



# Progress towards Sustainable Development in Africa Summary Report



Economic Commission  
for Africa





**RIO+20**  
United Nations Conference  
on Sustainable Development

# Progress towards Sustainable Development in Africa Summary Report



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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

+	A21	Agenda 21
+	AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
+	ABI	Africa Biosciences Initiative
+	ABNE	African Biosafety Network of Expertise
+	ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
+	ACFS	African Centre for Food Security
+	AEEP	Africa-EU Energy Partnership
+	AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
+	AfDB	African Development Bank
+	AFFM	Africa Fertilizer Development Financing Facility
+	AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on Environment
+	APDev	Africa Platform for Development Effectiveness
+	APINA	Air Pollution Impact Network for Africa
+	APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
+	ASTII	African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Initiative
+	AU	African Union
+	AUC	African Union Commission
+	BDPA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
+	CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
+	CDSF	AU-NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework
+	CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
+	CiD	Centre for Institutional Development
+	COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
+	COP 17	17 <sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
+	DAC	Development Assistance Committee
+	DFID	Department for International Development
+	EAC	East African Community
+	ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
+	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
+	EU	European Union
+	FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
+	FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
+	GEF	Global Environmental Facility
+	GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
+	IBSA	India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum
+	IFI	International Financial Institution
+	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development



+	IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
+	IMF	International Monetary Fund
+	IPPF	Infrastructure Project Preparatory Facility
+	IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
+	MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
+	MfDR	Managing for Development Results
+	MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
+	NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
+	NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
+	NPCA	NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency
+	OAU	Organization of African Unity
+	ODA	Official Development Assistance
+	OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
+	OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
+	PCRD	Policy Framework for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
+	PD	Paris Declaration
+	PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
+	PFIA21	Programme for the Implementation of Agenda 21
+	PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
+	PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
+	RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
+	RECs	Regional Economic Communities
+	Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, June 2012
+	SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
+	SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
+	SOER	State of Environment Report
+	SSC	South-South Cooperation
+	UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
+	UNCTAD:	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
+	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
+	UNDP/RBA	United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa
+	UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
+	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
+	UNEP/ROA	United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Office for Africa
+	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
+	UNCSD	United Nations Council on Sustainable Development
+	UN-RCM	United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism
+	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
+	WB	World Bank
+	WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
+	WFP	World Food Programme

- WSSD World Summit on Sustainable Development
- WTO World Trade Organization

# A. Introduction

## 1. Background

This report was prepared for the Rio+20 UN Summit<sup>1</sup> and presents a synopsis of efforts made by the region, starting from the Earth Summit in 1992 (the Rio Summit), through the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10), to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), scheduled for 20-22 June 2012, and is thus a guide to the extent to which the Africa region has implemented international and regional commitments on sustainable development.

By June 2012, the world would have had precisely two decades to develop strategies and institutions, implement policies and programmes, build partnerships and mobilize resources to move from a conventional to a sustainable development paradigm. This transition is no longer an option, but has become a necessity for the long-term survival of humanity. From 20 to 22 June 2012, people from throughout the world will gather in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in order to revisit issues, commitments and progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 (A21), which resulted from the 1992 Earth Summit, held in Rio from 3 to 14 June 1992, and reinforced by the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (PFIA21) of 1997, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of 26 August – 4 September 2002, which gave rise to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). Mandated by a decision of the UN General Assembly in December 2009, Rio+20 will examine issues ranging from the political to the operational. On the political front, it will rekindle and heighten political commitment to sustainable development and renew the call for regions and countries to do more to show results. On the operational front, it will assess the progress made since the 1992 Summit, assess gaps in the implementation of commitments, and address new and emerging challenges. Discussions will centre on two key themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

The world has come a long way since attention was first drawn to the need to think about the environment and consciously connect the economic, social and environmental components into an integrated development process that is now referred to as sustainable development. Gradually, over the past forty years, global consciousness of and concern for sustainable development have increased enormously in response to the scale of the environmental and social problems that have arisen worldwide as a result of unsustainable development. This concern, which gave rise to A21, PFIA21 and JPOI, has determined the context within which countries must pursue development. While there has been progress towards implementing the commitments made in these frameworks, all the evidence points to the need for countries and regions to do more to achieve sustainable development.

The Rio+20 Conference is taking place at a time when global and regional development challenges are pushing development strategies to the limits of knowledge and innovation. The world

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<sup>1</sup> For further and more detailed information, this report should be read in tandem with other reports commissioned by UNECA for inputs for the region's preparation for the Rio+20 Conference. These include the reports on Institutional and Strategic Frameworks for Sustainable Development; New and Emerging Challenges in Sustainable Development; the Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication – What are the Implications for Africa?; Means of Implementation- Bridging the Gap; and the five review reports for Central, Eastern, North, Southern and West Africa.

today remains highly vulnerable. Natural disasters have continued to devastate regions and countries; the global economy is increasingly unstable and has been plagued by varying degrees of financial, food and fuel crises, depressed growth, rising unemployment, huge debts, and inadequate response to the most significant of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – poverty eradication in developing countries. The developed countries face sovereign debt crises, which require economic reforms, while developing countries are still grappling with challenges in achieving MDG targets, especially eradication of poverty, which is being exacerbated in some countries by declining agricultural productivity, surging food prices and the effects of climate change. For Africa, achieving the targets set for the MDGs is an unavoidable precondition for take-off into sustainable development. A return to the table to take stock of progress in the implementation of commitments on sustainable development in the context of poverty challenges is therefore essential, but it must go beyond simply re-enacting political commitment and adding to the rapidly growing volume of normative prescriptions on sustainable development. The need for results is much greater than it was two decades ago. Rio+20 must therefore point to and pave the way for meaningful results.

It should be recalled that, in 1997, the first five-year review of implementation of A21 showed that little progress had been made. It was clear then that the necessary momentum for accelerated implementation and political commitment was lacking. This led to the organization of WSSD, which represented a further ten-year review of implementation of the outcomes of the 1992 Rio Summit, particularly A21, and was a response to the need to reinvigorate global commitment to sustainable development. While WSSD pointed to pockets of encouraging results during the first decade of implementation of A21, it was obvious that Africa needed to do a lot more. The Africa Review Report on Progress towards Sustainable Development seeks to assess the region's performance since 2002, and cumulatively since 1992.

The Rio+20 Conference is significant in many respects. It will provide an opportunity to assess performance in the implementation of sustainable development commitments. The significance of Rio+20 also lies in the need for renewed political commitment and, very importantly, to address the issue of resources. It has been estimated that developing countries would need about US\$ 600 billion annually, including about US\$ 125 billion to be transferred in grants or on concessional terms from the international community, to implement the sustainable development commitments put forward by A21.<sup>2</sup> With financial and technical resources constituting some of the most constraining means of implementation and only a few African countries having well-articulated national sustainable development strategies, the Africa region faces a very challenging post-Rio+20 development agenda.

## ***2. Purpose, Scope and Methodology of Report***

The purpose of this report is to assess the performance of the African region in the implementation of global and regional commitments on sustainable development for the Rio+20 Summit. In terms of scope, the analysis is based on progress made at the regional and subregional levels. Where necessary, country-level performances are drawn on for concrete evidence of progress, however. This report was prepared on the basis of a desk review of documentation. It draws heavily on reports prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as well as data and information gathered from the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), the United

<sup>2</sup> See iisd, APFED1/02 Ref. 6, January 7, 2002.

Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism-Africa (UN-RCM Africa), regional research institutions and networks, and regional knowledge-sharing platforms, among others.

The assessment of Africa's performance was based on global commitments and obligations as contained in the following frameworks: A21, Rio Summit of 3-14 June 1992; PFIA of 1997; JPOI, WSSD, 26 August-4 September 2002; the MDGs, September 2000; the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, March 2005; and the Accra Agenda for Action, September 2008. The assessment had the following five dimensions: commitments; achievements; financing obligations; support required and received (financial, technical, etc.); and implementation gaps.

## **B. The Concept of Sustainable Development**

### **1. Definition of Concept**

Sustainable development is a well-established concept. This Report is guided by the definition advanced by the Brundtland Commission: development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>3</sup> Sustainable development places challenges facing growth and development within the context of the absorptive or carrying capacity of natural ecosystems and recognizes the limits of such systems. It also places emphasis on intra- and intergenerational equity. In the 1970s, the development concern was economic sustainability, with ecologists pointing to the limits of growth. Since then, concerns have shifted to the sound state economy, which presents a state of equilibrium that allows environmental issues to be addressed. Thus, the concept resulted from a gradual shift in the focus of development theories. In the 1950s and 1960s, development mainly focussed on economic growth and increases in outputs based on efficiency theories. In the 1970s, the growing gap between rich and poor within and between regions resulted in a shift to addressing equity issues, with emphasis on social development and income distribution as key elements. Around the same time, the impact of economic growth on the environment brought into focus the importance of integrating environmental concerns in the development agenda. It is in this context that the seminal work by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), known as the Brundtland Commission, can be argued to have contributed significantly to the recognition of the need to integrate economic, social and environmental concerns in the development process.

### **2. Pillars of Sustainable Development**

The analysis of the concept of sustainable development is generally based on three component pillars, namely, economic, social and environmental sustainability. There is a strong consensus on them in the international community and among development management institutions and development practitioners. While there is general consensus on the three pillars of sustainable development, this Report equally stresses the role and importance of governance and institutions as a fundamental and overarching dimension of sustainable development. The components examined are therefore: Governance and Institutions; Economic Sustainability; Social Sustainability; and Environmental Sustainability. Also of importance in the analysis of progress are interlinkages among the pillars and the means of implementation of the commitments. The gaps in the means of implementation are a measure of how far the region can truly go in meeting its commitments on sustainable development.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1987, the United Nations released the Brundtland Report, which included what is now one of the most widely recognized definitions. “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

## C. Implementation of Sustainable Development Commitments: Progress and Challenges

### 1. *Implementation of Sustainable Development Commitments, 1992-2002*

#### (a) Global Progress – A Synoptic Overview

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) provided a political platform and programmes to drive the transition from conventional to sustainable development. A21 was accepted by more than 178 governments in 1992.<sup>4</sup> The commitments were strengthened by PFIA21. There was evidence that there had been progress towards achieving the goals contained in those framework documents, albeit slower than anticipated. It was also generally acknowledged that the integration of environment and development into a common sustainable development framework remained a challenge. Meanwhile, globally, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and poverty did not decrease at the pace envisaged by the various international commitments.<sup>5</sup> This was also true of social development, in view of the recent outbreaks of unrest demanding political reforms and improvement in the quality of governance.

