



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
9 February 2024

Original: English

---

### Economic Commission for Africa Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Tenth session

Addis Ababa (hybrid), 23–25 April 2024

Item 8 (e) of the provisional agenda\*

#### **Parallel meetings for an in-depth review of progress made, peer learning and acceleration actions regarding the sub-themes of the Regional Forum: partnerships for the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

### **Background report on the sub-theme of partnerships for the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

## **I. Background**

1. Sustainable Development Goal 17 intersects with all the other Sustainable Development Goals and, therefore, it is critical in rescuing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It can be used as the foundation for collective action and progress, addressing the interconnectedness and complexity of development challenges through crucial means of implementation, including finance, trade, technology, data and statistics, and capacity-building. The complex interplay of multiple global crises – climate change, finance injustice, the continuing impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and ongoing regional and global conflicts – has hampered progress by diverting attention and resources away from long-term development goals that, when attained, result in the sustainable, equitable and prosperous futures that are envisioned in the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

2. The trust and collaboration that are essential to collective action are being eroded by rising nationalism and geopolitical tensions, making it increasingly difficult to build a consensus. Furthermore, economic downturns have a negative impact on government budgets and private sector investment, limiting the resources that are available for development initiatives.

3. Developing countries need at least an additional \$4 trillion annually to support their efforts to attain the Goals by 2030.<sup>1</sup> More than 50 per cent (\$2.2 trillion) of that amount is required for the energy transition, another \$0.3 billion are needed annually to revamp agrifood systems in low-income and middle-income countries and to put an end to hunger, and \$500 billion annually are required for water and sanitation investments. Global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, however, declined by 12 per cent in 2022, down to \$1.3 billion. In addition, Africa needs investments of over \$3 trillion in mitigation and adaptation by 2030 to implement its nationally determined contributions,<sup>2</sup>

---

\* ECA/RFSD/2024/1/Rev.1.

<sup>1</sup> *World Investment Report 2023* (United Nations publication, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> African Development Bank, “COP25: climate change in Africa”.



requiring accessible and predictable inflows of conditional and unconditional finance.

4. Domestic financial resources on the continent have significant potential to support sustainable development: domestic government revenues amounted to \$466 billion in 2021, equivalent to 17 per cent of African gross domestic product.<sup>3</sup>

5. Amid economic uncertainty, international collaboration in science, technology, innovation and digitalization is emerging as a beacon of hope for the acceleration of the achievement of the Goals and the fulfilment of Agenda 2063. Digital technology – from mobile phones to innovations that leverage artificial intelligence and other emerging technology – are improving financial inclusion, government effectiveness and the delivery of public services. The absorptive capacity of cutting-edge technology, however, is often limited by weak infrastructure for information and communications technology in rural areas.

6. The availability of data on the Goals has improved across the continent over the past decade. The number of indicators with at least two data points for 40 per cent of African countries increased from 124 in 2021 to 166 in 2023. Nevertheless, substantial additional investment in African data systems is required.

7. African countries, with support from the African Union Commission, regional organizations, entities of the United Nations system, specialized training institutions and development partners, have made considerable progress in developing human capital, building institutions and sharing knowledge in the past two decades. For instance, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has trained some 15,600 government officials and other stakeholders in the implementation of national development plans aligned with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

8. The present paper provides an overview of the progress achieved in relation to Goal 17 (partnerships for the Goals) of the 2030 Agenda and goal 19 (Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence) of Agenda 2063, with which it is closely aligned.

## **II. Important trends and progress in implementation**

### **A. Finance**

9. The current financial situation in African countries remains precarious, and estimates of financial flows, such as FDI and remittances, indicate a stable or slightly downward trend. Two contrasting realities characterize the financial paradox on the continent: Africa faces a significant financing gap but, at the same time, is a net lender to the rest of the world, given that illicit financial flows from the continent surpass its receipts of FDI and official development assistance (ODA). That dichotomy is baffling, considering the abundant financial resources in the region that could significantly address its development financing needs if harnessed fully and used effectively.<sup>4</sup> Figure I shows the potential magnitude of the continent's domestic resources that are not currently mobilized, which could amount to \$500 billion–\$600 billion and,

