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**Economic Commission for Africa**

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the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

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**Strengthening integration and implementation:  
role of sustainable development bodies after 2015**

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## **I. Background and introduction**

1. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, emphasized the role of effective governance at all levels in achieving sustainable development. The Conference recognized that the institutional framework for sustainable development should be consistent with the Rio Principles, and build on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It also recognized that reform of the institutional framework was not an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable development. In that regard, it committed to strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development at the global level to, among other things, promote a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and enhance implementation by, among other measures, strengthening coherence and coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts and reviewing progress in implementing sustainable development.

2. Moreover, Rio+20 established a universal intergovernmental High-level Political Forum (HLPF), building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission. It also decided to launch an intergovernmental and open, transparent and inclusive negotiation process under the General Assembly to define the format and organizational aspects of the Forum, with the aim of convening its first meeting at the beginning of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

3. The Conference called for promoting the review and stocktaking of progress in the implementation of all sustainable development commitments, including commitments related to means of implementation. It recognized that the development of sustainable development goals could be useful for providing a focused and coherent action on sustainable development, and emphasized, among other things, that the goals should take into consideration and incorporate in a balanced way, all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages. It stressed that the goals should be coherent with, and integrated into the United Nations post-2015 development agenda, and called for an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process that would be open to all stakeholders.

4. To deliberate on the main outcomes of Rio+20 and their implications for Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, convened the Africa Regional Implementation Meeting (Africa-RIM) from 19 to 21 November 2012. The Africa-RIM Outcome Document represented Africa's collective input into the General Assembly processes on Rio+20 follow-up, including, the institutional framework for sustainable development, the sustainable development goals and means of implementation. The Meeting recommended the upgrading of the Africa-RIM to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to provide the platform for deliberating on the region's input to HLPF.

5. The sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, of March 2013, deliberated on the progress made in the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes. The Conference acknowledged the Africa-RIM outcome document as a key African input to the Rio+20 follow-up processes and requested

the African Union Commission, ECA, the African Development Bank, and other relevant partners to expedite the development of a regional action plan for coordinated implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes in Africa. Such a plan should include strategies for the integration of the outcomes into national development policies, strategies and plans, taking into account the need for balancing economic, social and environmental development imperatives. The Conference also urged that necessary steps be taken to achieve an early convergence between the post-2015 development agenda and the Rio+20 follow-up processes, particularly the sustainable development goals, in order to ensure a “Delivering as one” development agenda.

6. In January 2013, the General Assembly established an intergovernmental Open Working Group to steer the formulation of the sustainable development goals. At the Africa level, the High-level Committee on the post-2015 development agenda was established to further strengthen political leadership in the Africa post-2015 development agenda process. In May 2013, the Assembly of the African Union mandated the High-level Committee to oversee and provide political guidance on the Africa process. The Committee was also mandated to finalize the common African position and ensure that the priorities identified were integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

7. The Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the sustainable development goals was held from 31 October to 5 November 2013. The meeting was attended by ministers and high-level officials from African countries, regional and subregional organizations, a wide range of major groups and development partners. Participants of the meeting endorsed 12 sustainable development goals that embody Africa’s priorities for sustainable development, in the context of a post-2015 development agenda. The outcome document of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the sustainable development goals was adopted as an input to the work of the Africa High-level Committee on the post-2015 development agenda.

8. Following extensive consultations in Africa with a wide range of stakeholders, the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda was formulated and adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in January 2014. Through the common African position, Africa has made substantial contributions to the Open Working Group’s proposal for sustainable development goals and the Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report on the post-2015 development agenda. In September 2014, the General Assembly welcomed the report produced by the Open Working Group, which proposed 17 Goals and 169 targets, and decided that the proposal “shall be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing that other inputs will also be considered in the intergovernmental negotiating process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly” (see A/68/970).

9. In July 2013, the General Assembly established HLPF and adopted decisions on its format and organizational aspects. The inaugural meeting of the Forum in September 2013, and the second meeting of the Forum in July 2014, highlighted its pivotal role in promoting and reviewing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. At its 2014 meeting, the Forum adopted its theme for 2015: “Strengthening integration, implementation and review - the HLPF after 2015”. The 2015 meeting will be held from 26 June to 8 July 2015, including a three-day ministerial segment to be held from 6 to 8 July 2015. In addition to the issues of integration, implementation and review highlighted in its theme, the Forum will allocate time to discuss other topics, notably: new and emerging issues and the science-policy interface; sustainable consumption and production; small island developing States and other countries in special situations.

10. In December 2014, the Secretary-General released his Synthesis Report to support intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and summarize the inputs received. He suggests six essential elements to communicate the proposed sustainable development goals: dignity; a focus on people; prosperity; respect for the planet; justice and effective governance to promote safe and peaceful societies; and partnerships to catalyse global solidarity (United Nations, 2014). As regards the intergovernmental negotiations on the post 2015 agenda, seven sessions will be held from January to July 2015. Negotiations will focus on the expected four main parts of the post-2015 development agenda: declaration; sustainable development goals and targets; means of implementation and the global partnership; and follow-up and review. The co-facilitators have been requested to ensure the engagement of non-State actors building upon the Open Working Group practices.

11. The HLPF-2015 will occur at a time when negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda will be in full swing. The preparations for HLPF can give political impetus to the last phase of negotiations. A focused discussion on the substantive aspects of integration and implementation and review and on how to prepare HLPF for the post-2015 period can complement the negotiations, while not prejudging their outcome. Given that the outcomes of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will serve as Africa's collective input to HLPF-2015, the Regional Forum will deliberate on key issues to be discussed at the global Forum.

12. The present report analyses the role of sustainable development bodies at various levels in strengthening integration, implementation and review after 2015, following the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, which will embody the sustainable development goals. The report is intended to inform the deliberations of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to be held in May 2015, which is expected to reach a consensus on key messages that will constitute Africa's collective input to HLPF-2015.

The present report is organized into five sections. This section presents the background and introduction. Section II of the report highlights the significance of integration, implementation and review in furthering the sustainable development agenda. Section III discusses the role of sustainable development bodies at global, regional, subregional, national and local levels in advancing integration, implementation and review. It also presents recommendations for consideration by the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development as key messages to HLPF-2015. Section IV highlights key issues for Africa on global partnership for development, particularly in relation to means of implementation. It also concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Africa Forum. Section V is the submission for presentation at HLPF-2015.

## **II. Significance of integration, implementation and review in furthering the sustainable development agenda**

13. The Outcome Document of Rio+20 acknowledges the need to “mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions” (United Nations, 2012, para. 3). As part of the process of preparing for Rio+20, the United Nations worked with about 70 countries to prepare national reports on progress and lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals. A report was then prepared that synthesized the key lessons from 60 of the countries (DESA and UNDP, 2012). The study found that implementation of sustainable development has remained a critical challenge, with

many Governments perceiving environmental sustainability as important to economic growth. It identified integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, inclusion of all stakeholders and actors, coherent planning and decision-making at various levels, and thus implementation itself to be critical.

#### **A. Integration**

14. The World Summit on Sustainable Development broadened and strengthened the general understanding of sustainable development, particularly the important linkages between economic growth, social development and environmental protection. The Summit recognized the three components of sustainable development as interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions, hence the emphasis placed on promoting their balanced integration. The interfaces between them are important. According to Munashinge (1996), the economic and social elements interact to give rise to issues such as intra-generational equity and targeted relief for the poor. The economic–environmental interface has yielded ideas on valuation and internalization of environmental impacts. Finally, the social–environmental linkage has led to renewed interest in areas like intergenerational equity and popular participation.

15. The above suggests a broad integrated conceptual approach in which the net benefits of economic activities are maximized, subject to maintaining the stock of productive assets over time, and providing a social safety net to meet the basic needs of the poor. It calls for appropriate institutional and strategic frameworks and supporting systems that foster an integrated approach. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the report of the Commission on Africa clearly articulate the interlinkages between Africa's many development challenges.

16. The Africa Environment Outlook (2006) underscores the interdependency between environmental concerns and various facets of development, and calls for an interlinkage approach. The various thematic reports of the United Nations Millennium Project, demonstrate the interlinkages between the various Millennium Development Goals, and the need for adopting an integrated approach in pursuit of their attainment in an efficient and effective manner. Accordingly, these global and regional-level responses, individually and collectively, provide opportunities for enhancing synergies and promoting interlinkages in tackling the region's development challenges.

17. To date, the progress reported in the implementation of sustainable development commitments has shown a glaring weakness in fostering this integration. However, global, regional and national level strategic responses to the Millennium Development Goals have provided invaluable opportunities to harness the synergies integral to this interconnectedness. In the pursuit of human development, the emphasis on multidimensionality complements conventional approaches to sustainability, which serves as a reminder that the debate about what should be sustained is as important as how to sustain it.