Thus, progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments during the first decade had three major features. First, the concept of sustainable development prompted a shift from a focus on single, isolated issues to an appreciation of the complex interactions between a wide range of environmental and developmental factors. This marked a transition to sustainability. Second, there was a movement from international top-down normative guidelines to national institution-building and more local-level approaches. Third, the requirements for implementing sustainable development as contained in A21 and PFIA 21 placed emphasis on the development and sharing of scientific and technical knowledge. This resulted in increased interest in research by public and private institutions globally.

By the end of the first decade, more than 85 countries had developed national strategies for implementing A21. Some progress had been made in a number of areas, including the following:

- Development of national strategies, policies, programmes and institutional coordination mechanisms for sustainable development.
- Integration of sustainable development strategies into national plans and planning cycles.
- Integration of sustainable development objectives into sectoral policies and programmes.
- Strengthening of mechanisms for coordination with and among donors at the country level in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
- Improvement of institutional mechanisms for following up international obligations on integrating environmental considerations into development activities.

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<sup>4</sup> Some 85 of the 178 signatories to Agenda 21 have national policies and programmes for sustainable development.

<sup>5</sup> Camilo and Sale (July 2011).



In a number of developing countries, sustainable development principles had been introduced into national frameworks, such as conservation strategies, environmental plans, national vision statements, and national Agenda 21 initiatives.

There was growing awareness and sensitization of the private sector to sustainable development commitments. Companies, especially multinational corporations, had begun to integrate sustainable development obligations into their operations. A growing number had stepped up research on and investment in the development of cleaner technologies. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development had developed a collection of case studies of the sustainability transition for a wide variety of firms.

## (b) Global Challenges in Implementing Commitments

By the time WSSD was held, A21 had had limited success (UN, 2003). Some of the challenges in the implementation of the commitments included:

- *A fragmented approach towards sustainable development that de-coupled environment and development.* The concept of sustainable development integrates environment and development in the long term. Between 1997 and 2002, the approaches to sustainable development were still largely fragmented. This was primarily the result of policies and programmes at the national and international levels that were often short-term, and that inadequately merged environmental and developmental considerations.
- *Lack of integrated national policies and approaches in the areas of finance, trade, investment, technology, and sustainable development.* To a large extent, short-term considerations were placed above the long-term use of natural resources, and policies were compartmentalized.
- *Continuing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.* Unsustainable consumption and production remained rooted in value systems that drove the utilization of natural resources. Such value systems, some of which had deep cultural roots, had proven slow to adapt.
- *Inadequate financial resources and technology transfer from developed countries.* Official development assistance fell short of pledges by the international community, and debt burdens constrained opportunities by many developing countries to address sustainability issues. Additionally, private-sector investment was volatile and concentrated on specific countries and sectors. Technology transfer to developing countries was inadequate.

At the local level, a number of challenges were identified in the implementation of sustainable development objectives. Of these, financial constraints were most prominent. Other factors included lack of support from national governments; lack of empowerment; difficulties in mobilizing community interest; and insufficient knowledge, technical expertise and information. These challenges reflected an urgent need to build capacity to strengthen decision-making on economic, social and environmental issues. At the end of WSSD, it was obvious that a number of fundamentals needed to be in place for the successful implementation of A21, PFIA21 and the then emerging JPOI. Two of these were crucial. First, there was an urgent need for more countries to convert international obligations into national policy on sustainable development. Second, the transition from normative standards to operational programmes needed to be associated with the creation of new knowledge (through scientific and technological research and the integration of indigenous knowledge) as part of a larger societal problem-solving process. Thus, there was a



much greater need for the application of new knowledge and innovative means, and for the reorientation of technology to respond to sustainability challenges.

It was thus obvious that capacity for technological innovation needed to be greatly enhanced in developing countries so that they could respond more effectively to the challenges of sustainable development. The orientation of technology development also needed to change in order to pay greater attention to environmental factors. The relationship between environment and development meant that sustainable development required scientific input to decision-making, as well as the application of technologies. Since 1992, science has been central to addressing A21 challenges in such areas as climate change, global warming, ozone depletion, water quality, land integrity, and air quality.

### (c) **Africa's Performance**

By 2002, more than 95 per cent of African countries had ratified the Rio conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. National policies and laws relating to environment and development had been agreed upon and international environmental treaties had been signed by most African countries. At the national level, a number of countries had made some progress in developing national policies and laws that addressed issues related to sustainable development. Laws had been promulgated on environmental impact assessment; sustainable use of water, forests, and biodiversity; and management of solid wastes. At the local level, a growing number of sustainable development activities were being implemented in some 28 African countries.

During the period, African leaders continued to show commitment by discussing challenges in implementing sustainable development initiatives since the 1997 Rio+5 Forum. The transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) in 2001 represented a significant move towards implementing the sustainable development agenda. AU represents the strongest expression of the continent's aspirations and commitment to enhancing economic, political and social integration in the development of the region in order to reduce poverty and improve quality of life; to promote democracy and good governance; as well as to resolve and manage conflicts.

Progress at the regional level in the implementation of sustainable development strategies was also reflected in the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD, an AU programme that came into being in 2001, is a pledge by African leaders to address the continent's multi-faceted development challenges for the achievement of the MDGs and sustainable development. It recognizes that poverty eradication and improved living conditions for the majority of the population are essential for sustainable development. NEPAD outlines the responsibility of African leaders to articulate national and regional priorities and to manage development by engaging Africans in leading and owning their development.

At the sub-regional level, a number of RECs demonstrated commitment to the implementation of A21 and PFIA 21. A number of key issues were addressed. These included:

- ✦ Regional infrastructure development to promote trade and integration.
- ✦ Land policy reforms to manage diminishing grazing lands and land degradation, and environmental management programmes aimed at protecting and rehabilitating land resources.
- ✦ Formation of working groups to promote sustainable forestry management in response to rapid population growth and increased demand for food and energy resources, which were depleting forest resources.
- ✦ Adoption of regional approaches to integrate water resource development and management in response to recurrent drought, growing water demand and water pollution. These regional initiatives helped to prevent conflicts over shared water resources and improve access to potable water. Some sub-regions also made progress in implementing reforms aimed at sustainable management of water resources.

#### **(d) Challenges**

A number of countries in the region encountered difficulties in gathering and analyzing national and sub-national data on major sustainable development issues, such as natural resource inventories, climate change and desertification. Generally, national-level reporting on these issues was not satisfactory. Other challenges were the need to:

- ✦ Strengthen institutional frameworks in most countries for coordination among ministries and across sectors.
- ✦ Improve coordination among governments, NGOs and the private sector.
- ✦ Develop appropriate legal frameworks.
- ✦ Engage national stakeholders through consultation prior to signing international agreements, and develop appropriate human and institutional capacity to translate these agreements into actionable programmes.
- ✦ Address poverty, illiteracy and lack of awareness in the development and implementation of sustainable development programmes.
- ✦ Manage the increasing gap between population growth and national output.
- ✦ Effectively mainstream gender and women's empowerment in sustainable development.
- ✦ Strengthen leaders' vision and commitment to implementing sustainable development strategies, policies and programmes.

Thus, between 1992 and 2002, much of the progress in African countries towards implementation of sustainable development commitments had been at the normative rather than the operational level. As the international community concluded WSSD 2002, what was obvious and served as an input to the present Report is that Africa needed:

- ✦ Better integration of the principles of sustainable development into national policies and development programmes.
- ✦ Significant progress in the formulation of major strategic and operational programmes for sustainable development.
- ✦ Guidelines for a system of sustainable development indicators that could be applied by all countries for comparability of results. These should be included in official national statistics for the purpose of monitoring and performance evaluation.

- ✦ Strong institutional and research support to strengthen integration of the economic, social and environmental sectors for sustainable development.
- ✦ Reforms in order to include sustainable development issues in educational curricula at all levels.
- ✦ Improved cooperation and coordination among state agencies and all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, in the development of sustainable development policies and strategic plans at national and sub-national levels; intersectoral coordination committees and task forces; and strengthened national councils and committees for sustainable development to guide the development and implementation of programmes for A21 and JPOI commitments.
- ✦ An accessible information network on sustainable development issues.
- ✦ An integrated regional sustainable development framework and action plans across the five subregions and well-articulated continental, regional, national and local sustainable development agendas to drive and guide efforts on sustainable development.
- ✦ More stakeholder engagement through conferences, seminars, workshops and media in order to raise awareness and create space for open discussion of issues.
- ✦ Intervention in capacity-building in order to support the sustainable development process.

## ***2. Implementation of Sustainable Development Commitments since 2002***

In reviewing the region's performance since 2002, this Report presents an analysis based on four elements: governance and institutions, economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability.

### **(a) Governance and Institutions**

Good governance has been defined in various ways. Essentially, it is the manner in which public institutions exercise power in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (World Bank, 1989: 60). Central to this are the process of decision-making and implementation; the capacity of governments to formulate and effectively implement policies and programmes; the space and capacity for political participation, and effective and efficient electoral systems; and peace and security. Some of the key elements include effectiveness and efficiency in public sector management; the accountability and responsiveness of public officials to the citizenry; the rule of law; public access to information; and transparency, equity and inclusiveness (World Bank 1992b: 3; 1994, viii). Good governance analysis examines the relationship between government and markets, government and citizens, government and the private sector, elected officials and appointed officials, branches of government, and between nation states and institutions, among others.