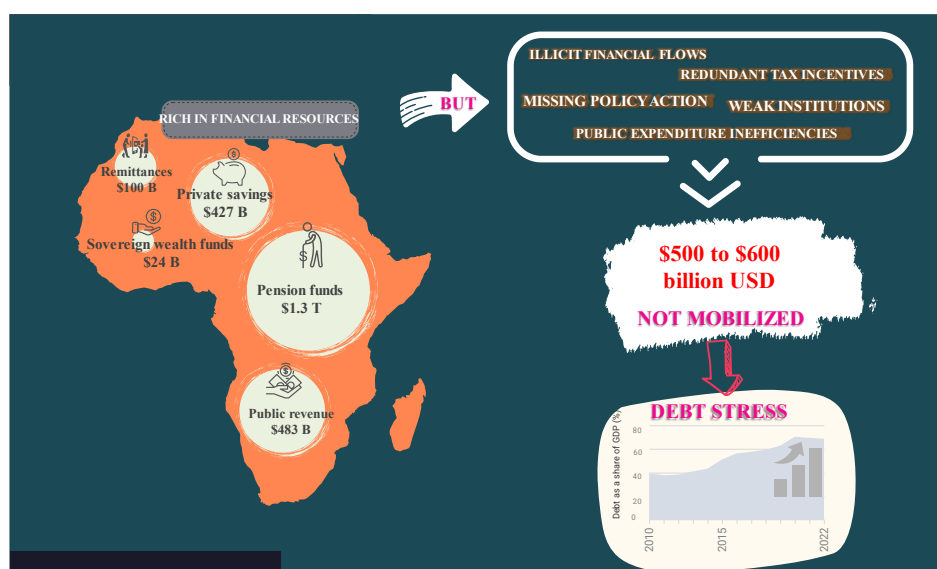
---

<sup>3</sup> African Union Commission and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Africa's Development Dynamics 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Africa's financing paradox, see United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, *Solving the Paradoxes of Development in Africa: Financing, Energy and Food Systems* (2023).

if not harnessed, represent a foregone opportunity to boost sustainable development on the continent.

Figure I  
**Financing paradox in Africa**



Source: Adapted from United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, *Solving the Paradoxes of Development in Africa: Financing, Energy and Food Systems* (2023).

10. On average, members of the Development Assistance Committee allocated 0.3 per cent of their gross national income as ODA in 2021, up from 0.2 per cent in 2000.<sup>5</sup> That amount, however, is less than one half of the target of 0.7 per cent, which, in 2021, was met by only Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden. Furthermore, net ODA flows to Africa declined between 2020 and 2021, from \$78 billion to \$75 billion. In 2021, 44.9 per cent of the \$46.9 billion of official sustainable development grants to Africa accrued to one subregion: East Africa.

11. At an estimated \$48 billion, flows of FDI to Africa remained almost unchanged in 2023 compared with the previous year, decreasing only slightly, by 1 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Other regions received considerably greater amounts. Owing to high interest rates, very few countries have raised debt on international markets over the past three years, and the limited resilience of African economies to shocks has adversely affected their sovereign credit ratings. Progress towards achieving Goal 17, therefore, remains limited.

12. The launch of the African Green Bank Initiative by the African Development Bank could help to generate climate finance opportunities on the continent worth \$3 trillion between 2020 and 2030.<sup>7</sup> African countries issued 0.2 per cent of total global green bonds between 2006 and 2022.<sup>8</sup> The barriers to the issuance of green and blue bonds include the time and cost of developing

<sup>5</sup> Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation, "Official and private flows", OECD International Development Statistics. Available at [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/data/oecd-international-development-statistics/official-and-private-flows\\_data-00072-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/data/oecd-international-development-statistics/official-and-private-flows_data-00072-en) (accessed on 5 January 2024).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Foreign direct investment in developing economies fell 9% in 2023", 22 January 2024.

<sup>7</sup> AllAfrica, "African Development Bank launches catalytic initiative for green banks in Africa on the sidelines of COP 27", 17 November 2022.

<sup>8</sup> African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2023: Mobilizing Private Sector Financing for Climate and Green Growth in Africa* (Abidjan, 2023).

the instruments, the need for the transparent use of proceeds, monitoring difficulties leading to greenwashing risks, insufficient awareness, limited capacity for project assessment and weak regulation.

13. Debt-for-nature swaps are climate and nature transactions aimed at positive environmental outcomes and improvements to countries' debt sustainability. They are a form of affordable green financing that, by tackling debt and environmental issues simultaneously, have a meaningful and measurable impact in the borrowing country.