18. Sustainable development challenges are interlinked across spatial, thematic and institutional processes. Changes in the natural resource base and the challenges of sustainable development are caused by the same sets of drivers, which include: demographic change; economic processes; scientific and technological innovation; distribution patterns; cultural, social, political and institutional processes; consumption and production patterns; and globalization that has brought about increased flow of goods, services, capital, technologies,

knowledge, information, ideas and labour at global level. There is an intricate relationship among these drivers, which in turn, has effects on the natural resource base. Understanding these interlinkages help in the design of policies and programmes to tackle sustainable development challenges.

19. Adopting an interlinkage approach in the formulation of policy and the development of programmes can therefore help to ensure that interventions are more relevant, robust and effective, and that policies are based on principles that are cross-sectoral (UNEP, 2006). Thus, an interlinkage approach offers an opportunity for better coordination and harmonization of policies to eliminate any contradictions or unintentional effects, avoid overlaps, and boost capacity to carry out sustainable development. Implementing sustainable development through the interlinkage approach results in fewer conflicts, less duplication of work, strengthened complementarities and synergies, and makes it possible to take advantage of development opportunities. The essence of an interlinkage approach, thus, is to reduce trade-offs and enhance the efficiency of the entire system rather than increasing the productivity of specific sectors, often at the expense of others.

## **B. Implementation**

20. The achievement of sustainability in national development requires a strategic approach, which is both long-term in its perspectives and integrated or “joined-up” in linking various development processes that are sophisticated enough to meet the complex challenges of sustainable development (OECD and UNDP, 2002). Nowhere are these challenges more profound than in Africa, hence, the adoption of several development frameworks at the level of Heads of State and Government to provide overarching frameworks for Africa’s transformation and for dealing with sustainable development challenges on the continent.

21. The continental frameworks include NEPAD of 2001, which reflects the common vision of African leaders, and the shared commitment to eradicating poverty and to placing their countries, both individually and collectively, on the path to sustainable growth and development. In January 2015, the Assembly of the African Union adopted the Agenda 2063 framework as a shared strategy for inclusive growth, structural transformation and sustainable development in the region. The Agenda reiterates and builds on the principles and strategic orientations of NEPAD and earlier continental development frameworks, such as the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 and the Abuja Treaty on the African Economic Community of 1991. It provides an integrated framework that promotes coherence and synergies among the various continental development frameworks and strategies.

22. In their common African position for the post-2015 development agenda adopted in January 2014, the Heads of State and Government affirmed their collective interest to, among other things, pursue structural economic transformation that promotes inclusive and people-centred development. Agenda 2063 subsumes the common African position and provides the framework for the post-2015 development agenda on the continent. Accordingly, the Agenda constitutes an integrated framework for the implementation of international commitments on sustainable development in Africa.

23. The implementation of sustainable development commitments, calls for the development of policies and strategies that embody relevant sustainable development principles and commitments. In this context, countries have, over the years, developed and implemented national strategies for sustainable development in various forms aimed at

achieving poverty reduction, broad-based and equitable growth, and environmental sustainability.

24. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)–Development Assistance Committee and the defunct United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development guidelines on the national strategy for sustainable development process, indicate that a national strategy for sustainable development does not necessarily mean developing a new strategy document, but it should entail improving or restructuring the decision-making process to achieve a full integration of economic, social and environmental issues, and a broader range of public participation. Indeed, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (2001) defines a strategy as comprising “a coordinated set of participatory and continuously improving processes of analysis, debate, capacity strengthening, planning and investment, which integrates the economic, social and environmental objectives of society, seeking trade-offs where this is not possible.”

25. Achieving sustainable development depends a great deal on high-level political commitment, well-functioning government institutions and overcoming coordination failures in public policies (OECD, 2005). Developing and implementing a national strategy for sustainable development should involve a broad range of stakeholders from the private sector and civil society, and also governments, who should be involved in all stages of the process of developing and implementing the strategy, and in making decisions about its scope, the process and the outcomes (OECD–UNDP, 2002). This allows strategies to take a broad view of issues, give voice to a range of dispersed interests and develop trade-offs across policy areas.

26. Given the complexity of issues to be dealt with in a national strategy for sustainable development process, stakeholders need the requisite knowledge and skills that will allow for meaningful participation. According to OECD (2005), national strategies for sustainable development should involve local authorities and be a two-way iterative process between national and decentralized levels. The main strategic principles and directions should be set at the central level, but more detailed planning, implementation and monitoring can also be undertaken at the decentralized level, with appropriate transfer of resources and authority. This will ensure commitment to the process and actions that yield desired results at all levels.

27. Access to adequate means of implementation is critical to strategy development and implementation. An ECA survey of national strategies for sustainable development indicates inadequate institutional, technical and financial capacities as major challenges. In view of the centrality of ministries of planning, finance and national planning commissions or similar bodies, their involvement in guiding development planning processes and in formulating national development frameworks, would be crucial. Also of importance, is budget support that would ensure coherence between budget and strategy priorities in the national strategy planning process.

28. The incremental costs associated with the implementation of the sustainable development agenda demands that domestic resources be complemented with external sources of funding. It is therefore critical that countries begin to engage actively in assessing financing needs and articulating a financing strategy for the sustainable development goals. In particular, given that Africa has been mostly dependent on foreign sources to finance its development over past decades, it is crucial that the continent takes a proactive step in putting forward its ideas about how the sustainable development goals will be financed.

29. Africa needs to put adequate time and resources into estimating the resource needs for the sustainable development goals as soon as possible, to inform or feed into expert, development cooperation, informal dialogues and intergovernmental negotiations (ECA, 2015). Also, as advanced by the Division for Sustainable Development–Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2002), donors should adopt flexible approaches that would allow them to technically and financially support different components of the strategy process. The adoption of sustainable development goals will lead to renewing national strategies to ensure that they are consistent with the goals and targets in accordance with national priorities, thus advancing implementation.

### **C. Review**

30. Progress towards sustainability can be monitored through regular reporting on trends, changes in, and co-influence of, the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, which should be embedded in the sustainable development strategy processes. These processes need to be recognized as learning processes, in which information about progress towards sustainability, or lack of progress, is used constructively to revise the mechanism and the means to realizing objectives (OECD–UNDP, 2002). In this regard, the processes should embody mechanisms for monitoring, follow-up, evaluation and feedback, including setting realistic and flexible targets. In this way, it will enable focus to be put on outcomes and means of implementation.

31. The development and incorporation of quantitative indicators can help remove discrepancies between the intentions set out in national strategies and what is, or can be, realized in practice. Statistics and indicators make it far easier to identify and assess gains and trade-offs among the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development. Indicators can be used to track progress along sustainable development paths and provide the foundation for performance targets. They also contribute to policy transparency and accountability (OECD, 2005). Statistics and indicators for review, monitoring and reporting on progress are also critical for planning and designing strategies, plans and programmes.

32. Sustainable development indicators show, in an integrated fashion, the state of economic, social, and environmental well-being and changes taking place in a sector, system, institution, community, country, region or continent. Indicators provide benchmarks and help measure performance and progress over time. For sustainable development indicators to be useful for decision-making, it is critical that the underlying data be accurate, reliable and collected frequently enough, to facilitate decision-making at all possible levels. In some cases, the quality and accuracy of statistical data may be more important for the decision maker than the quantity or coverage. In other instances, qualitative indicators may have to be used. The information or data should also be available when it is needed. In Africa, where national statistical capacities are weak, and where economic and social infrastructure is poor, the quality and coverage of primary data are often poor. Decision-making processes should thus take into account the constraints related to data availability and accuracy.

33. Sustainable development indicators also help measure the degree of sustainability, how far a sector or country is from desired targets and goals, and to identify weaknesses and what needs to be done. For policy decision makers, indicators are a useful communication tool for assessing and expressing the relative effectiveness of, or need for, policies and performance (political accountability). Numeric indicators often provide the most useful and



understandable information to decision makers. In Africa and developing countries generally, where there is a paucity of data, qualitative information is necessary to supplement quantitative indicators, and better understand the condition of a sector or community in order to monitor progress.

34. As sustainable development is the pursuit of integrated and balanced development across sectors, places and generations, sustainable development indicators tend to be cross-sectoral and multidimensional. Examples of such indicators include: economic growth measured in changes in gross domestic product adjusted for environmental degradation and income inequality; the switch from leaded to unleaded fuel; the ratio of renewable to non-renewable energy used, instead of total energy consumption of a country; and the percentage of farmed land sustainably managed, instead of land area cultivated. The development of sustainable development goals, accompanied by targets and indicators to measure progress, is a step in the right direction towards the reviewing and stocktaking of progress in the implementation, and means of implementation, of sustainable development commitments.

