

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 - Cape Town, 28-30 October 2021

WELCOME REMARKS - DR GERALDINE FRASER – MOLEKETI

Building resilient institutions is very important as it is one way to help countries achieve accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063, given the background of Covid 19 pandemic. It is important to understand what entails reimagining the role of institutions and shifting towards transformative pathways to strengthen resilience and accelerate action to achieve SDGs. African countries have been facing a myriad of challenges which can hinder their capacity to recover from Covid 19 pandemic in all aspects, for example, the recent coup followed by demonstrations in Sudan, conflict or tension in parts of Ethiopia, instability in northern Mozambique and problems in Eswatini.

The Covid 19 pandemic has widened the income gaps within and between African countries due to travel restrictions and lockdowns and increase in sickness and death amongst other impacts. When Covid 19 pandemic hit these nations in early 2020, there were already existing economic inequalities caused by failure to allocate capital to productive sectors, lack of equity in policy making and inadequate investment in health and education amongst other causes. Studies reveal that on average, income inequality between and within affected countries increased steadily following each pandemic and the effect is higher when the crisis led to contraction in economic activity, as is the case with Covid-19.

The pandemic increased global food insecurity in almost every country by reducing incomes and disrupting food supply chains. A July 2021 report by five UN agencies found that global hunger spiked in 2020, with 2.3 billion people lacking year-round access to adequate food. In September 2021, the World Bank stated that maize and wheat prices were 34% and 6% above their January 2020 levels.

The economic crisis caused by the pandemic is expected to contribute to global unemployment through widening the jobs gap by 75 million by end of 2021, which is likely to fall to 23 million in 2022 if the pandemic subsides. Compared to 2019, an additional 108 million workers worldwide are now categorized as “poor” or “extremely poor” due to the pandemic.

For many African countries, the Covid 19 pandemic increased health, educational and economic inequalities. The economic impact of the pandemic has been worse for people in African and other developing countries, save for a few countries, as generally they did not receive relief grants from their governments unlike their counterparts in developed countries. Further,

the distribution of vaccines has not been equitable with developed countries obtaining a larger share of the vaccines while African and other developing countries struggle to vaccinate their populations. There are many questions however that come to mind. These include the extent to

which institutions in Africa have risen to the challenge of responding to Covid 19 pandemic, have they done enough?

To create an enabling environment for sustainable development of countries, given the Covid 19, it is important to strengthen the capacities of institutions, senior policy makers and public officials. It is also important to strengthen SDG advisory and planning functions, drive policy coherence and ensure an integrated approach that involves participation at all levels by all actors. Further, there are lessons learnt, including innovations that can drive change and accelerate implementation of the agendas by the countries. These lessons come from both within Africa and from the rest of the world. It is therefore important for the institutions to find and share the lessons learnt and good practices adopted during the pandemic.

In building resilient institutions, countries also need to avoid duplication of activities and ensure vertical and horizontal coherence of work. There are also enablers and barriers in the implementation of effective governance for sustainable development in Africa and it is important to understand how barriers can be overcome while enablers are promoted..

Also important is an analysis of planning frameworks adopted by countries to address Covid 19 impact. The weaknesses and strengths of current planning approaches need to be analysed in detail so that planning can play a role in sustainable development and achievement of SDGs. There are also roles played by sectors and levels of Government, the private sector and non-State institutions in achievement of SDGs and these can create partnerships to contribute to the attainment of the agendas.

Monitoring and reporting are important aspects that need to be enhanced and it is important to understand how technologies and data can contribute to effectiveness of these aspects. Further, it is imperative to assess how AU organs have been collaborating and how synergies between AU and UN are created to assist countries in reporting on the agendas.

The APRM Baseline study was therefore carried out to accelerate the attainment of the agenda taking into account, both the content and context of government with a clear view of the world in 2030, having lived through 2020 and 2021 with the Covid-19 pandemic. This experience should lead to a greater realisation that the context within which the SDGs are situated and must not be expressed in static terms, as if, the world ten years from now, will be the same as today.

Emergent signals suggest that ten years from now the world will most certainly be with less and without greater globalisation. It will almost certainly be a polycentric world, be more diffractive, more prismatic and more diversified than World War II. The need for a UN away from hegemony and global cooperation and concertation, not one size fits all solutions and edicts from a superpower, will be even greater than ever.

The baseline study provides an invaluable baseline from which to build. There is a need for governments to work together through the United Nations and/or its regional structures, in this instance the African Union Commission, to address and help resolve issues like climate change, and inequality which have escalated during the past forty years. Global poverty which has in the last decade shown some decline, still remains stubborn and will be assisted by Covid-19 to increase.

There are several findings from the APRM baseline study. On awareness of the UN-CEPA principles, out of 26 experts and key informants, 5 did not give an opinion on awareness of the UN-CEPA principles yet the challenges relating to the implementation of SDGs and Agenda 2063 have answers in the UN-CEPA principles. There is also a discrepancy between awareness, knowledge and understanding of the principles and is a deficit for programme execution of good governance.

The study findings were quite interesting as they also suggest that institutional coherence is required between the CEPA Secretariat, African Missions to the UN, other UN organs like the UNDP, and African Union organs. To note also is the fact that that the least applied UN-CEPA principle is subsidiarity while integrity ranks high amongst the most applied UN-CEPA principles. The least applicable strategy is the promotion of public sector diversity while the most applicable strategy has a tie of three: respect for legality, multi-stakeholder forums and results-based management.

Overall, the impact of COVID-19 on the UN-CEPA Principles is positive. For instance, 66% of the strategies are impacted positively, compared to 34% impacted negatively. The major threat is competitive public procurement as there are rampant allegations of bribery and corruption as regards procurement of personal protective equipment. However, the major opportunity is strengthening the national statistics systems and offices which have been at the forefront of responding to the pandemic.

An approach is necessary that seeks to map strengths to opportunities and counteract weaknesses, while building on a manual of practices for the implementation of the UN-CEPA principles by the APRM. The APRM could guide workshops and discussions on how a SWOT map can be put in operation. Also recommended is a manual fostering awareness and understanding of the principles together with a pilot training programme for public administrators, however delegates can give opinions on this suggestion. Maybe a toolkit and peer learning?

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To conclude, resilient institutions can help countries achieve accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063, especially as the countries are recovering from the impact of Covid 19 pandemic, while some are facing domestic political challenges. The Covid 19 pandemic has widened health, educational and economic inequalities. within and between African countries making it even more difficult to achieve the agendas. This is coupled with uneven distribution of vaccines around the world, negatively affecting African countries' capacity to fight the pandemic.

An enabling environment for sustainable development of countries can be achieved through strengthening the capacities of institutions and SDG advisory and planning functions and ensuring an integrated approach, amongst other measures. Institutions need to find and share the lessons learnt and good practices adopted during the pandemic, promote enablers and find ways to overcome barriers.

Duplication of activities should be avoided while planning, monitoring and reporting are important in sustainable development and achievement of SDGs. The Government, the private sector and non-State institutions can partner in achievement of SDGs while synergies between AU and UN are created to assist countries in reporting on the agendas. The APRM Baseline study suggests that awareness of the UN-CEPA principles is lagging and there is need to increase awareness of the principles through a manual of practices and a SWOT analysis.