## **B. Technology and innovation**

14. Collaboration among African countries and between Africa and other regions in science, technology and innovation has increased in terms of the number of partnerships and its intensity. The results of one study show that the share of scientific publications by an African scientist and at least one researcher from another country increased from 3.9 per cent in 2000 to 7.6 per cent in 2017, and that 34 African countries produce 75 per cent or more of their scientific output in collaboration with at least one foreign researcher.<sup>9</sup>

15. That trend is borne out in the increase in joint cooperation over the past three decades. Africa Initiative II is an example of collaboration between the African Union and the European Union on research and innovation in four areas: public health, the green transition, innovation and technology, and capacities for science.<sup>10</sup> In addition, in 2022, the European Commission announced an investment package of 150 billion euros aimed at accelerating a strong, inclusive, green and digital recovery in Africa.

16. The United Nations encourages collaboration among African countries and between Africa and the rest of the world. ECA recently launched the Origin research and innovation hub, which has become a platform on which African researchers and students can collaborate with their international counterparts to solve African challenges. In 2022, ECA reached a significant milestone in the Congo by establishing the African Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence, the first such research centre in Africa.

17. The Pan African University was established by the African Union to revitalize higher education and research by promoting, through its institutes, collaboration among African countries. The institutes and the countries in which they are based are: Water and Energy Science (Algeria); Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation (Kenya); Life and Earth Sciences (Nigeria); Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (Cameroon); Space Sciences (South Africa); the Entrepreneurship Hub (Algeria); and the Pan African Virtual and e-University (Cameroon).

18. The acquisition of technology in Africa has slowed down since 2015. Imports of capital goods declined from \$144 billion in 2013 and 2014 to \$104 billion in 2020; expenditure on the use of intellectual property declined from \$3.3 billion to \$2.6 billion between 2013 and 2020; and FDI declined from about \$58 billion in 2015 to about \$48 billion in 2023. In contrast, between 2013 and 2020, payment for the use of intellectual property increased in

---

<sup>9</sup> Jorge Cerdeira, João Mesquita and Elizabeth S. Vieira, "International research collaboration: is Africa different? A cross-country panel data analysis", *Scientometrics*, vol. 128 (March 2023).

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the initiative and cooperation between the African Union and the European Union, see European Union, "Horizon Europe boosts, again, EU-Africa cooperation: the 'Africa Initiative II'", July 2023, and African Union and European Union, "The AU-EU innovation agenda: final version", 19 July 2023.

Malaysia from \$1.4 billion to \$2.4 billion and in Turkey from \$1.6 billion to \$2.3 billion.<sup>11</sup>

19. Artificial intelligence, big data analytics, advanced robotics, remote sensing, financial technology and biotechnology are being applied in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. For instance, artificial intelligence tools are being used to deliver medical supplies, including blood and vaccines, to remote areas of Rwanda and to provide farmers in Kenya with real-time insight into soil health, helping to optimize irrigation and predict crop yields.

20. Platforms for new action and creative solutions are critical to accelerate innovation. The United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub is aimed at maximizing the benefits of a food systems approach by transforming food systems and leveraging the shifts in order to deliver progress across the 2030 Agenda and address climate change.

### C. Trade

21. Substantive progress has been made with the private sector in implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. So far, 47 members of the African Union have deposited their instruments of ratification of the Agreement, seven countries have signed the Agreement but have not ratified it, and only one country has not signed it.<sup>12</sup>

22. Digitalization is increasingly becoming a catalyst for the expansion of trade and a crucial driver of inclusive sustainable development. Digitally delivered services accounted, however, for only 17 per cent of the continent's total services exports in 2022, in contrast to the global average of 55 per cent.<sup>13</sup> Recent ECA research<sup>14</sup> suggests that the lack of an enabling policy environment for digital trade hinders African trade in digital services. Furthermore, the regulatory landscape across the continent remains fragmented. A harmonized regulatory framework would, therefore, play a critical role in creating a conducive environment for African digital trade in services.

23. The Common African Agro-Parks Programme of the African Union has the potential to transform African agriculture and to boost its integration through trade and industrialization. The initiative is supported by the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency, the African Export-Import Bank, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, ECA, the Pan-African Farmers' Organization, the African Development Bank, the Pan African Agribusiness Apex Chamber, the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area. It is focused on establishing five large common agro-industrial zones with transboundary food supply corridors in five geographical regions of Africa.

### D. Data and statistics

24. Recent efforts and the commitment to the modernization of data systems are helping to produce timely and accurate data on socioeconomic issues and

<sup>11</sup> ECA, "Advancing technology transfer for sustainable development in Africa: revisiting Africa's technology transfer landscape in the wake of COVID-19" (Addis Ababa, n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Trade Law Centre, "Status of AfCFTA ratification", 6 September 2023.