35. The Statistical Commission will develop a set of indicators on the sustainable development goals and targets for post-2015. It is important that all member States engage in the work of the Statistical Commission and the General Assembly negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, as it will provide some political guidance on the development of indicators that are adoptable at national level and enable comparability in reviews. Agenda 2063 will also develop a set of indicators and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Official statistics should play the central role in reviews and can be supplemented by other data source. Official statistics is also critical to enhance national ownership.

### **III. Sustainable development bodies and their role in strengthening integration, implementation and review after 2015**

36. Participants of Rio+20 committed to strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development at the global level to, among other things:

(a) Promote a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development;

(b) Enhance coherence, reduce fragmentation and overlap, and increase efficiency, effectiveness and transparency, within and outside the United Nations system;

(c) Promote full and effective participation of all countries in decision-making processes; and engage high-level political leaders to provide policy guidance and ensure effective implementation of sustainable development;

(d) Enhance the engagement of major groups.

37. Further, participants underscored the need to ensure adequate frameworks for sustainable development at the international, regional, national and subnational levels, and called for all relevant sustainable development actors to undertake measures to ensure that sustainable development is adequately considered in their activities.

### **A. Global high-level Political Forum**

38. Rio+20 reaffirmed the role of the General Assembly as the chief, deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations, and called on the Assembly to further integrate sustainable development in its agenda, including through periodic high-level dialogues. Participants of the Conference also called for United Nations system-wide coherence and coordination, and invited the United Nations system and international financial institutions to enhance the mainstreaming of sustainable development. Participants recognized the critical role of the Economic and Social Council as the principal body for policy review, dialogue and recommendations, and follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals, and committed leaders to strengthening the Council, in particular to foster a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. A universal intergovernmental High-level Political Forum was established, for a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on, and eventually substituting, the Committee on Sustainable Development. In that regard, an intergovernmental process, under the General Assembly, to define the format and functioning of the Forum was launched at the Conference.

39. The General Assembly established HLPF in July 2013, as the main United Nations platform dealing with sustainable development, and subsequently defined the format and modalities of the Forum (A/RES/69/290 and A/RES/69/214). The Assembly, in resolution 67/290 of 2013, decided that the Forum, consistent with its universal intergovernmental character, shall:

(a) Provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development;

(b) Follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;

(c) Enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels;

(d) Have a focused, dynamic and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

40. Further, the Assembly decided that the meetings of the Forum shall be convened under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The meetings of the Forum, under the auspices of the General Assembly, shall:

(a) Be convened at the level of Heads of State and Government;

(b) Be convened every four years by the President of the Assembly for a period of two days, at the beginning of the session of the Assembly;

(c) Result in a concise negotiated political declaration to be submitted for the consideration of the Assembly.

41. HLPF is mandated to conduct reviews of implementation of sustainable development commitments and ultimately, the sustainable development goals in all countries. Those reviews are mandated to replace the national voluntary presentations, which used to be conducted at the Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Reviews, but to be more effective, building on other review mechanisms.

42. The meetings of the Forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall be convened annually by the President of the Council for a period of eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment. The General Assembly resolution on the HLPF format and organizational aspects, reaffirms the commitment to strengthen the Economic and Social Council as a principal organ in the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, and recognizes the key role of the Council in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

43. However, during the same session, the Assembly adopted resolution A/67/290, and among other things, reaffirmed the Economic and Social Council as a principal body for policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development and for the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals.

### **Integration**

44. As noted in section II of the report, the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, hence the need for their balanced integration in tackling complex development challenges. In that context, the General Assembly decided to enhance the integration of the three dimensions in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels, and encouraged countries to ensure that their participation in HLPF meetings reflect this from their national perspectives. This is quite pertinent, as several of the reviews conducted in the run up to Rio+20 indicated that the Commission on Sustainable Development, though instrumental in elevating the significance of sustainable development, did not achieve the desired level of integration.

45. Meetings of the Commission were mostly attended by the environment constituency, both government and non-governmental organizations, and the agenda was mainly environment driven. Broader development issues were tackled only peripherally. The establishment of the United Nations Environment Assembly as a universal body, makes it all the more necessary to avoid limiting HLPF to environmental issues. The decision of the General Assembly, for travel expenses of one representative of least developed countries to all formal meetings of the Forum to be met from the United Nations regular budget, is a good start. However, there is a need to consider the establishment of a trust fund for least developed countries to ensure their adequate representation in HLPF meetings in terms of achieving a balanced integration.

46. Given that starting in 2016, the Forum will carry out its work in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, there is ample opportunity to realize the integration objective of sustainable development. The post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals will embody objectives and thematic areas that cut across the three dimensions, and also peace and security, and governance imperatives. The fact that the goals are not viewed as stand-alone, but in relation to one another embodied in one monitoring and evaluation framework, provides the opportunity for enhanced integration. This can engender the adoption of an interlinkages approach to dealing with specific thematic issues, thereby eliciting discussions on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development relevant to the theme.

47. With regard to sustainable development mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system, Rio+20 recognized that a HLPF would be very well placed to provide a focused and unified message to all United Nations organizations on sustainable development.

This will also be instrumental in fostering integrated approaches in the system. The first report on the mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Nations system, notes that the Forum “would help member States to send a unified message to United Nations system organizations, including through their respective governing bodies, on the need to take an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental policies and actions” (United Nations, 2013). Further, the advance version of the 2015 report highlights that the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda, with the sustainable development goals at its core, is providing new impetus and new tools for adopting more integrated approaches to the three dimensions throughout the United Nations system. This is expected to accelerate ongoing progress in inter-agency efforts to drive further integration, and prepare the United Nations system for supporting the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda.

48. HLPF can become the lead political champion of mainstreaming sustainable development in the United Nations system, particularly into “Delivering as one” arrangements, supported by the United Nations Development Group. This presents an important opportunity for HLPF to strengthen integration, and calls for close working relationships with the United Nations Development Group, the Environment Management Group, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council, including the Development Cooperation Forum – the lead political body to coordinate the development work of the United Nations. Additionally, working relationships with the “Delivering as one” initiative and the United Nations Environment Programme – the lead authority on environmental matters and secretariat of the recently created United Nations Environment Assembly – are crucial, as are similar bodies and lead entities in the social field.

## **Implementation**

49. The adoption of sustainable development commitments should be complemented by well laid-out strategies to ensure effective implementation. In that regard, in addition to the review mandate conferred on HLPF by the General Assembly, the Forum is expected to advance implementation by providing a “dynamic platform for regular dialogue and for stocktaking and agenda-setting to advance sustainable development, and that the agenda of all meetings of the Forum will be focused, while allowing flexibility to address new and emerging issues” (United Nations, 2013). A focussed agenda will allow the Forum to entertain the level and breadth of discussions necessary to effectively deal with specific issues of concern, in order to arrive at relevant and robust conclusions to inform decisions that will engender buy-in and actions by all, thus strengthening its legitimacy. Similarly, the flexibility to accommodate new and emerging issues will strengthen the relevance of the Forum, as decisions reached on those issues, will most likely be demand driven, and will attract the required implementation support. This will be an important improvement over the agenda setting and programming practices of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which undermined its effectiveness in terms of fostering implementation.

50. Despite early success in placing sustainable development into intergovernmental discussions, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Commission on Sustainable Development diminished over time, especially with regard to translating recommendations into action, policy impact and implementation throughout the United Nations system. Notably, many of those shortcomings stemmed, not from the mandate or lack of early accomplishments of the Commission on Sustainable Development, but from its limited ability to attract the involvement of ministers and high-level policymakers over time, especially from the economic and social sectors. That difficulty, in addition to other consequences, militated

against a close relationship with international financial, development and trade institutions, and limited its impact at the national level in many countries.

51. In terms of the Commission on Sustainable Development agenda, the adoption of a multi-year programme of work, following the World Summit on Sustainable Development, had the unintended consequence of being too rigid, “preventing the Commission from addressing critical contemporary challenges and new and emerging issues” (United Nations, 2013, para.42). Although the Commission on Sustainable Development adopted a strong set of policy options, none of the implementing agencies of the United Nations system took it up in their governing bodies. As a result, the implementation of those decisions was limited and amounted only to some technical capacity-building projects (Commission on Sustainable Development Secretariat, 2011).

52. In delivering its mandate of advancing implementation, HLPF is expected to promote the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development and, on a voluntary basis, facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies. It is also expected to promote transparency and implementation by further enhancing the consultative role and participation of other relevant stakeholders at the international level. This can boost the critical mass of expertise, foster experience sharing, information exchange and enrich discussions at meetings, thereby contributing to enhancing implementation.

