

Talking Points

HLPF Special Event on SDG Acceleration Actions to Build Back Better

14 July, 8:00 AM - 8:50AM

Background information

In the lead up to the 2019 SDG Summit, UNDESA set up an online platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>) to capture new and ambitious SDG Acceleration Actions, to support the Decade of Action for SDG implementation by 2030. The UN Secretary-General thereafter launched the platform as a continuing effort to mobilize ambitious SDG actions and track their progress.

Globally, as of 7th July 2020, a total of 171 SDG acceleration actions have been registered on the platform, covering all the 17 SDGs, and including major commitments from United Kingdom, India and Mexico.

- Actions submitted by a significant number of countries (78%) aim to address multiple SDGs leveraging interlinkages, while 22% of initiatives focus on addressing one SDG. Of the 171 registered actions, SDGs 16 and 17 have mobilized the largest number of actions, followed by SDGs 13, 8, 5 and 1.
- With regard to geographical location of initiatives, 39% of registered actions come from Europe; 19% from Latin American and the Caribbean; 14% from Africa; 12% from Asia and the Pacific; 11% from North America; and 4% from West Asia (Middle East).
- In terms of country breakdown by GDP (ppp), 60% of submissions are from high-income countries, while 36% from middle-income countries and 4% from low-income countries. There is a scope for mobilizing more SDG Acceleration Actions from the least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as they account for only 5% and 3% of total actions published.
- Civil society organizations have submitted the majority of SDG Acceleration Actions (33%), followed by Governments (30%), UN entities (18%) and the private sector (9%).

This is an encouraging start, but much remains to be done to encourage increased numbers of new or scaled up SDG actions commensurate with the massive mobilization required to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

ECA's role in promoting SDG Acceleration Actions

- The Economic Commission for Africa has been at the forefront of popularizing the SDG Acceleration Actions initiative in Africa in close collaboration with DESA. During the recently concluded 6th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (held on 24-27 February), a call for submissions was made to 3,000 participants in attendance, which resulted in new submissions from Africa. The Africa Regional Forum is designed to be an action-oriented Forum for Member States and other stakeholders to explore, gain insight into, share and agree on sets of concrete

and workable solutions actions that will enable the countries to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 within the set time frame.

- The call for submissions at the Forum and ECA outreach led to a significant increase in submissions from Africa, with the global share increasing from 8% in May to 14% in July 2020.
- Even though the call at the African Forum resulted in new submissions, ECA will continue with outreach efforts to raise awareness and engage Member states into action for the SDGs implementation, while also encouraging the submission of acceleration actions especially on SDGs noted to have a low submissions count. The SDG Acceleration Actions platform comes as an excellent tool to share actions that exist but that are not visible.
- The SDG Acceleration Actions have great potential: Any new submissions would have a multiplier effect as they will trigger submission and implementation of similar actions by other countries.
- In addition, ECA is consulting with DESA on creating a South-South learning space to exchange lessons learned from implementing SDG acceleration actions for possible replication and technical cooperation intra- and inter-regionally: Together with the issue of monitoring, this would be an important area of follow-up to maximize the impacts of SDG acceleration actions.

Focus on SDG 3 - “Good health and wellbeing”

Although SDG3 is especially critical for Africa at this time that we are fighting COVID-19, ECA noted that a low number of Acceleration Actions on this SDG have been submitted from the continent. ECA is optimistic in light of the several initiatives that have already been unveiled on COVID-19 and will continue reaching out to create awareness on the Acceleration Actions in order to stimulate increased submissions.

Some of the initiatives and partnerships recently undertaken by ECA include:

1. A report titled, “COVID-19: Protecting African Lives and Economies”. This report warned that over 300,000 Africans could lose their lives due to COVID-19. This, as the pandemic continues to impact on the Continent’s struggling economies whose growth is expected to slow down from 3.2 percent to 1.8 percent in a best-case scenario, pushing close to 27 million people into extreme poverty.
2. In May 2020, ECA produced a report and held a global debate on Africa’s COVID-19 lockdown exit strategies. Panellists underscored that lockdowns are costing Africa an incredible \$65 billion a month, but we cannot afford to lose lives either, therefore smart lockdowns are needed, to enable continuing economic activity. The panellists

also noted that “nobody will be safe until everybody is safe, and that the pandemic requires big doses of global cooperation and coordination”

3. In collaboration with Africa’s biggest Telecom operators and ITU, ECA launched an Africa Communication and Information Platform (ACIP) for Health and Economic Action in June 2020, to support National COVID-19 Taskforces, Ministries of Health, and Ministries of Finance, Economy, and Planning, and international development organizations, including Africa CDC and ECA with intelligent information and analysis of live data for decision-making.
4. In collaboration with South Africa and UNESCO, ECA organized a one-week Innovation and Investment Forum 2020 to mobilize investment for innovations shaping global responses to COVID-19 and highlight investment opportunities in different areas of intervention. This online Forum showcased Africa’s innovation and production potential in key areas to fight the pandemic.

In recognition of the economic slowdown triggered by COVID-19, ECA has redoubled its efforts to support Member States to not only address current economic and health issues, but also to prepare to emerge stronger and “Build Back Better” after COVID-19.

In conclusion

Among other dialogue spaces, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) has been an effective regional platform for galvanising continental actions and coordination for implementation of both Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and is therefore a dependable constituency that ECA will rely on to promote the SDG Acceleration Actions.