Between 1996 and 2006, 44 elections were held in sub-Saharan Africa, and between 2007 and September 2011, 28 presidential and 28 parliamentary elections were held, with the Democratic Republic of Congo being the most recent (December 2011). Recent political uprisings in North Africa in favour of democratic reform suggest that the region is moving forcefully in the consolidation of democratic governance. The occurrence of political settlement after electoral conflicts through the formation of coalition governments or government of national unity (Kenya and

Zimbabwe) is declining. Developments in the region also show that the incidence of military coups d'état, violence and manipulations associated with elections, as witnessed in Cote d'Ivoire in 2011 and are declining but remain indications of continuing challenges in democratic governance.

Essentially, it can safely be asserted with respect to governance and institutions in the region that:

- ♦ The dark years of personalized power, prevalence of unaccountable and authoritarian governments, violation of human rights, rampant corruption, absence of the rule of law, massive state intervention in the economy and lack of decentralization of responsibilities and resources are receding in Africa. The region is today making strides in the building of democratic institutions and will continue to pursue efforts aimed at good governance within the context of the activities of AU, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and interventions by the RECs, which have been instrumental in addressing issues of conflict and peace management. The APRM has completed a number of country reviews, which have provided important insights into governance and institutional issues, as well as invaluable lessons.
- ♦ The region is fully conscious of other factors that might contribute to the refinement of the good governance agenda. Neo-patrimonial political practices, which are in conflict with the norms of accountability, transparency and formal institutional rule, are one. There is a need to assess how neo-patrimonial power is exercised, how it affects the operation of the state, and how it integrates formal and informal political processes and determines the nature of the social compact between rulers and ruled.
- ♦ Elections have become the means for political change in the region. Nonetheless, there is still enormous room for improvement of the quality of governance and democracy. The region continues to learn lessons from contested elections and the struggle for constitutional reform (Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire), and, on balance, has made satisfactory progress in the entrenchment of democratic processes and institutions and will continue to promote a culture of respect for the rules and election results.
- ♦ Constitutions in Africa remain veritable social contracts, which provide the basis for good political governance. They will continue to be upheld.
- ♦ African countries are encouraging younger generations to participate actively in political processes in order for the voice of youth to be given stronger expression in governance.
- ♦ The region is mindful that there is still a strong perception that economic incentives underlie politics and tend to subvert democratic and developmental outcomes. Moreover, elements of patronage and clientelism continue to exist. There is nonetheless an abundance of good democratic practices, which hold invaluable lessons for democratic order and effective management of resources for sustained improvement in the quality of lives.
- ♦ Corruption still exists and is a reflection of weakness of public accountability mechanisms and suppressed transparency systems. There are, however, strategies and measures that are working. The region will continue to strengthen the demand for public accountability by civil society and other stakeholders in order to establish collective and nationally-owned mechanisms for translating ideas into public policy reforms and change. There is a strong conviction that a viable, strong and well-informed civil society is central to good governance and is an effective partner in the development process.

There is therefore compelling evidence of sustained progress in the pursuit of good governance and the emergence of strong, functional and effective institutions in the region, which are vital for

sustainable development. The governance climate is conducive to sustainable development and the region will continue to resist attempts by the international community to dictate governance issues and make them preconditions for development cooperation and assistance.

## **African UNION-NEPAD – Africa’s sustainable development frameworks**

- The Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)
- Africa’s Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA)
- Environmental Action Plan (EAP)
- Sub-Regional Environmental Action Plans (SREAPs)
- NEPAD Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan (STAP)
- NEPAD Spatial Development Programme (SDP)
- NEPAD Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA)
- AU-NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework (CDSF)
- AU Gender Policy Framework
- Framework for Engendering NEPAD and Regional Economic Communities
- AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa
- Policy Framework for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD)
- AU-NEPAD Health Strategy

Source: NPCA, NEPAD: A Continental Thrust – Advancing Africa’s Development, 2011

## **African UNION-NEPAD action plan, 2010-2015**

The AU-NEPAD African Action Plan, 2010-2015 covers nine sectors that address the region’s sustainable development challenges. Those sectors are:

- Infrastructure – energy, water and sanitation, transport, and information and communication technology
- Agriculture and Food Security
- Human Resource Development – health, education, youth development, and social affairs
- Science and Technology
- Trade, Industry, Market Access and Private Sector Development
- Environment, Climate Change and Tourism
- Governance, Public Administration, Peace and Security
- Capacity Development
- Gender Development

Source: NPCA, NEPAD: A Continental Thrust – Advancing Africa’s Development, 2011

### **(b) Sustainable Economic Development**

#### *(i) Africa’s Economic Growth Performance*

In order to move from conventional to sustainable development, countries need to be on the path to broad-based, quality economic growth. Growth is a prerequisite as it creates the wealth from which sustainable development commitments and targets can be met. Poverty levels and inequalities in incomes must fall progressively and socio-economic infrastructure, which encourages and supports investment as well as efficient social services, must be available to create the conditions for sustainable development. Without these fundamentals, it would be difficult for most countries in the region to make the transition from conventional to sustainable development.



Present statistics place no fewer than six African countries among the world's ten fastest growing economies over the decade 2001-2011 (Angola, 11.1 per cent; Nigeria, 8.9 per cent; Ethiopia, 8.4 per cent; Chad, 7.9 per cent; Mozambique, 7.9 per cent; and Rwanda, 7.6 per cent). Forecasts by the IMF indicate that seven African countries are likely to be among the top ten over the next half decade, 2011-2015 (Ethiopia, 8.1 per cent; Mozambique, 7.7 per cent; Tanzania, 7.2 per cent; Republic of Congo, 7.0 per cent; Ghana, 7.0 per cent; Zambia, 6.9 per cent; and Nigeria, 6.8 per cent). It has been observed that over the past decade, the unweighted average growth rate was about the same for Africa and Asia. Given current prospects, there is a strong likelihood that Africa will surpass Asia in growth in the next decade.

Present statistics also demonstrate that the region's economies have recovered from the slump that resulted from the recent global recession<sup>6</sup> and that growth prospects are very promising. The recovery of African economies has been driven largely by prudent economic policies prior to the crisis, sustained development assistance, earlier debt relief, and financial resources advanced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the AfDB. Other measures have included the adoption of new and expanded social protection programmes; better policy coordination; and the incorporation of the MDGs and performance indicators into African countries' development strategies. Despite the promising development, a number of countries in the region still face structural obstacles to growth that need to be addressed. In 2010, Africa's average growth rate rose to 4.9 per cent, from 3.1 per cent in 2009. The political developments in North Africa were projected to have a depressing effect on the continent's growth, leading to a fall to 3.7 per cent in 2011, with the possibility of accelerating to 5.8 per cent in 2012. Despite the return to growth, generally the region still faces enormous development challenges.

On balance, given the encouraging economic growth performances, African countries have the potential to make the transition from conventional to sustainable development. However, this will require significant policy shifts, as well as financial and technical resources, to cushion the effect and avoid a rise in poverty levels. Specific programmes and policy adjustments will need to be supported over a fairly long period. In this respect, an Africa Sustainable Development Initiative Fund could be part of the response to the financial resource requirement.

#### (ii) *Components of Sustainable Economic Development*

Some of the key components of economic sustainability in which progress has been made are sustainable agricultural development, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable tourism development, sustainable industrial development, sustainable energy development, sustainable land management, and sustainable mineral resources development.

The development of sustainable agriculture has been driven by a number of initiatives, including the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) endorsed by AU in July 2003. CAADP is a much needed impetus to generate the required momentum in the agricultural sector. Sustainable tourism development has been guided by, among others, the NEPAD Tourism Action Plan, and countries' inclusion of tourism in national development strategies, and

<sup>6</sup> An uneven recovery across the region. Southern Africa, which was hardest hit in 2009, is recovering more slowly than other subregions, with an average growth of almost 4 per cent in 2010/2011. East Africa, which best weathered the global crisis, is projected to again achieve the highest growth, with more than 6 per cent on average in 2010/2011. North and West Africa are expected to begin to grow at around 5 per cent and Central Africa at 4 per cent during the same period.

the adoption of the global code of ethics for tourism. Sustainable industrial development is being pursued in the context of the Africa Productive Capacity Initiative (the NEPAD sustainable industrial development strategy), the African Productive Capacity Facility, a number of initiatives to promote cleaner production, and the gradual emergence of Cleaner Production Centres that are being led by Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Efforts at sustainable industrial development are also benefiting from improved metrology, standards, testing and quality institutions, which provide complementary support to the introduction of standards by allowing for proper control of product, health and environmental quality, and by providing the means for standards certification. These institutions also promote best practices and encourage the development of new products through Research and Development (R&D).

The Africa region has also made progress towards diversifying energy development into sustainable and environmentally friendly sources in order to improve access to, and the affordability, economic viability, social acceptability and environmental soundness of energy services and resources. Reforms are being pursued to remove market distortions, establish domestic programmes for energy efficiency, and accelerate the development and dissemination of energy efficiency and energy conservation technologies. It was in support of infrastructure development that, on 24 July 2010, AU, NEPAD and AfDB launched a reinvigorated Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). PIDA provides a vision, a strategic framework and a programme to be implemented up to 2030. The programme activities focus on developing transportation, energy, information and communication technologies, as well as transboundary water basins. Infrastructure and regional integration are key priorities of the AfDB 2008-2012 medium-term strategy. The infrastructure sector alone accounts for more than half of AfDB operations, which exceeded US\$ 6 billion in 2009. The AfDB infrastructure project preparation facility has provided funding for the preparation of several regional projects.