53. The Forum could build on the good practices of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which encouraged broad civil society (including business, experts and other stakeholders) input and participation, through for example, partnership fairs, to showcase their important implementation role. The Commission on Sustainable Development provided for multi-stakeholder dialogues, official papers from stakeholders and experts, and the ability of civil society representatives to intervene at meetings, which Governments and stakeholders generally perceived as essential for informed deliberations. It also showed great potential as a platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices between stakeholders of all types, including those with significant experience as implementers in the field. Moreover, side events, although sometimes uneven, provided a “platform for showcasing implementation, networking and enlisting support for partnerships”. Inclusiveness and openness are likely to be among the Forum’s greatest strengths (United Nations, 2013). Most of these provisions were retained in the resolution on HLPF.

54. The General Assembly also mandated the Forum to devote adequate time to discussing the sustainable development challenges facing developing countries, including the most vulnerable countries, in particular the least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and countries in Africa, with the aim of enhancing engagement and implementing commitments. The Assembly recognized the need for those countries to be adequately supported by the international community in various forms, taking into account their expressed needs and capacity to mobilize domestic resources. Financial, technical, and capacity-building support, will contribute to increased participation and engagement of developing country stakeholders.

## Review

55. In defining the framework for action and follow-up, Rio+20 committed to address the remaining gaps in the implementation of outcomes of major summits on sustainable development, to tackle new and emerging challenges and to seize new opportunities through actions to foster implementation in key thematic and cross-sectoral issues, supported as appropriate through the provision of means of implementation. The Conference recognized that goals, targets and indicators, including gender-sensitive indicators, are valuable in measuring and accelerating progress. It underlined that progress in implementation can be enhanced by voluntarily sharing information, knowledge and experience. It also requested HLPF to consider the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report.

56. Subsequently, the General Assembly decided that HLPF will follow up and review progress in the implementation of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation. It also decided that the Forum, when it meets under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

57. In various discussions, member States have underscored that an effective review mechanism was important to ensure the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Countries have emphasized the need for a voluntary, State-led, participatory, evidence-based and multi-tiered process to monitor progress. The review architecture envisaged in the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report on the post-2015 development agenda, comprises five components: accountability at the national level; peer reviews at the regional level; knowledge and experience sharing at the global level; thematic reviews to chart progress on particular themes; and review of the global partnership for sustainable development.

58. The Synthesis Report also foresees a global component for knowledge-sharing as a forum for participatory, multi-stakeholder and, importantly, universal review, starting at the launch of the new agenda to be convened annually under the auspices of HLPF. It would provide a periodic occasion for individual countries to voluntarily present national reviews of progress (as mandated in the HLPF resolution), to discuss lessons learned across countries and the opportunity to review both short-term outputs and long-term outcomes related to attaining the goals. Multi-annual reviews under the Forum in a five-year cycle will also be considered.

59. In order to ensure that the Forum effectively delivers on this mandate, its review system should allow for effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This should include, setting realistic and flexible targets to focus on outcomes and means of implementation. The contextualization of the Forum's review mandate within the post-2015 framework, which embodies the sustainable development goals, provides an opportunity for putting in place an adequate review system. Such a system could serve to identify priority areas, monitor and enhance means of implementation allocated to the set priorities, and assess the overall impact of the key policies and programmes on progress in achieving the sustainable development goals. The sustainable development goals framework would provide a common analytical and reporting framework to allow for comparability, coordination, credibility and sustainability of monitoring and evaluation of performance and results across countries, subregions and

regions, thus ensuring its universality. The framework could, at the same time, allow for differentiation in terms of targets, indicators and measurement methods that take into account varying developmental contexts and specificities. The outcome of the review could be presented in the mandated global sustainable development report.

60. The monitoring and evaluation framework for the sustainable development goals could build on the current institutional mechanisms, particularly those used for the Millennium Development Goals, noting and correcting for identified weaknesses. In particular, the monitoring process for the Millennium Development Goals taught important lessons on how to maintain focus on internationally agreed development goals and targets, while keeping the world informed of achievements, problem areas and emerging issues. It also brought to the fore the necessity of having well-defined, objectively measurable indicators that can be used to track progress across countries, and be aggregated to represent regional and global trends. At the global level, current structures such as the Millennium Development Goals Africa Working Group, which brings together regional and international institutions to monitor progress, should be maintained. The global statistical community, led by the Statistical Commission and guided by the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, should continue to play an authoritative and leadership role in strategic and technical guidance for monitoring the sustainable development goal indicators.

61. The proposed sustainable development goals reveal the emergence of development themes and goals, which were not part of the Millennium Development Goals framework. Furthermore, it will be essential to assess goals, targets and indicators on means of implementation in relation to progress made in other relevant areas, and vice-versa. Although the Millennium Development Goals framework achieved a lot to build upon – in terms of institutional capacity, skills, methodologies, data collection and reporting – the additional resources and political commitment required for the additional themes should not be underestimated. The proposed goals will, to a large extent, require the development of new data sources and sound benchmarking, some along more traditional data collection lines, such as household surveys, some with methods outside the mainstream of national statistical systems, such as opinion, perception and satisfaction surveys.

62. Additionally, the inclusion of goals that seek to integrate social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development and related efficiency and sustainability indicators, could pose new challenges for monitoring and assessment. Necessary infrastructure and consensus on responsibilities, and therefore accountability in data compilation and analysis at national and international levels, will require that time and resources be allocated for these new themes. Experience with monitoring the Millennium Development Goals shows that it could require a few years at least, and significant new resources, to put in place agreed new statistical development programmes, achieve and begin to test and benchmark results, and follow up with regular data collection and reporting to support regional and global monitoring.

63. There will be a need for well-coordinated interventions to strengthen statistical capacity of institutions responsible for data gathering and analysis. In this regard, a thorough assessment of long-term capacities and responsibilities at national and international levels must be an important dimension of implementation plans and strategies of the sustainable development goals. This is in line with the recommendation of the Independent Expert Advisory Group, established by the Secretary-General on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, that calls for the catalysis of a multi-stakeholder global partnership for

sustainable development data to mobilize and coordinate the actions required to make the data revolution serve sustainable development, and promote initiatives such as the holding of inclusive world forums on sustainable development data.

64. In addition to the review, that will be conducted through the sustainable development goals framework, there will be a need for review of the implementation progress on specific thematic issues that may be deemed important at a particular point in time. The review could analyse implementation challenges, constraints and lessons learned and could build on the interlinkage approach of the Commission on Sustainable Development to bring out relationships with other thematic areas and highlight the economic, social and environmental dimensions in order to tackle implementation challenges in an integrated and synergistic manner. The thematic reviews could be presented in the form of review reports on the selected areas, and could be seen as complementary to the Global Sustainable Development Report, which places emphasis on the science-policy interface. The Secretary-General's Synthesis Report envisages that the reviews would be carried out under HLPF, but "rely on relevant coordination and review platforms" (United Nations, 2014, para. 146). They would thus utilize current specialized, intergovernmental or functional mechanisms that are convened by the United Nations and other multilateral entities. Annual global thematic reports could aggregate available data.

65. Multi-stakeholder reviews from local, national, subregional, regional and international levels will be critical for the success of the review process. The reviews should promote the sharing of best practices and experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned to better inform the implementation process. The Secretary-General's Synthesis Report on the post-2015 development agenda recommends a new paradigm of accountability of all actors — Governments, international institutions, private sector actors and organizations of civil society and citizens of all countries. The Report considers the role of parliaments as central, and calls for their strengthening to carry out their constitutional mandates of oversight (United Nations, 2014).

66. The Secretary-General's Report also advances a component to review the global partnership for sustainable development – the essential element of partnership and its mobilization of means of implementation. The modalities for such a review and how current structures and processes can help review and strengthen the global partnership for sustainable development, including the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, will need to be deliberated on at the third Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa, in July 2015. An important additional role for the review process under this component will be to examine the respective conference tracks targeting the special conditions and needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island Developing States.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

67. Rio+20 provided the much needed impetus for accelerating the implementation of sustainable development commitments, and gave clear guidance on the institutional framework for sustainable development at all levels, including the establishment of HLPF that replaced the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Conference recognized the role of all actors from global to local in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda, and underscored the need for effective linkages among the various levels and across



sectors to ensure consistency, coherence and synergistic approaches for enhanced implementation.

68. The General Assembly, in defining the format of HLPF in 2013 as the home of sustainable development at the global level, paid due regard to the Rio+20 decision to create the Forum and spelled out the mandate, functions and operational modalities of the Forum in relation to United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Assembly contextualized the review function of the Forum within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda. Its decisions on preparations for, and participation in the Forum's review sessions, took into account the lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development process, in order to cater to a review mechanism that would strengthen integration and implementation.

69. In light of the foregoing, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development may wish to consider the following messages to inform its collective input to HLPF-2015.

