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**Regional Coordination Mechanism**

**Special session**

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 24 February 2020

Item 2 of the provisional agenda \*

**Dialogue between the African Union and the United Nations on leveraging the United Nations decade of action in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing Agenda 2063**

**Concept note**

**I. Background**

1. 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 Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. According to the *2018 Africa Sustainable Development Report: Towards a Transformed and Resilient Continent*, Africa has been making steady progress towards building the critical ingredients for sustainable and resilient societies, but the pace has been slow. In this regard, the United Nations system has pledged to continue to work in partnership with the African Union Commission, other African Union organs and the African Development Bank to leverage and optimize the use of financial and non-financial, natural and institutional resources to advance the development objectives of member States.

2. 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 Goals;

(b) Local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities;

(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.

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\* ECA/RCM/SS1/2020/1.



3. Africa has achieved significant economic growth, with growth rates ranging between 3 and 4 per cent per annum over the past two decades. Further, poverty rates are declining while access to key services such as education, health care and electricity are improving. Nevertheless, looking at the global goals, the progress attained has been slow and insufficient, with huge variations across and within countries, an indication that there is a need to invest financially and technically to expedite progress towards attaining the global goals. Although poverty rates are declining, the absolute number of people living in poverty is rising (from an estimated 413 million in 2015 to 422 million in 2019) owing to high population growth rates and a lack of opportunities for decent jobs and of access to quality education and health services. Unfortunately, many Africans, particularly young people and women, continue to be left behind, despite the many opportunities. The inclusiveness, and indivisible and integrated nature, of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 and the large gaps in achieving many of the targets call for heightened levels of ambition to motivate a step-change in implementation and reporting on the two development agendas.

4. The United Nations decade of action therefore calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges, including tackling poverty, gender inequality and climate change and closing the finance gap. In particular, the year 2020 is an opportune time for a comprehensive review of progress on the two agendas at the country, subregional and regional levels, paying particular attention to the incorporation of the agendas into national law and their implementation. In recognition of the vital role industrialization plays in addressing poverty, the international community, through the General Assembly of the United Nations, identified the period between 2016 and 2025 as the third Industrial Development Decade for Africa. Areas of focus within the Decade include but are not limited to trade capacity-building, technology transfer, agribusiness value chain development, renewable energy and energy efficiency, industrial policy and special economic zones and industrial parks, and action on climate change.

## II. Objectives

5. The main objective of the session will be to discuss and agree on how the United Nations can better collaborate with the African Union to accelerate the attainment of the two agendas. Specifically, the session will:

(a) Foster a common understanding of the linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda) and Agenda 2063;

(b) Showcase success stories, challenges and lessons from the continent and discuss how they can be adapted and scaled up elsewhere;

(c) Discuss how the work of the United Nations system contributes to the main theme of the African Union for the year 2020 on silencing the guns and conflict resolution to create a conducive environment for the development of Africa.

## III. Format

6. The session will be interactive and will present an opportunity for the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations to hold a dialogue with the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission and other stakeholders on leveraging the United Nations decade of action to accelerate the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of Agenda 2063. In this regard, the Deputy Secretary-General will make an intervention to which the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission will respond.

7. Following the dialogue, the moderator will invite Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, Amira Elfadil Mohamed Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission, and Alexander Chiteme, Minister of National Development and Planning of Zambia, to make interventions for five minutes each. She will then invite comments from a representative of the private sector and a representative of civil society, each of whom will be allotted five minutes. The minister, private sector and civil society representatives will focus on the following key areas:

- (a) Country success stories and challenges:
  - (i) Progress towards domestication and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: what opportunities and challenges exist at the national level?
  - (ii) How can more opportunities be created for collaboration between Governments, policymakers and institutions towards implementation and domestication of the two agendas?
  - (iii) What support do Governments need?
- (b) Private sector entrepreneurship as a key driver of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063:
  - (i) What is the role of the private sector in driving implementation of the two agendas?
  - (ii) Skills for the future: What is needed? Where are the gaps?
- (c) Civil society pathways to development:
  - (i) What role do civil society and other development partners have to play?
  - (ii) Which are the areas that need immediate attention?

8. Following the interventions of the speakers, there will be a question-and-answer session that will include reactions from the floor as well as short statements from discussants representing various sectors of society (see annex).

#### **IV. Expected outcomes**

9. The expected outcomes of the dialogue are the following:
- (a) Nuanced recommendations that will inform the future programme of work between the African Union and the United Nations;
  - (b) Synthesis of action points to feed into the key messages of the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

## Annex

### Draft organization of work

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<i>Date and time</i>	<i>Programme</i>
<b>Monday, 24 February</b>	
2.50-3.20 p.m.	Dialogue moderated by Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe  <b>Interventions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina J. Mohammed</li><li>- Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Kwesi Quartey</li><li>- Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union</li><li>- Amira Elfadil Mohamed Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission</li><li>- Alexander Chiteme, Minister of National Development and Planning, Zambia</li></ul>
3.20-3.35 p.m.	Comments and reactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Representative of the private sector</li><li>- Representative of a civil society organization</li></ul>
3.35-3.55 p.m.	General discussion (questions and comments)
3.55-4.00 p.m.	Summary of the key issues arising and policy messages by Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe

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