

UN deputy chief calls for the Africa Regional Collaborative Platform to scale up its transformative support

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Niamey, 06 March 2023 (ECA) - UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed called on heads of regional UN entities across Africa to accelerate the collective delivery of strategic results at the regional level by providing more transformative support to Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in 54 countries on the continent, and developing Africa's common positions on emerging issues in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Africa Union's Agenda 2063.

On 28 February, at the sidelines of the ninth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Niamey, Niger, Ms. Mohammed held an annual discussion with Regional Directors of UN entities representing the Africa Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP), a mechanism that brings together 26 UN organizations across the continent to ensure full collaboration and coordination of the UN's regional assets, such as expertise, experts and funding.

This regional architecture is led by its chair Ms. Mohammed and two vice-chairs, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa at the UN Development Programme, and Mr. Antonio Pedro, Acting Executive Secretary for the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

During three hours of in-depth dialogue, the Deputy Secretary-General emphasized the urgent need for a course correction to rescue the SDGs and the AU Agenda 2063. "We are totally off track with the SDGs, and we were already off before COVID-19. The pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis all exacerbated the situation," she said.

She highlighted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN responded with "development as an emergency," repurposing available funds and adjusting the assistance needs.

“We did things we have never done before. It was not just about saving lives; it was about saving livelihoods. I know that we can do things differently and change the status quo in the way we have done things before,” she said.

Reviewing the progress of the Africa RCP in 2022, Ms. Mohammed acknowledged that its regional support, leading up to last September’s Transforming Education Summit, was “a testament to the regional UN system coming together.”

Last year, members of the Africa RCP, led by the UN Children’s Fund and UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, provided strategic guidance and support for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to intensively engage with their government counterparts, which contributed to the organization of national consultations in 46 African countries on how to transform education before the summit in New York.

Additionally, Ms. Mohammed recognized the role of the Africa RCP in preparation for the UN Climate Change Conference, COP27, which took place in Egypt last November.

Ahead of COP27, the Africa RCP held a series of strategic dialogue sessions with Resident Coordinators to identify and consolidate key priorities for the continent, which included climate finance, just energy transition, capacity development and good practices on mitigation and adaptation.

These priorities then responded to the requests raised by government partners and the African group of COP27 negotiators, ensuring that the work between the Africa RCP and UN Country Teams on the ground was closely aligned with decisions taken at the intergovernmental level.

Building on such concrete examples of regional support in 2022, Ms. Mohammed urged the Africa RCP members to help shape Africa’s common narratives on critical topics and get the continent well-prepared for global negotiations and stocktakes at crucial moments of the year, working closely with Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in each country.

For example, she pointed out that a global stocktaking moment for the UN Food Systems Summit will be organized this July. And COP28 in December will be another crucial milestone for the first-ever global stocktake to assess where the world stands in order to reach the Paris goals in the next five years.

Ms. Mohammed also stressed that the Africa RCP’s support would be critical for the upcoming SDG Summit in September and called for its members to help Resident Coordinators engage strategically with their government counterparts so that governments can communicate a clear vision and robust benchmarks at the summit to get the SDGs back on track.

Furthermore, she added that the Africa RCP must assist in the work of moving the recommendations laid out in the Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda" from ideas to action, including crucial policy briefs to be released this year on a Global Digital Compact, a New Agenda for Peace and other vital issues.

Underscoring the significance of promoting "Africa's agency," Ms. Mohammed addressed the need to further strengthen the partnership between the African Union and the UN, and urged the Africa RCP members to further integrate the AU-UN joint frameworks into its work.

"Africa is at a crossroads, with the impact of global crises challenging the development gains made in the past two decades. Our role in supporting the African Union and its members, in their vision and mission, is more important than ever. But we cannot accompany them as individual UN agencies. Together, through this platform, we can bring thought-leadership and varied expertise to accelerate the Africa We Want," said Ms. Eziakonwa, one of the Africa RCP vice chairs.

Particularly, promoting the African Continental Free Trade Area is one of the AU's top priorities. And Mr. Pedro, the other vice-chair of the Africa RCP, raised the importance of supporting national strategies for the Continental Free Trade Area to be integrated into the work of the UN at the country level.

Throughout the meeting, all members of the Africa RCP stressed its strong relevance and value propositions as a platform for collective action to support the acceleration of the SDGs and a unique entry point vis-à-vis the African Union.

"Transformation in Africa requires well-connected links at the global, regional and country levels. The Africa RCP, with enhanced horizontal and vertical integration, will further contribute to system-wide coherence and improve our permeance for the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063", said Mr. Pedro.

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