



Concept Note & Preliminary Agenda

Workshop on Accelerating the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063 in Africa: Building Resilient Institutions for the SDGs in the time of COVID-19

Co-organized by APRM and DESA

Cape Town, 28-30 October 2021

1. Introduction

Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU Agenda 2063 depends on strengthening institutions, particularly the capacity of policy makers to design and implement inclusive sustainable development policies and strategies. Institutions should be adequately equipped to provide an enabling environment for all sustainable development actors, as well as provide quality public goods and services to all segments of society. However, across Africa, institutional gaps and challenges hamper efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the AU Agenda 2063. Furthermore, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its unprecedented consequences on African economies and lives are placing further stress on institutions, bringing into sharp relief the importance of coherent and effective public policy and institutional capacity.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) organized a Regional Workshop entitled *Effective Governance for Sustainable Development: Putting Principles into Practice* in Pretoria, South Africa from 30 October to 1 November 2019. The workshop supported countries in their efforts to foster coherence by encouraging alignment of institution-building efforts related to the 2030 Agenda with the objectives of Agenda 2063. UNDESA and the APRM, are organizing a follow-up three-day workshop, with the overall aim of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063.

2. Background

To build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the AU Agenda 2063 requires ensuring that institutions are equipped with capable and sufficient expertise, resources and tools to carry out their mandates; collect

and analyze disaggregated data in a timely manner; pursue evidence-based policy making; facilitate and sustain cooperation among all development actors at all levels; as well as strengthen transparency, accountability and corruption prevention efforts. The 2030 Agenda provides, in SDG 16, for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and for the provision for access to justice for all and the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Agenda 2063 provides for capable institutions and transformative leadership to be in place, with participatory development and local governance.

At present, African countries are confronted with an increasing number of challenges, often consisting of new crises and threats that have a strong bearing on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the AU Agenda 2063 and national development plans and strategies. Often, these crises and threats spread beyond national borders, creating significant social, economic and environmental knock-on effects. One such threat is the COVID-19 pandemic, which is posing an unprecedented health and economic crisis for African countries. Amid a sharp fall in global demand, commodity prices slumped, negatively impacting the performance outlook of African economies. In addition, African countries have also seen sharp falls in tourism revenues, capital and remittances flows, further exacerbating their vulnerability to economic and climatic shocks. Disproportionately high debt-servicing burdens of many African countries will weaken their external balance, potentially increasing the likelihood of debt defaults. Africa's least developed countries as well as small island developing States that are highly dependent on food imports will face the added challenge of ensuring food security during the health and economic crisis.

One key lesson that can be drawn from how countries have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic is to protect the gains made in implementing the 2030 Agenda as well as accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. It is imperative to have governance systems and public institutions that are robust, agile, adaptive, resilient and adequately resourced in both financial and human capital terms. At its 19th session, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) noted that the pandemic presents a unique opportunity to reimagine the role of institutions and policymaking, promote new governance norms and shift from past practices to transformative pathways that strengthen resilience and accelerate action to achieve the SDGs.¹

AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver inclusive sustainable development. The Agenda sets out a long-term development trajectory, guided by the achievement of seven Aspirations. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which is part of the African Union family of organizations, is dedicated to promoting good governance for socio-economic development among the African Union Member States. Encouraging peer-learning among African Union Member States is a crucial objective of APRM's mandate and activities. Given its commitment to promoting good governance across the continent, the APRM focuses on follow-up to Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 that calls for an "Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law" which is closely related to SDG 16 of the 2030 Agenda.

¹ <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/CEPA/19th-Session>

The principles of effective governance for sustainable development, developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), are designed to help interested countries build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, with a view to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Endorsing the principles and framework in July 2018, ECOSOC requested the Secretary-General to take their value in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels in pursuit of the achievement of the SDGs fully into account in responding to the capacity building requests of Member States.

3. Objectives of the workshop

The overarching objective of this workshop is to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063, using as an entry point institutions and follow-up and review processes at the national and regional levels. The workshop will: (a) strengthen institutions and governance for SDGs, including implementation of the CEPA principles, among African countries in partnership with the APRM; and (b) empower countries to turn the lessons learned from the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and other review processes like the APRM, into actionable and effective solutions, in particular by integrating the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into sustainable development strategies and plans. The workshop responds to needs identified at the above-mentioned Pretoria workshop, deepening the discussion that had started there.

The workshop aims to fulfil the following objectives:

- (a) Strengthen institutional capabilities, and that of senior policy makers and public officials, to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including through assessing gaps and challenges in institutional capabilities to accelerate the implementation of both Agendas as well as to effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis and other shocks.
- (b) Strengthen SDG advisory and planning functions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the AU Agenda 2063 in Africa by enhancing the capacity of policy makers, SDG advisers and senior Government officials to develop integrated and coherent development plans and strategies, including at local and regional levels.
- (c) Drive policy coherence and an integrated approach that involves participation at all levels by all actors, including public institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector. This will promote an enabling environment for sustainable development by highlighting the regional organs' role in promoting institutional preparedness and resilience against disease epidemics such the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and disasters.

4. Participation

Participation in the workshop will be open to senior policy makers and public officials from African countries, particularly those that have acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism. Participants will be selected from relevant line ministries, including foreign affairs, finance, planning and economic development and public administration. Resource

persons from the United Nations system, including UNECA and representatives from participating Country Teams, Multi-Country Offices and AU organs, and selected experts from academia and think tanks will also be invited to contribute to the workshop.

5. Contacts

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