Other programmes that are supporting the region's efforts towards sustainable energy development include the World Bank AFREA programme for the development of renewable energy in sub-Saharan Africa, regional power pools, reforms and awareness campaigns on efficient use of energy, which are showing results in Ethiopia, Tanzania and South Africa. Nigeria has launched an extensive reform of its electricity subsector that will provide for massive privatization of investment. Other initiatives include the Africa Electrification Initiative (AEI) – a three-year AFREA and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)-supported programme launched in 2009 –, the Biomass Energy Initiative for Africa (BEIA), and Lighting Africa, which became effective in 2007. Other actions include actions by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which focus on promoting sustainable use of natural resources and increasing access to affordable energy; the UN-Habitat Energy Scale-Up Initiative; the UNDP/ Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie programme for capacity-building and investment in mini/micro hydropower, implemented in partnership with UNECA, UNIDO and UNEP in 11 African countries; the UNIDO Energy for Productive Use programme; the UNEP African rural energy development project; and regional rural electrification strategies developed in different forms by various RECs, such as EAC, ECOWAS and SADC.

There is a need to build capacity that is responsive to and inclusive of social and environmental factors in investment decisions related to energy projects. Institutional capacity is required for energy planning, analysis and modelling, using specific national and regional data to inform decision-making and policy development. Governments will need to intensify efforts to decen-

tralize the decision-making process for energy investment and projects, and promote greater participation by local government, and regional, communal, and community-based organizations. More action needs to be taken in the area of interregional cooperation. Frameworks and incentives need to be encouraged, developed and strengthened to promote regional integration of energy projects, programmes and systems. With the support of the international community, RECs could promote subregional and regional energy trade as a catalyst for development in the region and in order to improve the share of renewable energy in Africa's energy mix. African governments should promote energy diversification, and remove barriers to fairer competition of all energy resources. International development partners, including the UN System, should improve their financial and technical support in order to enhance implementation of NEPAD's energy initiative.

In the interests of economic sustainability, sustainable land management has encouraged countries in the region to adopt innovative approaches to land management, especially in the area of land rights, with implementation of important regional initiatives such as the Pan African Framework on Land Policy for Securing Rights, Enhancing Productivity and Improving Livelihoods. With the support of UN-HABITAT, land policy and land reform benchmarks and indicators are being developed through this initiative in order to enable policy development and implementation processes and their outcomes to be monitored and evaluated. Several African countries are benefiting from the AUC/ECA/AfDB Land Policy Initiative, and the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), an initiative by UN-Habitat and partners to document best land management practices and tools in the region. Progress has been made on sustainable mineral resources development by the countries in the region in order to reform legislation on the mining industry. These reforms are geared towards stimulating investment, ensuring equity in access to mining rights and resources, empowering disadvantaged communities and groups, and ensuring access to the benefits of the industry by a growing percentage of the population. Mining companies are investing in exploration activities and the exploration budget is growing. Following the entry of China and India into the region's mining sector, there has been a leap in the exploration budget. The outlook for outputs of the various minerals is very promising, based on projections over the period, 2005-2011.

### (iii) *Sustainable Social Development*

During the period under review, the region made progress in the pursuit of social sustainability. Its social development framework is defined by the AU Social Policy Framework, while protocols are defined by RECs. The key elements in the analysis of sustainable social development include the extent of social sector development, poverty eradication, and the level of inequality. The region recorded a number of success stories in the achievement of the MDGs and is on track. A number of countries made good progress, but overall progress is somewhat slow. Nonetheless, the evidence is strong and encouraging that, with the right policy mix, efficient use of resources, improved governance and enhanced and sustained international support, the region will achieve many of the MDGs. At the MDGs Review Summit in September 2010, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the goals by 2015, and a number of promising initiatives to scale up success stories, such as the UNDP MDG Acceleration Framework, are under way.

**Poverty and Inequality:** While there has been respectable economic growth, this has come with an increase in inequality. The UNDP's new inequality-adjusted Human Development In-



dex shows that the human development ratings of African countries have fallen substantially, if adjusted for inequality in wealth distribution. For example, the adjustment reduces ratings for countries such as Central African Republic, Mozambique and Namibia by as much as 40 per cent. Social protection frameworks have also remained weak and ineffective. The recent global financial crisis provided a good test of the vulnerability to shocks of some segments of the region's populations. While efforts were made to implement the AU Social Policy Framework, a number of countries still lack mechanisms for social protection, as basic social security is still beyond the reach of many. Less than five per cent of the working age population is covered by contributory pension schemes, unemployment benefits and other social safety nets. The poor are therefore still exposed disproportionately to the effects of economic contraction and price rises. Worse still, and to the detriment of millions of the region's people, the strong economic growth that has occurred has been largely jobless and without visible poverty-eradication benefits. There are various projections of the region's growth prospects and their implications for the poverty eradication goal. While there is general optimism, UNCTAD projections show that the region's per capita income will grow only 2.7 per cent in 2011 and 2.8 per cent in 2012, both of which are below the 3 per cent threshold considered the minimum to make a dent in poverty. The need for accelerated progress is also underscored by the IFAD 2011 Rural Poverty Report, which points to the fact that sub-Saharan Africa is still home to a third of the world's poor, a number that has risen from 268 million to 306 million over the past decade. The UNDP Multi-dimensional Poverty Index puts the number of poor in the region as high as 458 million. Poverty has become both a rural and an urban phenomenon.

**Education:** Progress in achieving universal primary education has been the remarkable success story in Africa's MDG performance. The majority of countries in the region are on track to achieve the goal by 2015. Outstanding and notable progress has been recorded by Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania through measures that have included abolition of school fees, growth in public investment, and enhanced donor support, especially the World Bank's Education for All Fast Track Initiative. Progress is still needed in some areas, however, including quality of education, completion rates, enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, reform of educational systems and curricula, teaching capacity, and infrastructure. The targets in these areas are far from being achieved in light of the fact that more than 30 million children in the region, most of them girls, still do not go to school, and the number of new teachers needed between now and 2015 equals the present teaching capacity of the region. The challenge of expanding tertiary education, which is essential for sustained growth and development, is even greater: the current enrolment rate is only six per cent, female participation is low, and more than 40 per cent of faculty positions are vacant. Much still needs to be done to derive benefits from investment in higher education, improve strategic planning and reform curricula. More attention also needs to be given to making skills acquired relevant to market needs, as this is of vital importance for employment generation and the reduction of youth unemployment, which is becoming a threat to social stability.

**Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:** The international and regional frameworks for gender equality commitments are the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the MDGs, the AU gender strategy, and strategies adopted by RECs. Thus far, there has been measurable progress in the implementation of these commitments. The gender equality and women's empowerment dimension of social sustainability saw the Protocol [to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights] on the Rights of Women in Africa expanded to include the definitions contained in the Declaration on the Elimination

of Violence against Women, in particular those related to economic violence or harm. Twenty-nine African countries have ratified the Protocol; in October 2010, AU launched the African Women's Decade. There was steady, albeit tardy, progress towards universal primary education, the empowerment of women, and gender parity in educational enrolment; significant and encouraging improvements in the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, but with a visibly low rate of participation by women in the executive, the judiciary, traditional and other public spheres across the region.

Some progress has been made in efforts to implement gender equality commitments through strengthening social policy and enacting laws to promote women's socio-economic rights. However, ten countries still maintain reservations to the CEDAW and periodic reporting to the UN Committee on CEDAW, with some countries not having reported at all since 1992; 18 of the 28 countries practising female genital mutilation have outlawed the practice; Since 2007, six countries have developed National Action Plans on women, peace and security; and development partners continue to strengthen their support in socio-economic sectors aimed at addressing vulnerable groups and promoting gender equality.

There is a continuing upward trend in political participation by the region's women, who now hold 18.5 per cent of parliamentary seats, up from 15 per cent in 2010. Women's representation in national and regional parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa is now higher than in most other developing regions. Most countries are on track to achieve gender parity in primary education by 2015. A growing number of countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso and Senegal, have mainstreamed gender concerns into their national development plans and poverty reduction strategies. Over the last five years, Lesotho has achieved the greatest overall improvement by any nation measured by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.

In spite of the improvements, challenges and constraints remain. There is a paucity of gender-disaggregated data, gender budgeting is still not adequately encouraged, there are significant gender gaps in health, employment and wages, and cultural barriers still block effective utilization of women's talents. Labour market conditions restrict access to employment and sociocultural barriers are still major impediments to the participation of the vast majority of women, who face income and job insecurity. Women constitute a majority of the agricultural workforce in the region, producing about 80 per cent of the region's food, yet they own less than one per cent of the land on which they work. They, along with their children, are often the first to suffer the effects of economic downturn, drought, famine and violent conflict.

The mechanisms for the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment still remain weak at all levels, lacking adequate capacity, authority and funding. Line ministries have not reached gender equality targets due to low levels of resource allocation. Gender concerns continue to be treated rhetorically or as separate women's projects. Gender disaggregated data and information from gender-sensitive indicators are often not collected, lost in the compilation of published data, or simply not used.

The region needs to support women's press and communication initiatives. Women should also be allowed to play a prominent role in formulating and implementing sustainable development policies. NEPAD needs to ensure that economic empowerment of women is one of the priorities of its social and economic agenda. Culturally sensitive programmes must be initiated that entrust

men and boys with responsibilities to promote gender equality and girl/woman empowerment. The need to generate quality gender disaggregated data in order to effectively monitor progress in achieving gender equality is also essential. Development partners should ensure that adequate finances are allocated to supporting African partners in translating gender equality commitments into concrete policies, actions and programmes.

There is a need to adjust human development ratings for gender equality in order to encourage countries in the region to do more to show results. Achieving the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment is not the crucial aim of gender equality commitments, which is to draw on the vast skills, knowledge and energy of women, currently grossly underutilized, in order to promote growth and development.

**Health:** The race to reduce infant and maternal mortality by 2015 is being won in the region, but has required enormous efforts in order to overcome obstacles. There have been impressive results in infant mortality reduction. Mozambique has achieved a reduction of over 70 per cent, Malawi one of 68 per cent, and Niger one of 64 per cent. Maternal mortality rates have also fallen. Countries such as Burundi, Cape Verde and Egypt have reported significant reductions. Efforts are therefore yielding good results and need to be boosted. It is in this context that the region's leaders at the AU Summit in July 2010 pledged to increase financial and political support for female and child health and to continue to work closely with interventions such as the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA).

