.

VII. Documentation

20. The session documents will include the following:

- (a) Aide memoire;
- (b) Report of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa;
- (c) Report on strengthening regional and subregional coordination in support of the African Union;
- (d) Report of the 2019 joint meeting of the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups for Eastern and Southern Africa and for West and Central Africa;
- (e) Report on United Nations systemwide support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa’s Development Programme;
- (f) Africa inception report on reprofiling and restructuring of United Nations regional assets;
- (g) Final draft report of the internal review team of 16 December 2019;
- (h) Mapping of the proposed OIBCs onto relevant regional and global frameworks;
- (i) Publications and promotional materials relevant to the work of the Mechanism.

VIII. Participants

21. Representatives of the following organizations are expected to attend the session: African Development Bank; African Peer Review Mechanism; African Union Commission; regional economic communities; member States; various civil society groups, including women and young people; the private sector; United Nations organizations; and development partners.

IX. Dates and venue

22. The special session will be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, on 24 February 2020.

X. Working languages

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

XI. Administrative arrangements

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

XII. Contacts

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

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