<sup>13</sup> ECA calculations based on data from UNCTADstat.

<sup>14</sup> See ECA and secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, *Digital Infrastructure in Africa* (Addis Ababa, ECA, 2023).

to respond to the national, regional and global development agendas. The African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa are important frameworks that underpin efforts to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems in Africa, including in statistics on such areas as agriculture, the environment, climate and digitalization, the institutional statistical environment, production processes, coordination and collaboration.

25. In 2020, only 29 African countries had national statistical laws that complied with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.<sup>15</sup> By January 2024, only 29 African countries had conducted population and housing censuses during the 2020 round, in compliance with the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, issued by the Statistics Division of Department of Economic and Social Affairs.<sup>16</sup>

26. As a result of the increasingly mobile population, civil registration records have become more important. Data on international migration in Africa, however, remain relatively scarce. For example, by 2019, 14 per cent of African countries had not updated their total number of international migrants since the 2000 round of population censuses.<sup>17</sup>

## **E. Capacity development**

27. Digital technology is being increasingly used in capacity development in Africa. Mobile applications, e-learning platforms and online courses are providing accessible and cost-effective training opportunities, in particular for women and in remote and underserved areas. The trend has gained prominence, largely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the shift towards online learning.

28. African countries are increasingly engaging in cross-sectoral collaboration to address complex development challenges. Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations are pooling resources, knowledge and expertise. For example, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the African Union includes initiatives that are aimed at training farmers in sustainable and modern agricultural techniques, such as crop rotation, water management and organic farming, to increase food production and reduce hunger. The Tony Elumelu Foundation and other organizations provide training, mentoring and funding to African entrepreneurs, fostering economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction. The Africa Renewable Energy Initiative continues to train experts and develop sustainable energy projects across the continent, combating climate change. The Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres has five Centres in Africa that are working to accelerate energy and climate transformation.<sup>18</sup>

29. The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, the African Union Commission and their partners have responded to an upsurge in capacity-development requests from States and in the number of trainees, in particular women and young people. A total of 69 training activities were offered in 2023, focused on: economic management and development planning; mineral supply chain management; digital transformation of technical and vocational education and training; fiscal policy and budgeting; risk

---

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, SDG Indicators Database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database> (accessed on 5 February 2024).

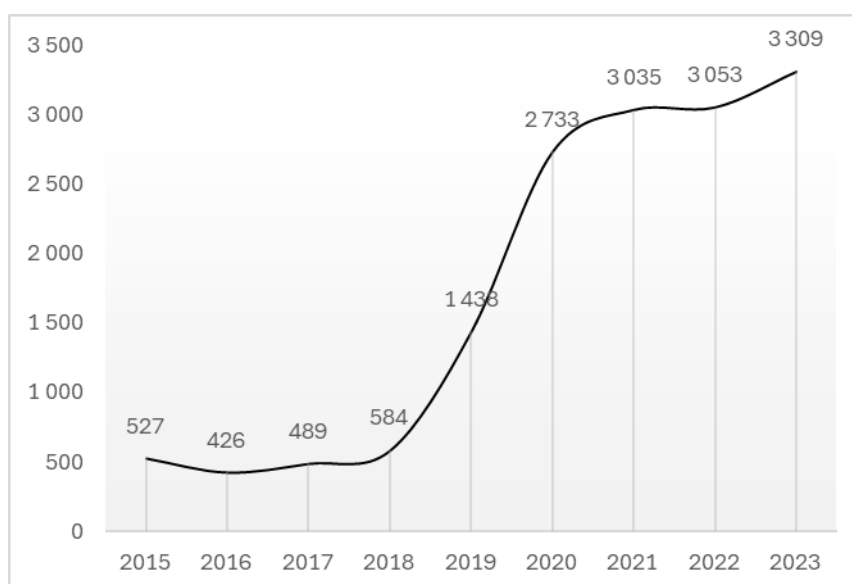
<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Béla Hovy, Frank Laczko and Rene N'Guettia Kouassi, "African migration: an overview of key trends", in *Africa Migration Report: Challenging the Narrative*, Aderanti Adepoju, Corrado Fumagalli and Nanjala Nyabola, eds. (Addis Ababa, International Organization for Migration, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see the website of the Global Network: <https://www.gn-sec.net/>.

management and development planning; climate and carbon market readiness; trade analysis and negotiation, including in times of crisis and pandemic; sovereign credit ratings; cross-border e-commerce; the empowerment of women and young people in agriculture; and gender-responsive economic policy management. Some 3,300 trainees from 52 members of ECA received training in those areas in 2023, as shown in figure II.