The fight against malaria has also progress significantly. The results have been astounding: distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets has protected more than 578 million people at risk of contracting malaria in sub-Saharan Africa; 11 countries in the region have reduced by some 50 per cent the number of confirmed malaria cases, and the majority of countries are now on track to rolling back the advance of the disease by 2015.

Significant progress has also been made in the elimination of river blindness, polio, measles, guinea-worm disease and mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. Routine immunization is progressing across the region and several new vaccines, including for meningitis and pneumococcal disease, are being introduced and yielding beneficial results. These results have been possible in the region as a result of government policies and programmes, and support from the international community through innovative funding mechanisms, such as the Global Alliance for Vaccinations and Immunization (GAVI) and the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and interventions by agencies such as UNAIDS, WHO, and the World Bank, as well as support for successful regional health programmes, such as the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC), SMS for Life, and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, among other, silent, initiatives that are yielding beneficial results.

The achievement of health targets by 2015 is within reach, if African governments and the international development community honour their pledges. There is indeed substantial goodwill within the donor community. In June 2010 leaders at the G8 Summit pledged to mobilize US\$ 5 billion to accelerate progress in the achievement of MDGs 4 and 5 as part of the Muskoka Initiative to cut down maternal and new-born mortality in poor countries. The MDG Review Summit in September 2010 saw world leaders and other development stakeholders pledging to provide a total of US\$ 40 billion for health over the next five years. The replenishment meeting of

the Global Fund in October 2010 raised US\$ 11.7 billion for the period 2011-2013, an increase from US\$ 9.7 billion for the 2008-2010 programme phase. New commitments to GAVI were announced by a number of donors ahead of the replenishment meeting. African governments in 2001 signed the Abuja Declaration, which enjoined countries in the region to allocate 15 per cent of their public expenditure to health.

The challenge is to turn these pledges into actual disbursements. While the region looks forward to the actualization of the financial commitments by the donor community, it is critical that governments honour the pledge they made in the Abuja Declaration. At present, statistics show that some 19 countries spend less on health than they did when they signed the Declaration in 2001. Insufficient funding remains the most significant threat to health systems in the region. Resources are needed to enable health systems to respond effectively to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases, which include cancers, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, which are set to rise over the next two decades.

**Access to Water and Sanitation:** Access to water and sanitation is a key element in sustainable social development. It was in recognition of its importance that the eThekweni Declaration was made by African leaders to allocate 0.5 per cent of gross domestic product to water and sanitation, and that the African Ministers' Council on Water and the African Water Facility were set up. In order to guide the region's investment, AfDB, which implements a Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative, had estimated that an investment of US\$11 billion annually is required to meet the region's drinking water and sanitation needs. Emphasis on water and sanitation was also driven home in July 2010 when the UN General Assembly declared access to clean water and sanitation a human right.

Progress is being made towards attaining the goal of halving the proportion of the region's population without sustainable access to clean drinking water by 2015. At present, 26 countries are on track to attaining this goal, while nine are expected to meet the MDG target of halving the proportion of the population without sustainable access to basic sanitation by 2015. These countries are Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Rwanda, Botswana, Angola, South Africa and Egypt. At present, 60 per cent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa has access to improved sources of drinking water and less than half has access to basic sanitation facilities. These statistics point to the need to step up investment, as the challenge is that not only some 40 per cent live in water-deprived areas but that the amount of water available per person in the region is below the global average and is declining due to falling levels of groundwater as a result of climate change and over-exploitation. Present investment by governments, which stands at 0.2 per cent of GDP as against the 0.5 per cent put forward by the eThekweni Declaration, means the target of US\$ 11 billion is not being met. Also required is improvement in the governance of the water sector; better management of national sources, the 63 shared water basins, and the irrigation needs of the agricultural sector; and capacity to drill for water and maintain water infrastructure, especially in the communities.

**Food Security and Hunger Reduction:** Countries in the region have made progress towards meeting the MDG target of reducing extreme hunger by 2015. In spite of that, the region remains the most food-insecure in the world. Hunger is still a major challenge and this is being compounded by rising food prices. Food prices are now higher than at any time since 1984 and could serve as a trigger for social unrest. The region is making efforts to address the food insecurity and hunger challenge through a number of agricultural initiatives, including CAADP, under



which 29 countries have signed up to committing ten per cent of their national budget to agriculture and seeking to achieve a minimum six per cent growth rate in agricultural productivity. Also at the regional level is the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), which is helping to initiate financial partnerships and risk-sharing instruments with a number of institutions in order to mitigate the risk of lending by commercial banks and other financial institutions to smallholder farmers, and value chains that support them. International responses have also been robust. These include the G8 L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme, and the World Bank's Global Food Crisis Response Programme. There are attempts to create more transparency around food stocks held by large exporters in order to avoid panic caused by market uncertainty about the availability of commodities.

As the region's food insecurity and hunger challenge existed before the rise in food prices, there is a need to address structural barriers to food security. Some of these, which the Rio+20 summit will need to revisit, are the disadvantages the region faces with respect to international trade rules and agricultural subsidies; constraints to productivity arising from poor infrastructure; insufficient agricultural research and extension services; and lack of improved seeds, fertilizers and plant protection material. Other factors include poor soil and water management; poor access to credit and marketing services; inefficient and wasteful agricultural value chains; and loss of production due to conflict and diversion of food products to the production of biofuels. In order to address the food insecurity challenge, the region needs to scale up investment in agriculture. African countries must meet the minimum level of investment put forward under CAADP. Focus on smallholder farmers needs to be intensified.

**Youth Unemployment:** Every year, some ten million new graduates join the labour market in the region. Although Africa has in recent years been experiencing impressive economic growth, it has not generated meaningful employment. The result is growing youth unemployment, which has implications for social development. Youth unemployment is now a major social development challenge and was one of the factors in the demand for political reforms that swept through much of North Africa in early 2011. In addition to rising unemployment, labour markets have not been flexible enough to absorb the growing supply of young workers. Given the region's rapidly growing population, the demographic pressure on labour markets is set to continue in many African countries.

The dynamics and causes of youth unemployment in Africa are complex and multidimensional. Youth (those between 15 and 24) represent more than 60 per cent of the region's total population and account for 45 per cent of the total labour force. Unlike other developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa's population is becoming younger, with youth as a proportion of the total population projected at over 75 per cent by 2015 due to the high fertility rate underlying the demographic momentum. It is expected that this increase in the number of youth will not decline for 20 years or more. The incidence of youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be over 20 per cent. It is also estimated that about 133 million youth (more than 50 per cent of the youth population) in Africa are illiterate. Many youth have few or no skills and are therefore largely excluded from productive economic and social life. Those with some education often have skills irrelevant to current demand in the labour market, this in a context in which educational and skill requirements are increasing. The result is millions of unemployed and underemployed youth. University graduates are the most affected by youth unemployment. This has led many to question the capacity of higher education institutions in the region to provide youth with skills and knowledge adapted to the needs of the labour market. The link between youth unemployment

and social exclusion has been clearly established: inability to find a job creates a sense of vulnerability, uselessness and idleness among young people and can heighten the attraction of illegal activities. For many young people today being without work means being without the chance to work themselves out of poverty.

By including youth unemployment in the MDGs, the Millennium Declaration had an important and catalytic impact on drawing international attention to the problem of unemployed young people. Under target 16 in Goal 8, the resolution “to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work” is the only explicit reference to youth in the MDGs (UNDP, 2006). The International Labour Organization (ILO) recently released a frightening report on unemployment worldwide. It indicated that more than 1.5 billion people, or half the world’s working population, were in vulnerable or insecure jobs and that 205 million workers were unemployed last year. According to the ILO, the official figure is probably an underestimate because many people have given up trying to find a job. The most unsettling aspect of the report is that 77.7 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are unable to find work. This is particularly a major challenge for the region. There are 200 million Africans in this age bracket, comprising more than 20 per cent of the region’s population. Worldwide, youth account for 43.7 per cent of total unemployed, although they account for only 25 per cent of the world’s working population. In sub-Saharan Africa, about 60 per cent of the unemployed are youth, and an average of 72 per cent of youth live on less than US\$ 2 a day.

The region is making efforts to rise to the challenge of youth unemployment, albeit inadequately, given the challenges facing growth. The 17th African Union Summit, held from 30 June to 1 July 2011 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, was devoted to the theme of “*Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*”. Some recent major AU meetings, in particular those of March 2010, April 2011 and July 2011, successively provided opportunities to raise themes related to youth unemployment. These touched on employment policies and their financing with a view to reducing unemployment; social policies and the promotion of youth employment; and the acceleration of youth empowerment. The declaration on youth employment in Yaoundé, Cameroon, at the 8th Session of the AU’s Labour and Social Affairs Commission, called upon the 17th Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government to promote youth employment. The determination of AU leaders to improve the employment situation will undoubtedly reinforce the commitment made in Yaoundé by Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs, AU employers and trade unions to reduce unemployment of young people and women by at least two per cent a year over five years, and to harmonize labour market information systems by supporting the development, implementation and evaluation of employment policies. The 17th Summit provided an unprecedented opportunity for African Heads of State and Government, as well as young men and women, to participate in an open and frank debate on sustainable solutions to the concerns of the region’s youth. Some of the proposals put forward included: increased investment in education and training; increased investment to improve the integration of young people into economic, political and social life; introduction of vocational training that meets labour market needs; and promotion of grass-roots participation in decision-making processes. These strategies could form “a development incubator”, by reducing social deprivation, improving the competitiveness of the education system and promoting youth empowerment.