(a) **The mandate and functions conferred on HLPF, as well as its universal membership, accords the sustainable development body the authority and legitimacy to provide the platform for strengthening the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and reviewing progress in the implementation of internationally agreed commitments on sustainable development.** There is a need to clarify the role of the Economic and Social Council in relation to HLPF, which seem to have similar mandates. The functions, working relationships, coordination mechanisms and decision-making authority of each in relation to the other, should be clarified in the context of the post-2015 development agenda negotiations. This is important in order to avoid duplication and overlaps and to adequately inform the preparations for, and participation of, country delegates in the meetings of the two bodies.

(b) **Integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development is an important tenet of this development paradigm and to a large extent, will determine the effectiveness of HLPF.** In this regard, the Forum should learn from the lessons of the Commission on Sustainable Development and devise appropriate strategies and measures to ensure its adequate delivery on this mandate. This should take into account the ability to attract the participation of stakeholders representing the three dimensions, from Government and major groups, at all implementation levels – policy to practice.

(c) **Effective mainstreaming of equity issues, particularly in terms of representation and participation of developing countries, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in HLPF meetings is important in strengthening its legitimacy.** While it is important to mobilize adequate resources to sponsor a critical mass of stakeholders to participate at HLPF meetings, the issue of equity goes beyond representation (e.g., issues relating to distribution of the effects of climate change). In that regard, the Forum should ensure the meaningful engagement in terms of the equity implications of matters relating to development finance, technology transfer and capacity development.

(d) **Enhanced mainstreaming of sustainable development into the work of the United Nations system, including their support to member States, will greatly contribute to advancing sustainable development objectives.** This will be supported, among others, by the “Delivering as one” initiative of the United Nations system at all levels; global, through

the Chief Executives Board coordinating mechanism; regional, through the United Nations coordinating mechanisms at that level; and national, through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework mechanism.

(e) **The ability of HLPF to advance implementation will enhance its legitimacy and authority; and a review system that clearly brings out implementation gaps, challenges and lessons, will most likely proffer appropriate solutions to address the problem.** In order to advance implementation, recommendations should be consolidated in the form of an implementation matrix, specifying timelines. Following this, a matching of countries with development partners should be carried out, taking into account expressed needs, intervention areas and comparative advantages.

(f) **A focussed agenda will allow the Forum to entertain the depth and breadth of discussions necessary to effectively deal with specific issues of concern.** This will permit the Forum to reach appropriate and robust conclusions to inform decisions that will engender buy-in and actions by all concerned, and will attract the level of implementation support required.

(g) **The flexibility of HLPF to tackle new and emerging issues will strengthen its relevance.** The high-profile nature of new and emerging issues can attract the level of support required to effectively respond to a demand-driven agenda.

(h) **Fostering inclusive and broad participation in HLPF meetings can boost the critical mass of expertise to enrich discussions, thereby enhancing implementation.** In this regard, the Forum should encourage the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, promote the sharing of best practices and experiences, system-wide coherence and coordination, and enhance the consultative role and participation of other relevant stakeholders.

(i) **The contextualization of the HLPF review system within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals, is strategic and can help in ensuring an integrated and coordinated system that fosters integration and implementation.** The post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals embody objectives and thematic areas that cut across the three dimensions, and governance and peace and security imperatives. The fact that the goals are not viewed as stand-alone, but in relation to one another embodied in one monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework, provides the opportunity for enhanced integration and implementation.

(j) **The sustainable development goals framework will provide a common analytical framework for monitoring, evaluation and reporting to allow for coordination and comparability across countries, subregions and regions.** The targets should permit a focus on outcomes and means of implementation. The framework should ensure universality, while at the same time allow for differentiation of targets, indicators and measurement methods that take into account different developmental contexts and specificities.

(k) **The HLPF review system must permit the review of means of implementation.** In addition to directly assessing progress on means of implementation, it is essential to assess progress on this in relation to other thematic areas. This will enable countries to gauge the extent to which availability or lack of means of implementation can

advance or hamper progress; and to further inform decisions and assess progress on fostering global partnership for development.

(l) **The emergence of new development themes and goals in the sustainable development goals framework compared to the Millennium Development Goals framework, including those that seek to integrate social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development, will require strengthening of the review system.** In this regard, there will be a need for well-coordinated interventions to strengthen statistical capacity of institutions responsible for data gathering and analysis. The data revolution for sustainable development espoused by the Secretary-General should make this happen.

(m) **There may be a need to conduct thematic reviews, particularly on new and emerging issues to complement the sustainable development goals based reviews. These, as much as possible, should use the current review mechanisms within the United Nations system.** The reviews should analyse implementation challenges, constraints, lessons learned, and should build on the interlinkages approach of the Commission on Sustainable Development to bring out relationships with other thematic areas, while highlighting the economic, social and environmental dimensions that will allow for tackling implementation challenges in an integrated and synergistic manner. The review outcomes should be presented in the form of thematic review reports that complement the Global Sustainable Development Report.

(n) **Multi-stakeholder reviews will be critical for the success of the review process.** The reviews should be voluntary, State-led, participatory, evidence-based and multi-tiered; from local, national, subregional, regional and international levels. They should also promote the sharing of best practices and experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons to better inform the implementation process.

## **B. Regional and subregional levels**

70. The World Summit on Sustainable Development mandated the United Nations regional commissions to follow up on the implementation of its outcomes, and to promote a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions. Following the Summit, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the agencies of the United Nations system, and regional and subregional organizations, regularly organized the Africa Regional Implementation Meetings (Africa-RIMs) in preparation for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) sessions. Since 2003, the various configurations of the ECA CSD have been providing platforms for RIMs.

71. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) emphasized the significant role that regional and subregional organizations – including the regional commissions and their subregional offices – played in promoting a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and also in fostering effective linkages between the global, national and local level institutions. In that regard, the Conference urged the prioritization of sustainable development and encouraged the enhancement of regional commissions and their subregional offices. The Africa-RIM of 2012 lauded that recognition and recommended that specific actions should be taken to strengthen ECA and its subregional offices to enhance their support to African countries in furthering sustainable development objectives, including building their capacity to facilitate mainstreaming, integrated

assessments, monitoring and evaluation and the provision of platforms to promote experience-sharing and knowledge networking.

72. The 2012 RIM recommended the upgrading of the Africa-RIM to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) to deliberate on the region's collective input to the meetings of the 2015 High-level Political Forum. It further recommended that ECA should convene ARFSD jointly with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank (AfDB), in collaboration with relevant partners. In establishing the High-level Political Forum in 2013, the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development, and invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the Forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and stakeholders. The 2012 Africa-RIM also underlined the importance of the respective roles of ECA and various regional actors.

73. ECA serves as the regional commission of the United Nations in the region; and as an integral part of the African institutional landscape. Its strength derives from its role as the only agency of the United Nations system that is mandated to operate at regional and subregional levels, to harness resources and bring them to bear on Africa's priorities. This is particularly relevant, given that the perspectives of the African Union are primarily regional and subregional. On account of this unique positioning, and the multidisciplinary expertise of its staff embodying the economic, social and environmental dimensions, the comparative advantages of ECA are evident at the global, regional, subregional and national levels. The important role of ECA, in promoting a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in Africa, has been well recognized.

74. The pertinent role of the African Union Commission, as the executive arm of the African Union with a lead role in defining the continent's sustainable development agenda, cannot be overemphasized. Also significant, is the active engagement of AfDB as a key actor in supporting the region's sustainable development agenda through, among other things, the financing of sustainable development initiatives. These three premier organizations in Africa's institutional landscape, operating under the framework of their Joint Secretariat, would be well placed to lead the process in the region.

75. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency, as the operational arm of the African Union pertaining to the implementation of the NEPAD programme, would be an important partner in the process. The regional economic communities, that form the building blocks of the African Economic Community in supporting the definition and implementation of the sustainable development agendas of their respective subregions, would be principal interlocutors with national-level actors, including Governments and major groups.

76. Other important partners include the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Africa, for their leadership role in supporting the region's development and environment agenda, respectively, at regional, subregional and national levels. The advocacy role of the Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Africa, in relation to Africa's development agenda at the global level, will bring to bear this important dimension to the partnership.

77. The 2012 Africa-RIM called for the provision of a strengthened platform that adequately ensures an enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. Preparations for, and participation in the Africa Forum should ensure adequate coordination among delegations from member States (who may include in their delegations representatives from Capitals, the African missions in Addis Ababa and the African group in New York) and representatives of major groups. This would ensure a richly-informed and well-coordinated preparations, and effective linkages between local, national, regional and global level processes.

78. With regard to the sustainable development goals' monitoring and evaluation framework at the regional and subregional levels, ECA, the African Union Commission, AfDB, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the regional commissions, among other institutions, could take the lead. In terms of statistical capacity development, the Statistical Commission for Africa in particular, (which is equivalent to the United Nations Statistical Commission at the global level); and in ECA, the African Centre for Statistics (which is equivalent to the United Nations Statistics Division at the global level), should have the leading role. At the subregional level, the regional economic communities could provide the institutional framework for monitoring and reporting on the sustainable development goals for each of the five subregions, with the support of agencies of the United Nations system and other institutions operating at that level.