Figure II  
**Number of people trained in development planning by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, 2015–2023**



*Source:* African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, ECA.

30. The African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency and the World Food Programme developed the Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes in Africa. The Guidelines are recognized by African leaders for their contribution to human resources and capital development on the continent and for having an important role in inclusive development, health, rural development, gender equality and inclusive education, in particular for impoverished and socially marginalized communities. The Guidelines are aimed at linking African leaders more directly with smallholders and other local players in the school food value chain, while addressing the issue of nutrition.

### **III. Challenges, emerging issues and opportunities to accelerate implementation**

#### **A. Finance**

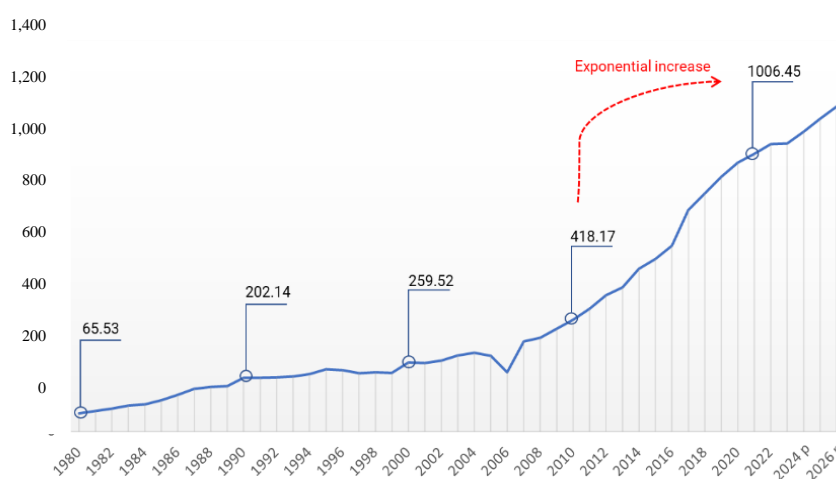
31. Improving the resilience of infrastructure in Africa will require a significant amount of funding, which could be captured through capital markets and relevant financial instruments. Well-developed capital markets could significantly contribute to the mobilization of domestic resources and scale up innovative financing solutions. By developing local currency bond markets, for example, more resources could be mobilized through capital markets for the financing of an inclusive green industrialization and growth-promoting infrastructure that requires adequate guarantee schemes to mitigate currency and other risks.

32. Among the requirements for the smooth functioning of domestic capital markets are a sound macroeconomic policy, a strong institutional and legal setting and a well-functioning financial infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> Governments could develop comprehensive policies and strategies to address the gaps in their frameworks for the development of capital markets. Digital technology could be used to help to mobilize untapped pockets of national savings through products tailored to the needs of households.

33. The substantial outflow of financial resources from Africa has led many African countries to rely on external borrowing, often at punitive costs, to finance their economic growth, structural transformation and sustainable development, which has resulted in ballooning debt levels, in particular from 2010 onwards, as shown in figure III. The composition of external debt has shifted, with the share of commercial borrowing rising from 27 per cent in 2011 to 56 per cent in 2021, which raises concerns about debt sustainability on the continent.<sup>20</sup>

Figure III

**Total external public debt in Africa, 1980–2026**  
(Billions of United States dollars, at current levels)



*Source:* Adapted from the report of the Secretary-General on solving the paradoxes of development in Africa: financing, energy and food systems (A78/309).  
*Abbreviation:* p, projection.

## B. Technology and innovation

34. There are fears that the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and their implementation, are not conducive to research, development and innovation in Africa. The principles of equitable access to research infrastructure and equal pay for equal work do not appear to apply in international research collaboration: it is not unusual for researchers working in the same location, doing the same work at the same level, to be paid differently, on the basis of their home country.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Luc Laeven, “The development of local capital markets: rationale and challenges”, Working Paper, No. 14/234 (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, *Solving the Paradoxes of Development in Africa: Financing, Energy and Food Systems* (2023).

<sup>21</sup> For more information on research and development in Africa, see Di Caelers and Dann Okoth, “Research funding in Africa: navigating sustainability and shifting perspectives”, *Nature*, 14 December 2023.