**Strengthening Indigenous Knowledge:** Some responses to social development challenges reflect innovations in the use of knowledge that improve the quality of life of a people or region. This is where indigenous knowledge connects with social development. Communities identify

themselves easily with indigenous knowledge systems that have enabled them to live in harmony with their environments for generations. These knowledge systems are important tools in environmental conservation and natural disaster management. The global scientific community acknowledged the relevance of indigenous knowledge at the World Conference on Science, held in Budapest, Hungary from 29 June to 1 July 1999, and endorsed it by recommending that scientific and traditional knowledge should be integrated, particularly in the environment and development field. UNEP recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge in the conservation of natural resources and management of natural disasters (UNEP, 2008). Knowledge and access to information are essential for effective environmental management and have significant impacts on the economy and the livelihood choices people make. Indigenous knowledge systems based on centuries of observation and continuous development in response to changing social and environmental conditions are an important resource for many rural people.

Indigenous knowledge, particularly agricultural and environmental knowledge, gained international recognition after UNCED in June 1992. A21 emphasizes that governments and inter-governmental organizations should respect, record and work towards incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into research and development programmes for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainability of agricultural and natural resource management systems. Other international documents, such as the 1980 “World Conservation Strategy” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), also paved the way for recognition of the important role played by indigenous knowledge in biodiversity and human development. The value of indigenous knowledge systems in facilitating development is now gradually being recognized by governments and development agencies (UNEP, 2008).

Although in the implementation of sustainable development commitments little attention has been paid to growing and applying indigenous knowledge in the region, this knowledge is still very much intact among indigenous (or local) communities in many parts of Africa. A survey by UNEP (2006) of four countries – Kenya, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania – provided invaluable information on the application of indigenous knowledge in environmental conservation and natural disaster management. The study found that indigenous knowledge systems had enabled the various communities in those countries to live in harmony with their environment for generations, and the systems are important tools in environmental conservation and natural disaster management. Nearly all the communities had powerful structures that exercised authority to ensure smooth compliance with the observances and rules of indigenous knowledge. The study provided useful insights into how those communities interacted with their environment. It documented the various ways the communities relied on indigenous knowledge to sustainably utilize their natural resources. The indigenous knowledge systems provided them with a variety of options and innovations for dealing with the challenges of nature conservation and disaster management in the course of making a living. The knowledge systems were particularly evident in agricultural production, food preservation and storage, health care, and in dealing with natural disasters.

Through indigenous knowledge, communities in the region have been able to protect and manage ecosystems, face many natural hazards, grow drought-resistant and early-maturing indigenous crop varieties, wild fruits and vegetables, practice wetland cultivation, livestock diversification and splitting that have enabled them to survive food, nutrition, health-care and climatic challenges with little or no support from the outside world. The communities were well aware of the disasters that faced them and in most cases had the knowledge and administrative structures to

cope with them. At the same time, the communities knew that a well-conserved environment helped them reduce risks associated with natural disasters. Each community had an array of early warning indicators and well-developed structures through which the wisdom of the community was applied to deal quickly and efficiently with disasters.

With the growing number of African governments and international development agencies now recognizing that local-level knowledge and organizations are a vital foundation for participatory approaches to sustainable and cost-effective development, the region stands to gain much by exploiting its application on a much wider scale. Strengthening the framework for developing, applying and sustaining indigenous knowledge will prevent loss of this asset, which is invaluable to social development. The region's older generation, the traditional custodians of indigenous knowledge, are dying off without leaving written records of their knowledge, at the same time as rapid environmental, socio-economic and political changes are occurring in many communities in the region, which place indigenous knowledge in danger of extinction and obliteration by globalization and new technologies (UNEP, 2008).

There is a role for indigenous knowledge in sustainable development, especially social and environmental sustainability. Consistent with what UNEP (2008) has recommended, such knowledge needs to be documented and shared through indigenous knowledge databanks and networks. Indigenous knowledge should be incorporated into national development plans and included in educational curricula. Efforts should also be made to integrate indigenous knowledge systems with modern knowledge, and appropriate laws enacted to protect intellectual property in indigenous knowledge (UNEP, 2008).

#### (iv) *Sustainable Environmental Development*

The pursuit of environmental sustainability has been an essential part of the region's effort to reduce poverty, as environmental degradation is inextricably and causally linked to problems of poverty, hunger, gender inequality, and health. Livelihood strategies and food security of the poor often depend directly on functioning ecosystems and the diversity of goods and ecological services they provide. Insecure rights to environmental resources, as well as inadequate access to environmental information, markets, and decision-making, limit the capacity of the poor to protect the environment and improve their livelihoods and well-being (UNECA, 2008).

More than 30 per cent of global dry lands are located in susceptible dry land regions in North Africa, the Sahel and the southern part of Africa. They cover almost two billion hectares in 25 countries, representing 65 per cent of the continent's land mass. Over 400 million people live in the dry lands, the majority of them the rural poor with an annual population growth rate of three per cent. The dry land is under threat from deforestation, soil erosion, nutrient mining, recurrent drought and climate change, potentially resulting in land degradation and desertification, and aggravated poverty. Sustainable agricultural innovations are key to limiting adverse impacts on the environment and on the livelihoods of rural populations (ECA/OECD, 2011). Without complementary societal and government action, markets can be weak on environmental sustainability, and therefore will tend to create the conditions for environmental degradation (UNDP, 2010).



In order to promote environmental sustainability, the Joint Secretariat of AUC, ECA and AfDB has been instrumental in initiating and launching regional initiatives, including the Land Policy Initiative and the ClimDev-Africa Programme, which seek to advance Africa's sustainable development agenda. NEPAD has a number of major frameworks or programmes, which integrate environmental concerns in sustainable development. These include CAADP; the Environmental Action Plan (EAP); the Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan (STAP); the Framework for Water and Energy; the Capacity Development Strategic Framework (CDSF); and Frameworks on Education, Health and Information and Communications Technology.

The African region is making progress in addressing environmental issues in its quest for economic and social development. Countries in the region are signatories to a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), which provide frameworks for addressing environmental challenges. They are party to at least 30 conventions at the global level dealing with various aspects of environmental management and related areas, including trade, which impacts directly on environmental sustainability. Most countries in the region have signed the three international conventions adopted at UNCED in 1992, namely, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Other MEAs to which African countries are party include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and those dealing with international trade in endangered species, the management of migratory species, hazardous waste management, cultural heritage, ozone depletion, biosafety, invasive alien species and forest management.

Also of vital importance are agreements reached in the area of trade, especially the World Trade Organization (WTO) and related agreements on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), and sanitary and phytosanitary provisions. Several agreements on agriculture, such as the International Convention for the Protection of Plants, have important implications for biodiversity and the sharing of benefits arising from its use. Human rights and development agreements adhered to also help the region to rethink its strategies for responding to environmental issues.

At the regional and subregional levels, the region has endorsed a number of agreements and protocols for the protection and management of the environment. These promote collaboration and harmonization of national laws, policies, strategies and programmes. Foremost among them is the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (ACCNRR) adopted by AU in 2003. Many subregional organizations have spearheaded the development of environmental management policy and law. There have been important multilateral agreements, which include cooperation in the management of the region's 63 shared river basins, wildlife and forests.

Implementation of commitments has been guided by institutions set up at the regional and subregional levels. The AU, through its NEPAD agenda, remains the region's most decisive response to the issues of sustainable development. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) is one platform that has been instrumental in determining the region's common position on environmental and climate change issues and providing the region's negotiators and leaders with negotiating strategies and information. Its activities have contributed to the development of collaborative approaches to environmental management in the region. The AU Con-

stitutive Act provided for the establishment of a specialized technical committee on natural resources and the environment. The Pan-African Parliament, established in 2004, has a permanent standing Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment. By spurring implementation efforts, the region has continued to signal its political commitment to addressing environmental issues, as is evidenced by a number of recent endorsements, including the 13<sup>th</sup> AMCEN Session of June 2010, the 7<sup>th</sup> African Development Forum, the AU Summit in January 2011, and the Conference of African Ministers of Economy and Finance (CAMEF) in March 2011.

Efforts to involve other stakeholders, including civil society, are helping to broaden the consultative base through a number of initiatives. These include UNEP's Global Civil Society Forum and Global Women's Assembly on Environment. These and other initiatives in the region have played key roles in widening the arena for the expression of public concerns, interests and priorities in environmental management and governance issues. The participation of civil society played a valuable role in the development of AU protocols on critical issues of environment and development concern, including biosafety, genetic resources and women's rights.

The region has also made progress in the development of partnerships with governments and the business sector in response to environmental issues. These have led to the establishment of transboundary natural resource management areas, management of protected areas and implementation of environmental impact assessments. Cooperation has also been stepped up in the management of shared water resources, malaria and chemicals; peace-building; and the pursuit of food and nutrition security.

Implementation of environmental sustainability commitments has seen progress in a number of areas, including growth in the practice of sustainable and organic agriculture, as Malawi and Uganda have shown; impressive growth in the development of renewable energies in countries such as Egypt and Kenya; and planned massive investment in solar energy in South Africa. Significant ecosystem restoration and sustainable tourism initiatives have taken place in Namibia and Rwanda, and improved forest management in the Republic of Congo and Gabon. The Republic of South Africa is at present setting up the South African Renewables Initiative (SARI) to scale up production of renewable energy in the country. National Cleaner Production Centres (NCPCs) have been set up in some countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Metrology standards, testing and quality institutions are being strengthened or established to provide complementary support for health and environmental quality programmes.

In spite of the progress in the implementation of commitments around the environmental pillar, there are monumental challenges requiring urgent attention. Among the most visible is the challenge of achieving balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in planning, budgeting and implementation of plans and programmes. There is a pressing need for national and subregional economic policies adequately to address environmental consequences. Mechanisms and administrative systems dealing with environmental issues are still weak. There is still insufficient public awareness about the real causes and magnitude of environmental problems and the consequences of not dealing with them. Also worthy of mention is inadequate forecasting of emerging environmental problems.