79. ECA subregional offices could play an important role, given their strategic positioning as the interface between headquarters and member States. The resulting subregional reports on sustainable development goals, would draw heavily on those produced at the national level. The subregional reports would, in turn, be consolidated at the regional level by the partner organizations operating at that level. The global report would be informed by the regional report, additional data and information provided by bilateral and multilateral institutions and agencies, United Nations organizations, global non-governmental organizations, among other organizations. It would be efficient and cost effective if the emerging monitoring and reporting framework builds on and strengthen the current mechanisms at various levels. All designated institutions and agencies would need to be adequately resourced to sufficiently track and report progress on the sustainable development goals. Reporting at each level is expected to be done at multi-stakeholder level, and subjected for reviews for validation. It is expected that an Africa sustainable development goals report would be the outcome of such a review process.

80. Of interest, is the proposed global sustainable development report that constitutes one of the tools for strengthening science policy interface. Since 2005, ECA has taken the lead on the production of the Sustainable Development Report on Africa. The Report has been serving as an important tool for monitoring and assessing progress towards sustainable development in Africa. The first part provides a holistic assessment of progress, using indicators that cover the economic, social and environmental dimensions, and governance aspects of sustainable development. The second part analyses themes of particular significance to Africa's sustainable development agenda. However, given the envisaged production of the regional sustainable development goals report, and in light of the rationalization process of ECA publications following its restructuring in 2013, the Sustainable Development Report on Africa will no longer be produced.

81. With regard to the thematic reviews, if eventually agreed as part of the High-level Political Forum review system, those for Africa could be held under the auspices of the ARFSD, the ECA Statutory Committees that provide oversight for the Commission's various subprogrammes, the joint meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Other relevant African Union specialized technical committees include, the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD), the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), the Conference of African Ministers of Industry (CAMI), the African Union Conferences of Ministers of Health, Education, Mineral Resources Development, among others.

82. In terms of enhancing a coordinated and coherent approach to the United Nations support to Africa in the implementation of sustainable development agreements, the 2012 Africa-RIM recognized the important role of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, and subregional chapters that will ensure effective linkage with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process at national level. The Mechanism will now incorporate Agenda 2063 in its support portfolio.

83. The Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 development agenda, recommends a regional component for peer review, tailored to regional and subregional needs, undertaken by the current mechanisms in a participatory, multi-stakeholder process, to consider national reports, identify regional trends, obstacles, commonalities, best practices and lessons learned. The Report notes that regional reviews would incorporate and build on the experiences and successes of mechanisms such as the African Peer Review Mechanism. The Mechanism is a mutually agreed programme, voluntarily adopted by States members of the African Union, to promote and reinforce high standards of governance. It is a self-monitoring mechanism with no conditionalities attached. The Mechanism's mandate is to ensure that the policies and practices of participating countries conform to the agreed values in the following four focus areas: democracy and good political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socioeconomic development. As part of the Mechanism, there are periodic reviews of the participating countries to assess progress towards achieving the mutually agreed goals.

84. The process has four main components:

(a) The Committee of Participating Heads of State and Government (African Peer Review Forum) is the highest decision-making authority of the Mechanism;

(b) The Panel of Eminent Persons (African Peer Review Panel) oversees the review process to ensure integrity, considers reports and makes recommendations to the African Peer Review Forum;

(c) The secretariat of the African Peer Review Mechanism provides secretarial, technical, coordinating and administrative support;

(d) The Country Review Mission Team visits member States to review progress and produce an African Peer Review Mechanism report on the country.<sup>1</sup>

85. The Mechanism could incorporate key sustainable development milestones and provide a platform for peer review of related commitments to complement the ARFSD process. In the light of the discussions thus far, the regional commissions are likely to be requested to promote some review or peer review activities in support of the High-level Political Forum review. Some have proposed that the regional commissions be the home for some or all of the Forum's reviews. This will raise the question of how to ensure the best possible use of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

86. The Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness is an exercise in mutual accountability, undertaken jointly by ECA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development following a request of NEPAD Heads of State and Government in 2003. Its purpose is to assess what has been done by Africa and its development partners to deliver commitments in relation to the continent's development, what results have been achieved, and what the key future priorities are. It complements the self-assessments produced by each side to the partnership, and looks at commitments made by political leaders collectively, rather than national governments individually. In doing so, it attempts to look at overall performance, recognizing however, that within this, there is a large degree of variation and diversity between countries in Africa (ECA, 2012).

87. The Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness Report presents a range of thematic issues and related commitments undertaken by Africa and its Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development partners, along with relevant action agendas, either underway or needed, to better address these issues and meet the commitments. It does not seek to generate new commitments, but rather to track implementation of commitments already made (allowing that new commitments may emerge from various forums).<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness provides a good opportunity for monitoring and evaluating commitments related to a global partnership for sustainable development between Africa and its partners.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

88. The decision of the General Assembly, on the review functions and processes of the High-level Political Forum, acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension, the role of the regional commissions and their partners in that regard, and took into account the need for strong linkages with regional, national and local level processes, and the effective participation of countries in special situations. In the Africa region, the various configurations of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development had been providing platforms for the RIMs to deliberate on the region's collective input to the sessions of Commission on Sustainable Development, with impressive results. Africa's robust preparations for Rio+20

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<sup>1</sup> Information on the African Peer Review Mechanism thematic area is available from <http://www.nepad.org/system/files/APRM.pdf>. Accessed 30 March, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [http://hubrural.org/IMG/pdf/oecd\\_eca\\_promise\\_and\\_performance.pdf](http://hubrural.org/IMG/pdf/oecd_eca_promise_and_performance.pdf). Accessed 30 March 2015.

ensured the adequate reflection of the region's concerns, priorities and interests in the Outcome Document of the Conference, entitled "The future we want".

89. The experiences gained in the organization of the Africa-RIMs, informed the organization of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the sustainable development goals, jointly convened by ECA, the African Union Commission and AfDB, in the context of the Africa consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. The Outcome Document was adopted as a technical input to the work of the Africa High-level Committee, and was one of the key documents that guided the negotiating positions of African negotiators in the global sustainable development goals consultations in New York.

90. The organization of ARFSD, in preparation for the High-level Political Forum, will build on the experience of the Africa-RIM. In that context, the important role of regional actors, including ECA, the African Union Commission, AfDB, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the regional commissions, the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Africa, and the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, is well recognized. The review process envisaged is for national and local level review processes to feed into the regional level process. The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa platform and current review mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness, will be essential to the process.

91. ARFSD may wish to consider the following messages to inform its collective input to the 2015 High-level Political Forum:

(a) **Building on the experiences of the Africa-RIMs, including successes, challenges and lessons, will be critical for the successful convening of ARFSD.** In that regard, ECA should organize the regional forums jointly with the African Union Commission and AfDB, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, and other relevant actors. Given that ARFSD will provide a platform to deliberate on Africa's collective input to the High-level Political Forum, its periodicity and programme should be informed by the Forum;

(b) **The significant role of the regional commissions and their subregional offices in promoting a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, including fostering effective linkages among global, national and local level institutions, is well recognized.** In that regard, and in line with the encouragement and recommendation of Rio+20 and the 2012 Africa-RIM, respectively, concrete actions should be taken to provide ECA with additional posts and operational resources required to enhance its support to African countries in implementing sustainable development. The additional resource requirements could be provided in the form of the General Assembly regular budget and extrabudgetary resources through global partnership for development mechanisms;

(c) **The provision of a strengthened platform that adequately ensures an enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development will contribute to ensuring the success of ARFSD.** To that end, preparations for, and participation in ARFSD, should include stakeholders from Government and major groups across the three dimensions of sustainable development, and ensure effective coordination among delegations



of member States from Capitals, the African missions in Addis Ababa, and the African group in New York and Geneva;

(d) **The effective operationalization of the sustainable development goals' monitoring and evaluation framework at regional and subregional levels, calls for the meaningful engagement of ECA, the African Union Commission, AfDB, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the regional commissions.** For each of the five subregions of Africa, the regional commissions should provide the institutional framework for monitoring and reporting on the sustainable development goals, with the support of agencies of the United Nations system operating at that level, including ECA subregional offices. The review at the subregional level should draw on the national level processes. The subregional reports should, in turn, inform the report on sustainable development goals for Africa. The same process should be used for producing the thematic review reports as deemed necessary;

(e) **Agenda 2063 constitutes Africa's framework for implementing post-2015 development agenda and its accompanying sustainable development goals framework.** In that respect, the Agenda, with its accompanying goals, targets and indicators, should provide a robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework for effective implementation at national, subregional and regional levels;