35. The growing number of special economic zones is likely to lead to the acquisition of technology and the development of knowledge-intensive goods and services. There were fewer than 20 such zones in Africa in 1990, but the number rose to about 100 by 2010 and 203 by 2021.<sup>22</sup> Special economic zones attract the finance, management and technical know-how needed to enter a sector quickly and diffuse knowledge into the wider economy. They provide the means for engaging in firm-level collaboration among countries and among foreign and domestic, large and small firms. For instance, China continues to be a significant partner in the development of such zones in Africa. In Ethiopia, special economic zones accounted for 5 per cent of manufacturing exports and 5 per cent of inward FDI between 2015 and 2018.<sup>23</sup> The performance of the zones more generally in Africa, however, is considered to have remained below expectations.<sup>24</sup>

### C. Trade

36. To harness the benefits of digital trade, African countries must redouble their efforts to implement the policy recommendations and proposed actions in existing subregional and continental strategies and instruments aimed at boosting digital infrastructure and skills. For instance, the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020–2030 includes a comprehensive set of recommendations for boosting digital transformation and connectivity on the continent, including through favourable regulatory environments, more affordable broadband and devices, curricula that align digital skills with improved technology, and Internet access for schools. The African trade competitiveness and market access programme of the European Union and other initiatives are helping to create favourable market conditions at the regional level.

37. The protocol on digital trade to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area will facilitate the expansion of digital trade across Africa, including by helping to harmonize the regulatory framework for such trade among African countries.

### D. Data and statistics

38. Most African countries face challenges in reporting on progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063, owing to their weak statistical systems and data governance frameworks. A recent assessment<sup>25</sup> conducted by the African Centre for Statistics revealed that, for roughly 30 per cent of the Goal indicators, there were insufficient data to measure the progress made towards fully implementing the 2030 Agenda. Consequently, it is possible to measure the progress in the achievement of only 115 of the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda.

39. The pandemic heavily affected data collection and statistical operations during 2020, given that funding was reallocated to health sector priorities. In 2021, most statistical activities resumed, including population and housing censuses. ECA supports efforts to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders to address issues concerning data and statistics in African statistical systems.

<sup>22</sup> Statista, “Number of economic zones in Africa from 1990 to 2021”, 28 April 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Amalitinga Abagna, “Special economic zones and local economic activities in Ethiopia”, Munich Personal RePEc Archive, Paper No. 117427 (2023).

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Handbook on Special Economic Zones in Africa: Towards Economic Diversification across the Continent*, UNCTAD/DIAE/IA/2021/3.

<sup>25</sup> ECA, *Africa Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report 2023* (Addis Ababa, 2023).

40. Statistical capacity-building, including in data collection, analysis, disaggregation and dissemination, is essential for monitoring and tracking progress against national development plans, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. With economic and wage imbalances, health crises, growing demographic shifts, conflict and climate change, people will always be on the move. Accordingly, the International Organization for Migration is working with members of ECA and regional economic communities to develop national and regional capacity to disaggregate data on the Goals through a migration lens.<sup>26</sup>

## **E. Capacity development**

41. Resource constraints, inadequate infrastructure, political instability and educational gaps pose challenges to capacity development in Africa, but emerging trends, such as the digital transformation, youth engagement and private sector involvement offer avenues for progress.

42. ECA, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Joint Research Centre of the European Union are helping various countries to develop their road maps for science, technology and innovation in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, on the basis of a guide designed by the United Nations Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. Of the five pilot countries using the guide, three are African: Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya. With the support of the Joint Research Centre, a further five African countries (Gambia, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia and Seychelles) are currently preparing their road maps on the topic. ECA, the Department and the Joint Research Council jointly organized a workshop on the road maps, which was held in Addis Ababa in October 2023, in order to share knowledge and experience among the pilot countries and the five African countries that are embarking on the process.

43. Partnerships with international organizations, Governments and the private sector help to mobilize resources and expertise, and collaboration, technical cooperation and creativity in capacity development can be fostered effectively through South-South cooperation and innovation hubs. African States have increasingly recognized the importance of peer learning and best practices. Triangular approaches, involving a country from the global North, can help to facilitate technology transfer. The successful implementation of universal health care in Rwanda through community-based health insurance has inspired other countries to adopt similar models. Similarly, Ghana and Kenya have shared their experience of mobile money and financial inclusion with neighbouring countries, promoting economic growth and financial accessibility across borders. Across the continent, innovation hubs and incubators have emerged as centres for creativity and capacity-building.

44. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, are powerful tools for learning and enhancing new and existing skills, and have the potential to revolutionize capacity-building in Africa. The Government of Rwanda, for example, has partnered with technology companies to deploy e-learning platforms driven by artificial intelligence, significantly enhancing the education and development of the workforce. In South Africa, the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences uses machine learning to promote mathematical and scientific education, equipping students with critical skills. Moreover, thriving start-ups are harnessing artificial intelligence across Africa to address local challenges, including health monitoring, the optimization of agricultural processes and financial inclusion.

---

<sup>26</sup> Statistical analysis on migration data and the Sustainable Development Goals is available at: [www.migrationdataportal.org/sdgs?node=0](http://www.migrationdataportal.org/sdgs?node=0).

45. Embracing emerging technology, in particular artificial intelligence and machine learning, is not optional; it is necessary. Such innovations can unlock unprecedented capacity-building opportunities, facilitate inclusive development and help to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a prosperous, equitable and sustainable future.

## **IV. Recommendations for the integrated and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

### **A. Finance**

46. Africa has abundant domestic financial resources that have not yet been fully mobilized. Private finance is a critical source of funding for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, in particular given the multiple crises that African countries must overcome. There are many challenges, however, that limit the mobilization of private finance and its alignment with the two agendas, including the lack of enabling environments, incentives, data and transparency. Attention should be given to introducing incentives aimed at aligning private finance with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, such as blended finance, guarantees, subsidies, tax breaks and green bonds, leveraging public funds and catalysing private investment. The quality and availability of data and statistics should be enhanced in order to monitor progress towards achieving development goals and the impact of private finance on such progress, and to inform evidence-based policy and action. Investment promotion institutions attract FDI and act as intermediaries among international investors, national Governments and local markets. Their role should be enhanced, with a view to matching private investment with development projects, and tackling the shortcomings in data availability.

47. The vast natural resources of the African continent offer a competitive advantage. Its expansive coastline provides an opportunity for the development of the blue economy, which could generate \$576 billion annually and create 127 million jobs by 2063 through research, innovation and ecosystem management.<sup>27</sup> Together with partners, ECA has developed a framework for national nature strategies<sup>28</sup> that aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, incorporating guidance from the Convention on Biological Diversity, to support countries in designing and implementing policies and financial instruments.

48. Reinvigorated partnerships and innovative market-based mechanisms, including debt-for-climate swaps, green bonds and blended finance, can help to address issues related to both climate change and financial stability. ECA is, therefore, supporting its members through the Sustainable Debt Coalition, which brings together creditor and debtor States and international financial institutions to foster long-term debt sustainability, and thereby facilitate the provision of predictable and affordable financing to support efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, *Africa Environment Outlook for Business: Our Environment Our Wealth* (Nairobi, 2023).

<sup>28</sup> ECA, *Framework for a National Nature Strategy: Facilitating the Development of National Nature Strategies that are Aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity* (Addis Ababa, 2023).

## **B. Technology and innovation**

49. Collaboration between Africa and the rest of the world must be reciprocal, fair, equitable and sustainable to generate benefits for all parties. International collaboration is likely to grow, thanks to the large and youthful African population and the rapidly growing tertiary education systems and expanding market of the continent, which make the region a major source of science, technology, entrepreneurial talent and economic growth. In most international cooperation, collaborative research, development and industry, however, Africa is not treated as an equal partner: most knowledge-intensive activities take place in the advanced partner country, and the African partners are relegated to information-gathering, the testing of final products, distribution and marketing. That approach limits the scope for learning and the acquisition of knowledge, fosters dependence and encourages giver-receiver attitudes, which is contrary to sustainable development.

## **C. Trade**

50. The benefits of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area will be achieved only if its parties implement the commitments set out in the text. A favourable environment for digital trade can be fostered through several regional instruments, such as the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, the African Union Data Policy Framework and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa. African countries must urgently translate the policy decisions and commitments outlined in those documents into national policies and regulations to ensure that they are implemented.

## **D. Data and statistics**

51. Strengthening statistical capacity and investing in national statistical offices and systems is crucial. Capacity should be strengthened for the collection, management and use of data for evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, big data and the increasing demand for actionable intelligence justify further investment in digital technology and the broader application of data on the continent.