The region has enormous potential to benefit from an environmentally friendly development strategy. In order to make a significant leap, however, it will need to undertake the following:

- Strengthen implementation capacity; review policies and development programmes that are harmful to the environment, while encouraging others that are beneficial, such as a public procurement policy that favours environmentally friendly behaviour by the private sector.
- Empower environment ministers to achieve the full potential of their portfolios.
- Pursue improvements in international environmental governance for an improved response to Africa's sustainable development needs and to this end explore the possibility of an enhanced role for and enhanced effectiveness of UNEP in the region.
- Step up financing and other means of implementation for environmental sustainability initiatives.
- Encourage the development and application of measures of growth performance that adjust for environmental degradation.
- Invest and participate in collaborative research geared towards improving understanding of how ecosystems such as forests and marine ecosystems can generate multiple benefits to support improved livelihoods.

### 3. *Interlinkages*

The three pillars of sustainable development are strongly interlinked and this has far-reaching implications for policies and processes in sustainable development, which need to be handled with considerable care. UNEP (2006) defines interlinkages in the context of the environmental sector as the processes and workings of environmental management which reflect the systemic characteristics of ecosystems and environmental problems, and the interconnection of human processes and environmental processes at all levels of human and natural ecosystem interaction. Natural resources, which consist of land, the atmosphere, water, biodiversity and human activities, function as a system and are all linked in a complex web of interactions and feedback. Sustainable development challenges are also interlinked across spatial, thematic and institutional processes. Changes in the natural resource base and challenges to 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.

Drivers are the pressures imposed on natural resources by human activities, including land use/cover change (e.g. agricultural expansion or reduction, urban expansion, land and soil degradation, deforestation, habitat fragmentation); harvests and resource consumption, including over-exploitation (e.g. tree-felling, mining, fishing and harvesting of species); species introduction/removal (e.g. invasive, genetically modified organisms, removal of fish); climate variability and change (e.g. temperature, precipitation, sea level, extremes, forest fires); air pollution (e.g. greenhouse gases, acidification, CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment); external inputs (e.g. irrigation, fertilizers, pest control chemicals); natural, physical and biological processes (e.g. volcanoes, evolution); and disasters such as war and climate change. There is an intricate relationship among these drivers, which in turn has effects on the natural resource base. Understanding these interlinkages helps in the design of policies and programmes to address sustainable development challenges.

The region's development challenges call for an interlinkages approach to sustainable development in order to facilitate an effective response to complex human-ecological systems. In order to facilitate more effective compliance with international conventions, treaties, protocols and agreed development goals, the interlinkages approach highlights areas for cooperation and joint programming among actors, countries, subregions and regions. Adopting an interlinkages approach to policy formulation and programme development 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 interlinkages approach offers an opportunity for better coordination and harmonization of policies in order to eliminate any contradictions, avoid overlaps, and boost capacity to implement sustainable development.<sup>7</sup> When fully implemented, the sustainable development through interlinkages approach results in a reduction of conflicts and duplication of work, a strengthening of complementarities and synergies, and enhanced exploitation of development opportunities.

The complexity and magnitude of the interlinkages among the pillars of sustainable development require that policymakers prioritize those interlinkages that require immediate attention and that will optimize growth and well-being as a combination of interrelated actions. Such actions require enhanced institutional systems through policy harmonization and monitoring; increased scientific understanding of the interlinkages through science, technology and innovation; and adaptive development governance.

The Africa region is fully aware of the mutually interdependent and reinforcing nature of the pillars of sustainable development and the significance of such interlinkages. It is this realization that underlies NEPAD's preference for an interlinkages approach to sustainable development in the region. Little progress has been made to foster a balanced integration of the pillars in national and subregional integration strategies, however. In order to exploit fully the benefits of interlinkages, the region needs appropriate institutional and strategic frameworks and supporting systems that promote a holistic and integrated approach to development challenges. Global, regional and national level strategic responses to the MDGs provide invaluable opportunities to harness the synergies of the pillars of development. This report calls for strengthened interlinkages among the pillars in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

#### **4. *Bridging Implementation Gaps and Means of Implementation***

The means for the implementation of sustainable development commitments are the financial and technical resources required to achieve specified development results. These consist of finance (domestic, external – official development assistance, foreign direct investment and debt relief, among others), capacity development (including education), regional integration, trade, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and South-South Cooperation, among others. At UNCED, countries committed to financing the implementation of A21 from domestic resources augmented by assistance from development partners. This was reiterated by the outcomes of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, South Korea in December 2011. Meanwhile, developed countries have continued to reaffirm their commitment to reaching the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance.

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<sup>7</sup> IISD interlinkages portal: <http://www.iisd.ca/sd/interlinkages/interlink2/>

**Finance for sustainable development:** Before the global financial crisis, most African governments made substantial progress in raising the ratio of government revenue to GDP, which in SSA increased from an average of 21 per cent to more than 27 per cent between 2001 and 2008. Home remittances from the region's diaspora communities was also a major source of domestic savings, contributing about US\$ 40 billion in remittances to families and communities back home every year (IFAD, 2009). ODA rose to US\$ 46 billion in 2010. This was a record level, but still fell short of the global commitments made in 2005 (ECA and OECD, 2011). In 2010, foreign direct investment flows declined from US\$ 72 billion in 2008 to US\$ 58.6 billion in 2009. Inflows to the region's extractive industries increased, however. External capital inflows contributed significantly to domestic investment and government spending in many countries in the region.

Some innovative financing mechanisms that are beneficial to the region were put in place to support sustainable development in developing countries. These included: UNITAID, the International Finance Facility for Immunization (IFFIm) for the GAVI Alliance (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization), Advance Market Commitments, the Voluntary Solidarity Contribution for UNITAID, the Global Fund, Debt2Health, the Carbon Market, and Socially Responsible Investments.<sup>8</sup> Not enough progress has been made on climate finance, however. The Green Fund, which was first included in the Copenhagen Accord, was established at COP-16 in Cancun. COP-17 in Durban committed to making the Fund fully operational in 2012. Furthermore, flows of fast-start finance, to which developed countries committed at COP-15 in Copenhagen, have yet to pick up, and persistent lack of transparency in country allocations and selection of activities remains.

**Development effectiveness:** Developing countries are increasingly discussing their national development strategies with their parliaments and electorates; development partners are increasingly aligning their aid to national strategies and are working towards streamlining their efforts towards harmonizing practices (OECD, 2008). There has been progress in untying aid, improving the quality of developing countries' public financial management systems, strengthening the quality of technical assistance, and promoting mutual accountability. With the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness due to be phased out in June 2012, one of the outcomes of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the region will need to explore mechanisms for Africa's representation and participation in monitoring implementation of the outcomes of the Busan Forum in the context of the emerging Global Partnership for Development Effectiveness Cooperation.

The region's governments have shown strong commitment and political leadership in relation to development effectiveness, improved consultation, coordination, and giving African development a common voice. In spite of the promising developments, the integration of official development assistance into country budgets is still poor. Furthermore, there has been limited progress in improving the quality of national development plans, and even in countries that have made progress, linking strategies with budget resources remains a challenge. Development partners need to step up their efforts to coordinate missions and studies. The region and its development partners need to strengthen and effectively implement frameworks to monitor and account for results.

**Technology development and transfer:** The most significant development in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the region in the last decade is the establishment of the NEPAD

<sup>8</sup> Douste-Blazy, P, Innovative financing for development the i- 8 group Leading Innovative Financing for equity [L.I.F.E.] <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/documents/InnovativeFinForDev.pdf>



Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA), and the AU African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), which oversees implementation of the CPA. The CPA identifies key priority areas for Africa to work on, and the strategies and policy processes for their implementation. The UN supports NEPAD science and technology through its UN science and technology cluster, consisting of more than ten agencies working through the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) coordinated by UNECA, in close collaboration with AUC and AfDB. Recent focus on science-based sustainable modernization of agriculture and rural transformation through CAADP and AGRA has been very encouraging. Several countries are participating through plans for modernizing agriculture or agriculture-led industrialization strategies. As regards information and communications technology, a number of countries have developed national information and communication infrastructure policies and plans within the framework of the African Information Society Initiative, which establishes the necessary guidelines and institutional mechanisms for promoting an environment that is favourable to competition and investment. As far as the transfer of environmental technologies is concerned, few technology transfer frameworks that benefit the region have been established over the past two decades, those that have, include the clean development mechanism (CDM) - the main market instrument of the Kyoto Protocol that is designed to transfer technology from developed to developing countries.

Science, Technology and Innovations, have an important role to play in the attainment of the region's sustainable development objectives. Yet, these are activities that have received the most inadequate support in the region. Africa's continued low investment in science and technology is also manifested in the declining quality of science and engineering education at all levels of the education system. Institutions of higher learning, particularly universities and technical colleges, are in dire need of renewal after many years of neglect and weak connection to national priorities. However, recent developments at the international and regional levels are providing some new sources of optimism and action.

Capacity development: Capacity is one of the most significant means for the implementation of sustainable development commitments. It provides the ability to set priorities, develop programmes, design appropriate implementation frameworks, and monitor and evaluate the performance of each of the pillars. Countries in the region must develop their skills and institutions, build their infrastructure, upgrade their education systems and provide public services. To this end, a country's or region's capacity development programme must derive from its development agenda. The region's capacity development programme must reflect the requirements for the delivery of the AU-NEPAD sustainable development framework. It must respond to the need for effective leadership, appropriate behavioural change, strong and responsive institutions, effective policies, the existence of an environment conducive to citizen participation in governance and policy processes, and enhancement of the space to innovate and generate new knowledge. The capacity development process requires coordination and should focus on all spheres of governance, from the community to the local, as well as the national, subregional and regional levels, including key institutions and stakeholders. Sector-specific capacity-building strategies need to be strengthened, well targeted and coordinated.