(f) **Africa has many platforms that could support the thematic reviews that may be undertaken under the auspices of ARFSD.** These include, the various ECA statutory committees, the Joint Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Should thematic reviews be agreed as part of the High-level Political Forum process, these platforms, in addition to those of the United Nations system, should be leveraged taking into account their comparative advantages in terms of enlisting the critical mass of expertise needed for reviewing a particular thematic area;

(g) **The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa plays an important role in furthering the sustainable development agenda in the region.** This regional mechanism for United Nations coordination on its support to Africa based on development frameworks such as NEPAD and Agenda 2063, should ensure coherence and coordination in the system's support to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in Africa, and the High-level Political Forum review system through ARFSD;

(h) **The African Peer Review Mechanism is a mutually agreed programme voluntarily adopted by the States members of the African Union to promote and reinforce high standards of governance.** It is a self-monitoring mechanism with no conditionalities attached. The Mechanism meets the criteria identified in the Secretary-General's report on the post-2015 development agenda, and should be updated to incorporate key sustainable development commitments and milestones, to provide a platform for individual country reviews in Africa in the context of the High-level Political Forum process that may be led by regional commissions;

(i) **The Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness is an exercise in mutual accountability undertaken jointly by ECA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, following a request of NEPAD Heads of State and**

**Government in 2003.** The report does not seek to generate new commitments, but rather to track implementation of commitments already made, while allowing for new commitments that may emerge from various forums. The report should complement other tools for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on commitments related to global partnership for sustainable development between Africa and its partners.

### **C. National and local levels**

92. At Rio+20, countries underlined the need for more coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at the national, subnational and local levels, and to that end, called on the international community to strengthen national, subnational and local institutions, or relevant multi-stakeholder bodies and processes dealing with sustainable development, including coordinating and facilitating effective integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The 2012 Africa-RIM reiterated the importance of such an arrangement at the national level, and recommended that national sustainable development bodies should consolidate and ensure the mainstreaming of sustainable development at the highest level of decision-making organs of governments, the private sector and civil society organizations. Moreover, the modus operandi of these coordinating bodies should ensure the involvement of all ministries, relevant government entities and other stakeholders, to enable them to exercise their full responsibilities in sustainable development. The Meeting also recommended that:

(a) The mandate, location and organizational structure of national coordinating bodies should allow for horizontal and vertical linkages, and ensure that the three dimensions of sustainable development are dealt with in an integrated manner. Furthermore, the composition of coordinating bodies should be broad-based ensuring the full and effective involvement of all relevant ministries and government entities, and major groups. The use and application of approaches and tools, including integrated assessments, should be adopted or enhanced to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable;

(b) National coordinating bodies should guide the development and implementation of policies, strategies and plans in order to ensure synergies and avoid overlaps and duplication of efforts. Additionally, they should ensure participatory mechanisms for the active engagement of all stakeholders, including civil society organizations in decision-making, and the implementation of activities. They should have an awareness-raising and advocacy role regarding sustainable development matters, and provide platforms for sharing experiences and knowledge networking;

(c) National coordinating bodies for sustainable development should have decentralized structures at local levels to guide implementation and ensure that the desired impact is made at those levels. They should be encouraged to recognize and include local experiences, lessons learned and actions in sustainability solutions and agreements, and to feed them into the policy and decision-making processes at the national level;

(d) ECA, jointly with the African Union Commission and AfDB, in partnership with the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the regional commissions and other partners, should provide capacity-building support and promote exchange of experiences and knowledge networking among the coordinating bodies.

93. Agenda 2063 considers three layers of interventions in its implementation, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. The national level, including government, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, business and service associations, women and youth groups and community groups, will be responsible for the implementation of key activities under Agenda 2063. The regional level constituted by the regional commissions, business or service and professional associations will serve as the fulcrum for the implementation at the member states level. They will adapt the Agenda 2063 results framework to regional peculiarities and facilitate or coordinate the implementation by member States and develop or implement a monitoring and evaluation framework at the regional level. The continental level (the African Union organs, especially the African Union Commission) will be responsible for setting the broad results framework and broad monitoring and evaluation based on inputs from the regional commissions.

94. The Secretary-General's report advocates for a country-led, national component for accountability. The report considers the national review process as the most significant in the overall review process. The process will build on current national and local mechanisms and processes, with broad, multi-stakeholder participation, including the presentation of national and local governments, parliaments, civil society, science, universities and business. It would establish benchmarks, review the national policy framework, chart progress, learn lessons, consider solutions, follow-up and report thereon. To that end, a Government report, a national stakeholder report, with contributions from national non-governmental actors, and a report compiling information and data from agencies of the United Nations system and international financial institutions, all based upon globally harmonized formats, could constitute the main written inputs on individual country progress.

95. The proposed sustainable development goals and targets would serve to, among other things, rally different actors, galvanize political will and actions, and encourage all nations to work towards a set of defined priorities – hence the need to harmonize monitoring and report on progress. However, development aspirations and processes are context specific. Accordingly, to be meaningful, global goals and targets must be tailored and adapted to regional and national contexts and initial conditions.

96. The Millennium Development Goals have been criticized for not taking due account of national contexts and initial conditions, whereby the relation between the agreed targets and indicators for global monitoring and possible national modifications were not clear, and countries have sometimes seen global targets and indicators as mandates. Accordingly, the proposed sustainable development goals are not meant to set or replace national priorities, and could be implemented with varying degrees of selection, adaptation or modification to national circumstances.

97. Further, as in the case of the Millennium Development Goals, some countries may choose to complement the proposed targets and indicators with others as deemed appropriate to their national development context. Lessons from the Millennium Development Goals should provide guidance on how countries could continuously and effectively review their own goals, targets and indicators through national participatory processes, with the global post-2015 agenda as a useful benchmark but not necessarily a prescription. This is critical for national ownership, commitment and accountability.

98. In terms of arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, the institutions and agencies charged with the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating performance and results of the

sustainable development goals will need to be clearly identified, appropriately mandated and resourced. This should be the case from the community to the national, subregional, regional and international levels. Thus, at the community level, the monitoring and reporting units of local governments or local community councils will need to be strengthened to play a role in surveys to generate relevant data and implementation reports. At the subnational level, provincial administration or State governments, where applicable, will have to raise the effectiveness of current monitoring and reporting mechanisms to collate statistics and community level reports to produce subnational implementation reports. The provincial or State level reports will further be consolidated at the national level through designated institutions and agencies. At this stage, the national statistics offices will play a fundamental role in the generation of timely and reliable data.

99. For issues of national ownership, political commitment and accountability, it is fundamental that the international monitoring of global development is based, to the extent possible, on official statistics produced by national statistics services. National statistical systems, especially national statistics offices, should take the leading role at the country and local levels. This calls for enhancing national capacities (technical, human and financial) for collecting, compiling, analysing and reporting on targets and indicators for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the sustainable development goals.

100. While national capacities have improved since the Millennium Development Goals framework and indicators were established in 2001, with appreciable international support provided for the development of national statistics, most national statistical systems are still severely under-resourced and have failed to deliver both in terms of timeliness and reliability of data. Although data paucity continues to be examined at different levels, securing good quality, comprehensive and comparable data for measuring progress towards the sustainable development goals will pose a challenge. Even when data is available, it is often not adequately disaggregated to allow for comparison between spatial scales, time periods and even special grouping by gender and other social structures, thus constraining in-depth monitoring and reporting.

101. Principal challenges facing national statistical systems include: limited human and institutional capacity of the units responsible for collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistics; lack of adequate technical tools, packages and framework to support data production efforts; insufficient funding; and poor institutional coordination, among other factors. In addition, donor support has often focused too exclusively on data collection with inadequate attention to strengthening national capacities for monitoring, reporting, analysis and development of indicators. To support the sustainable development goals, capacity-building and data collection programmes should pay greater attention to analytical techniques and post-data collection processes, including methods of estimation to fill data gaps.

102. The monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the sustainable development goals would, therefore, place additional stress on these systems and more work and resources will be needed to support the effective implementation of the sustainable development goals. It will be useful at an early stage to comprehensively examine data gaps and compilation limitations country by country and goal by goal, with a view to meeting potential capacity challenges in national statistics services. For the sustainable development goals, transparency, accountability and national involvement in any estimation which is not derived from reported data, should be enhanced at all stages, ensuring that methods must be replicable and easily

understood by users and national stakeholders. Where international agencies use their own methods of estimation and modelling to improve comparability and fill in data gaps, countries should likewise participate in the development and application of these methodologies. Improved consultations and support to national statistics services are needed to ensure collaboration and enhance national leadership.

103. With regard to the new emerging themes of the sustainable development goals, resource requirements, cost implications and data quality and continuity must be given due consideration. It will be essential to identify, at the outset, new resources to support the needed data collection, compilation and dissemination. Given the weak statistical capacity in Africa, building statistical capacity in the three dimensions of sustainable development must be an important part of the post-2015 development agenda. National statistical capacities must be strengthened for data gathering, analysis and reporting to support timely reviews.