52. Technology has played a critical role in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in Africa. ECA developed tools to assist its members in managing the use of electronic tablets for the enumeration and real-time monitoring of census data and to ensure that critical issues were mitigated in a timely manner.

53. Producers of official statistics must transform and modernize to respond adequately to all data demands arising from the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, subregional and national development plans, and other agendas and frameworks. The African group on the transformation and modernization of official statistics was created by the Statistical Commission for Africa in 2020 to strategically guide and coordinate the work undertaken to transform and upgrade national statistical systems in Africa.

54. In 2023, African Statistics Day was held on 18 November under the theme “Modernizing data ecosystems to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): the role of official statistics and Big Data in the economic transformation and sustainable development of Africa”. The purpose of the event was to engage all stakeholders in the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems by adopting new technology and harnessing the potential of big data.

55. Pan-African organizations, including ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, together with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT), have continuously supported the design, implementation and evaluation of national strategies for the development of statistics at the national level. In addition, bilateral and multilateral partners have supported the formulation of national strategies for the development of statistics in various countries.

## **E. Capacity development**

56. National and sectoral capacity-building strategies and plans must be developed to fulfil the two agendas. The capacity-building must be based on a comprehensive capacity-needs assessment, be focused on building resilience across the board and consist of long-term interventions to ensure the sustainability of the implementation of the two agendas. An emphasis should be placed on major sectors and such regional initiatives as the African Continental Free Trade Area; data, statistics, science, technology, research and development; programme development and project management; economic policy management; the mobilization of domestic resources, the management of public expenditure, debt, and macroeconomic and fiscal policy, and public accountability systems; and the capacity for effective knowledge management and policy dialogue. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa should be leveraged, given that it provides policy support and access to expertise to meet the specific needs and priorities of the continent.

57. Members of ECA should consider taking steps to:

- (a) Prioritize training in digital literacy and technological skills in order to equip individuals with the tools that they need for the digital age;
- (b) Expand access to education and training through online and blended learning models;
- (c) Use artificial intelligence to customize learning experiences, catering to individual needs and optimizing skills development;
- (d) Build data analytics capabilities to enable evidence-based decision-making at all levels;
- (e) Support regional and continental initiatives on data standardization and harmonization to improve data quality and comparability;
- (f) Foster collaboration between the public and private sectors, including public-private development partnerships, to create specialized training programmes aligned with the needs of industry and to promote the transfer of skills;
- (g) Establish mechanisms to assess capacity-building programmes regularly, with a view to adapting them to evolving needs and challenges;
- (h) Promote environmentally sustainable capacity-building initiatives, aligning them with the Sustainable Development Goals that are related to environmental conservation;
- (i) Facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration among African States, including best practices and lessons learned, with a view to establishing sectoral clusters and achieving tighter regional economic integration;
- (j) Invest in governance, transparency and accountability to build strong institutions for policy implementation;
- (k) Embrace a high-quality infrastructure approach towards policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and practices that support and enhance the

quality, safety and environmental soundness of goods and services for intra-African and international trade;

(l) Attract investment for cross-border industrial infrastructure projects, in particular African special economic zones, to improve the integration of regional value chains;

(m) Leverage existing platforms, such as the School Meals Coalition and the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, to encourage accountability and the exchange of best practices.

## V. Key messages

58. The international community should ensure that Africa has adequate and equitable access to concessional financing and market-based innovative financing mechanisms, including priority access to new mechanisms for credit enhancement and greater access to affordable financial instruments, such as debt-for-nature swaps, to address the intertwined challenges of debt, climate change and sustainable development.

59. Members of ECA should:

(a) Introduce policy and regulatory frameworks and enabling market environments and employ innovative tools, frameworks and initiatives for green financing, sustainable debt management and efficient resource utilization;

(b) Promote special economic zones in order to attract knowledge-intensive foreign firms and nurture domestic businesses;

(c) Implement urgently a road map for the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems in order to improve their resilience and facilitate the production of reliable data and the preparation of reports on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(d) Invest in reform and capacity-building initiatives to further their efforts to mobilize domestic resources;

(e) Translate into national policies and regulations the policy decisions and commitments of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and other regional instruments and frameworks in order to boost trade, including digital trade, and investment.

60. Members of ECA, entities of the United Nations system, the African Union and regional economic communities should:

(a) Design regional capacity-building strategies and implementation plans, leveraging existing platforms and emerging technology to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Leverage existing platforms, such as the School Meals Coalition and the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, to encourage accountability and the exchange of best practices.