104. Technical cooperation and partnerships among regional institutions and their member States should continue to play a positive role in the adaptation of global and regional goals, targets and indicators to national circumstances and priorities, including implementing essential basic data programmes, and compiling national indicators, and analysis and reports that are attuned to regional and global concerns. The Secretary-General's report stresses that the international community must significantly scale up support to countries and national statistics offices with critical needs for capacities to produce, collect, disaggregate, analyse and share the data crucial to the new agenda. The envisaged data revolution for sustainable development could be the answer.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

105. National ownership is crucial to effective integration, implementation and review processes. In this regard, broad-based national participatory approaches would enhance the commitment, accountability and ownership needed. National structures and coordinating bodies guide the development and implementation of policies, strategies and plans for sustainable development. National coordinating bodies: translate global and regional frameworks into national and local actions; provide the mechanism for coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at national level; and ensure effective linkages from local to global. The national review process is, therefore, the most significant in the overall review process for which a bottom-up process is critical. In this regard, the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda places emphasis on the need for a bottom-up review process. It also highlights the significance of national reviews that should inform subregional, regional and global level review processes, in that order, thus enhancing national ownership and the legitimacy of the High-level Political Forum review process.

106. However, the new and emerging issues in the post 2015 development agenda could place additional stress on already weak national monitoring and reporting systems. In this regard, resource requirements, cost implications and data challenges would need particular consideration for effective implementation and review processes. Hence, national institutions in charge of monitoring, evaluating and reporting at all levels, will need to be clearly identified, appropriately mandated and resourced. This calls for enhanced support from the international community and the operationalization of a sustainable development data revolution, which the Secretary-General's report considers an important enabler for a review system.

107. ARFSD may wish to consider the following messages to inform its collective input to the 2015 High-level Political Forum:

(a) **National coordinating bodies for sustainable development are essential for coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at national level and ensuring effective linkages from local to global.** National sustainable development bodies should ensure integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and should promote the mainstreaming of sustainable development at the highest level of decision-making organs of Government, the private sector and civil society organizations. Their operational modalities should ensure the involvement of all relevant ministries, government entities and other stakeholders for effective delivery on their mandates;

(b) **The national review process is the most significant in the overall review process for which a bottom-up process is critical.** The process should build on current national and local mechanisms and processes, with broad, multi-stakeholder participation, under the leadership of national and local governments and with parliaments, civil society, science, academia and business. A Government report, a national stakeholders report and a United Nations system and other development partners' report could constitute the main outcomes of the review. The African Peer Review process will be instrumental to the national reviews in terms of national policies and measures to implement the post-2015 development agenda;

(c) **The proposed sustainable development goals are not meant to set or replace national priorities and could be implemented with varying degrees of selection, modification or adaptation to national circumstances.** To foster national ownership, commitment and accountability, countries should continuously review their own targets and indicators through national participatory processes with the global post-2015 development agenda framework as a useful benchmark, but not necessarily a prescription. While Agenda 2063 appears broadly consistent or convergent with the post-2015 development agenda, a systematic analysis of all goals and indicators in line with national circumstances and broader long-term sustainable development objectives would be useful;

(d) **Institutions in charge of monitoring, evaluating and reporting at all levels, will need to be clearly identified, appropriately mandated and resourced.** At the community level, the monitoring and reporting units of local governments or local community councils should be strengthened to play a role in generating relevant data and implementation reports. At the subnational level, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to produce subnational reports should equally be strengthened. The provincial or State level reports should be consolidated at national level through designated institutions and agencies. In this connection, the national statistics offices that are expected to play a fundamental role, should be strengthened to generate timely and reliable data;

(e) **Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the sustainable development goals would place additional stress on national statistical systems.** There is a need to comprehensively examine data gaps and compilation limitations country by country, goal by goal, with a view to tackling potential capacity challenges in national statistics services. For the sustainable development goals, transparency, accountability and national involvement in any estimation that is not derived from reported data should be enhanced at all stages,

ensuring that methods must be replicable and easily understood by users and national stakeholders;

(f) **With regard to the new and emerging sustainable development goals themes, resource requirements, cost implications and data quality and continuity must be given due consideration.** At the outset, new resources should be identified to support the needed data collection, compilation and dissemination. Countries will continue to need assistance in improving their statistical systems. The international community must significantly scale up support to countries and national statistics offices with critical needs for capacities to produce, collect, disaggregate, analyse and share the data crucial to the new agenda. The envisaged data revolution for sustainable development should be geared towards delivering on this requirement.

#### **IV. Global partnership for development**

108. The global economy and the development landscape had undergone fundamental changes since the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness principles were defined in 2005, and reviewed in Accra, Ghana, in 2008 as frameworks for development effectiveness. For development cooperation to increase its effectiveness as a catalyst for poverty reduction, a fundamental change of focus was required – from global structures to a country-led approach, recognizing the range of actors in development partnerships and the important but different roles each play. The 2011 Busan Partnership Agreement was in recognition of that and embodies that shift with its four principles for achieving common development goals: ownership of development priorities by developing countries; a focus on results; inclusive development partnerships; and transparency and accountability.

109. The implementation of sustainable development in Africa necessitates the mobilization of adequate means of implementation, both domestically and externally. In that context, the positions expressed in the Outcome Document of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the sustainable development goals, the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda and Agenda 2063 are pertinent. With regard to the global partnership for development, the strategy and means of implementation, identified in the Africa sustainable development goals Outcome Document, are crucial. The outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development is expected to be a game changer in terms of sustainable development implementation, particularly the post-2015 development agenda, which is expected to be adopted in September 2015.

110. The Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development may wish to consider the following messages to inform its collective input to the 2015 High-level Political Forum:

(a) **Adequate means of implementation are necessary to realize sustainable development in general and the sustainable development goals in particular.** They include financial resources, technology development and transfer, capacity development, regional integration, trade and market access, and South-South cooperation. These are not mutually exclusive, and should be employed in a complementary manner for efficient and effective delivery;

(b) **Africa recognizes that it must take responsibility for its development, and must therefore endeavour to step up domestic financial resource mobilization significantly to achieve the sustainable development goals.** In this regard, Africa should

increase domestic savings and improve public revenue collection. The region should also tap into the significant private capital flows, as sources for development financing. It should also improve governance and ensure an enabling investment climate for increased domestic and foreign investment, and the stemming of illicit financial flows. However, regional actions should be complemented by a favourable international environment and effective global partnerships for mobilizing resources. In this connection, Africa urges development partners to fully honour their commitments to the region;

(c) **The requirements of sustainable development financing surpass, by far, the resources that could be mobilized domestically.** In this regard, developed countries should: honour their commitment to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance; provide 0.15–0.20 per cent of their gross national income to least developed countries and agree on time frames to reach these targets; and encourage the private sector, including transnational corporations, private foundations and civil society institutions, to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries;

(d) **Africa can save billions of dollars if illicit financial flows are stemmed and the cost of remittances reduced.** In this regard, rich countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development need to step up efforts on disclosure standards. International partnerships should be more responsive to the challenge of illicit financial flows from the African region. The 2009 pledge by the World Bank, supported by the G-8 heads of State, to reduce the average global cost of remittances from 10 per cent to 5 per cent by 2014, should be operationalized – taking into account Africa’s specific context;

(e) **The financing for development conference that will take place in Addis Ababa, in July 2015, is expected to result in a bold and ambitious outcome that ensures predictability and adequacy of development financing.** In this connection, Africa calls for enhanced support to developing countries, particularly small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developed countries of the region;

(f) **Technology development and transfer are a key means of implementation, and African countries will have to rely on technology, if they are to shift to a more sustainable development path.** It is imperative to bridge the technological divide so as to promote sustainable industrialization, inclusive growth and transformational change across the African continent. Progress towards realizing the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals will depend on strides made in the means of implementation, including technology. To this end, the international community should commit to adequately support the establishment of a continental network of centres of excellence and hubs, leveraging current networks and institutional arrangements, to assess needs and identify, develop, adapt and transfer clean technologies;

(g) **Capacity development is crucial for implementing sustainable development, including developing resource efficient and inclusive economies in developing countries.** In this regard, the international community should commit to support the implementation of regional capacity development frameworks, including the African Union – NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework, which requires updating. Support should also be provided for the elaboration of broader national capacity development strategies that embody all aspects of capacity development, including human resources, organizational and institutional development.



## **V. Submission and presentation**

111. The 2015 session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development requests ECA to officially submit its key messages to the 2015 High-level Political Forum via the latter's secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, by ...June 2015. The Regional Forum further requests its chairperson... of country to make a presentation of its key messages to the 2015 High-level Political Forum in New York on 1 July 2015, during the session on reporting on the outcomes of the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development.

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