Over the years, the region has made progress through country and subregional level efforts, as well as with the support of development partners, to respond to its capacity constraints and challenges. African governments have signed up to the Education for All (EFA) programme of

action. The Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) has built on gaps identified in the first education plans, moving beyond primary school enrolment (ECA and OECD 2011). The World Bank, UNECA among numerous UN organizations, AfDB and major multilateral and bilateral organizations have made enormous contributions to the response. The African Economic Research Consortium was created in 1988; the African Capacity Building Foundation was established in 1991; the Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa (PACT) was launched in 1999, the IMF launched the Africa Regional Technical Assistance Centres (AFRITACs) in 2002; and the AU-NEPAD in 2010 rolled out the regional framework for capacity development, the Capacity Development Strategic Framework (CDSF), among numerous other initiatives.

A recent survey of 34 African countries showed that 70 per cent had mainstreamed capacity-building in their national development plan, vision or strategy, and 54 per cent had specific national programmes for capacity development (ACBF 2011). African countries have improved the policy environment for capacity development through the establishment of national development strategies, effective dialogue mechanisms, and growing partnerships. Primary education remains a high national priority, with increasing emphasis being placed on secondary and vocational training. Capacity development is now a cross-cutting element in all aid delivery modalities.

Despite significant progress in capacity development, school enrolment rates and completion rates remain low, especially at post-primary levels, with an average of less than 70 per cent. The quality of education remains a challenge. The number of qualified teachers remains well below the requirement. Despite the fact that many African countries have developed strategic policy documents to guide capacity development, the rate of progress is inadequate to meet education and capacity-building commitments. Technical assistance for education and other areas of capacity development remain fragmented; it is often not aligned with government strategies and does not respond to government priorities. Ensuring the retention of trained staff is still a critical problem for many African countries. Thus, there is an urgent need to ensure that human and institutional capacity development is accorded the necessary priority, as a cross-cutting issue in all development cooperation, but also through targeted interventions aligned with nationally identified sustainable development needs and priorities.

**Trade and Market Access:** International trade, particularly market access for exportables, is an important factor in economic growth and development. The link between trade and development is highlighted in A21, and further reinforced in the JPOI and the Doha Ministerial Declaration. At the international level, the Doha talks have included discussions on implementation, capacity-building, the environment, Aid for Trade, and special and differential treatment. In 2010, there was some progress on specific issues, for instance, the “banana deal”, the cotton trade, the negotiations on non-tariff barriers, and notable engagement of the African Group. However, domestic support and export subsidies (including for cotton) remain high in major OECD economies.

Cooperation agreements and regional trade are critical for sustainable development in Africa. At the regional level, tariffs have on average fallen. Progress is being made on establishing regional free trade areas (FTAs) and customs unions, as reflected in the effort to integrate COMESA, EAC and SADC countries into an FTA. Joint infrastructure projects, such as the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI),<sup>9</sup> have been initiated as part of this. During the global crisis, intraregional trade proved more resilient than international trade, showing a lower

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9 NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency Business Plan, 2012.

dependency on international commodity markets. Despite this positive sign, the level of trade integration within Africa is still much lower than in other regions.

Several countries in the region and RECs are involved in bilateral trade negotiations in order to diversify their export markets and enhance their integration into global economic and trading systems. Nonetheless, the region remains marginalized in the global market.

**Regional integration:** Regional integration is a means of achieving sustainable development. This awareness is strong in the region and has been a driving force behind the numerous regional cooperation initiatives. Commitment to regional cooperation and integration is exemplified by the creation in 1963 of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), not long after many African countries had attained political independence. The transformation of the OAU into the AU set in motion actions to deepen progress towards regional integration. Numerous regional institutions have been set up and strengthened. Among these are the AUC, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, and the Pan-African Parliament, all of which are facilitating the building of broader consensus on the regional integration agenda. The establishment of other key regional institutions, including the African Investment Bank, the African Monetary Fund, and the African Central Bank, is being accelerated.

The Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) has been developed to streamline and fast-track the integration process. The MIP will, among other things, strengthen convergence of RECs. RECs are already being rationalized. Collectively, the region has entered into a number of external partnerships, guided by a regional approach to external cooperation. These partnerships include the multilateral partnerships in the framework of the WTO, and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP)–EU Economic partnership agreements.

There has been immense progress in regional integration (AUC, 2011), especially through the various RECs, which are the building blocks for the region's integration process. In spite of the progress made, there remain a number challenges and constraints in the acceleration of integration in the region. Among these are a multiplicity of RECs and overlapping memberships; fear of losing sovereignty; a volatile political environment, which makes conflict palpable in some countries in the region; lack of a self-financing mechanism; and lack of a compensation mechanism. Others are weak institutional capacity for implementation of the integration agenda at the national level; weak intraregional trade; and inadequate physical integration. The role of regional integration in promoting economic diversification, expanding markets, pooling and strengthening efficient allocation of resources, and addressing the transboundary and globalization issues and challenges confronting Africa, makes it a crucial vehicle in the realization of Africa's sustainable development aspirations. Deepening and accelerating Africa's regional integration should therefore remain a top priority for African countries and the region's development partners. Regional integration should be mainstreamed at the national level. In this connection, there is need to strengthen political will and support African countries in undertaking and enforcing national reforms, including setting up the necessary institutional frameworks in support of the regional integration agenda.

**South-South cooperation:** As a means of implementing sustainable development commitments, South-South Cooperation (SSC) has an important role in promoting trade, access to finance and investment, as well as exchange of knowledge, skills and technical expertise. SSC is a com-



mitment to solidarity among the peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

In order to foster SSC, the region has entered into a number of arrangements to strengthen and coordinate SSC efforts between Africa and other countries of the south, such as China, the Republic of South Korea, India and Brazil. The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was launched in 2000. In 2009, China announced measures to establish a China–Africa Partnership to address climate change; enhance cooperation with Africa in science and technology; help Africa build up financing capacity; further open up the Chinese market to African products; deepen cooperation in medical and health care; enhance cooperation in human resources development and education; and expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges. The Republic of Korea has established its Initiative for Africa’s Development (KIAD). KIAD is supported by the Republic of Korea–Africa Forum. The India–Africa Forum, which is held every three years, has been established. Other cooperation arrangements established are: the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) partnership, and the Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit. There are also interregional initiatives, such as the Africa and South America (ASA) Partnership, and the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP). SSC has also increased within the region. For example, with the rapid move of South African firms into the rest of Africa, there has been greater investment by South Africa in the rest of the continent since the democratization of South Africa in 1994.

Overall, Africa’s growing SSC has resulted in a significant increase in the importance of developing countries in the region’s merchandise trade. Official flows from developing countries to the region have also increased. According to UNCTAD (2010), estimates are that aid to Africa from developing countries was about US\$ 2.8 billion in 2006. While appreciable progress has been made in the strengthening of SSC, the partnership is beset with certain challenges that need to be addressed. These include multiple and fragmented cooperation arrangements, the inadequacy of Africa’s SSC strategy, and the poor environmental profile of some SSC initiatives.

With SSC becoming an important source of FDI and ODA, the region must address the associated challenges in order to harness and benefit fully from SCC initiatives. It must develop an effective strategy to guide its engagement in SSC partnerships. The strategy should be responsive to the priorities of the region and therefore be in line with its vision and programmes, such as those contained in NEPAD, which is the region’s framework for sustainable development. African countries and their partners in the South need to pay attention to issues surrounding debt sustainability by the recipient countries. The environmental profile of SSC initiatives needs strengthening. Great attention should be given in SSC partnership development to boosting the capacity of recipient countries, the sustainability of initiatives, and the results of SSC. While SSC has grown in importance as a vehicle for assisting countries in the region to implement their sustainable development commitments, it is not a substitute for North-South cooperation, but is rather complementary to it. It is therefore important for the region’s traditional donors to continue to scale up efforts in support of Africa-South and triangular cooperation.

## D. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, this report expresses the view that the African region has made measurable progress in the implementation of commitments in respect of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. With strong and sustained political commitment, well thought out strategies, enhanced awareness, involvement of national, subregional and regional stakeholders, and heightened consciousness of the implementation needs of sustainable development across the region, the results over the two decades would have been more robust. They have nonetheless been appreciable in light of the constraints facing implementation of those commitments.

### *Conclusions*

This report reaches the following main conclusions:

- ✦ The region appreciates the concept of, and need for sustainable development, but its understanding requires deepening at the level of subregional entities in order to facilitate effective integration of activities across the three pillars.
- ✦ Overall, the region has recorded encouraging progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments, as reflected in the achievement of a number of the MDGs. It will not meet all the MDGs targets by 2015, however, and achievement varies across subregions. Significant challenges remain to be addressed.
- ✦ Generally, the priority issues and trends in sustainable development were captured by the regional integration and development strategies of the RECs, which included some of the commitments from NEPAD programmes. These strategies were supposed to reflect each country's priorities as expressed in its development plans, but in the event showed disparities between national and regional frameworks. Not surprisingly, priorities differed across the five subregions.
- ✦ Institutional frameworks for managing sustainable development existed, but were inadequately coordinated, as issues and activities were handled by different entities, especially at the country level. For instance, ministries of trade in some countries issued mining licences without coordinating their activities with ministries of environment, which dealt with environmental impact assessments.
- ✦ Interlinkages among the pillars were understood, but project and programme implementation remained inconsistent with the requirements of balanced development. The result was over-exploitation of resources in a bid to address the poverty and hunger challenge.
- ✦ The green economy concept is yet to be fully understood and is perceived as an externally driven development paradigm. Efforts are needed to deepen understanding of the concept.
- ✦ Some of the challenges identified at WSSD in 2002, namely HIV/AIDS, ICT and the impact of globalization, persist and need attention. Since then, new challenges have emerged, including the global financial crisis (compounded by the sovereign debt crisis of the advanced economies); food, fertilizer and energy crises; climate change; and persistent human and institutional capacity challenges, as well as inadequate transfer of environmentally sound technologies.
- ✦ The means for implementation of sustainable development commitments were inadequate and this placed a serious constraint on implementation. There were insufficient funds for

development projects and programmes; a multiplicity of policy frameworks, which created confusion; institutional weaknesses due to lack of capacity; inadequate political will and decisiveness to implement commitments; duplication of mandates and functions across institutions, which led to rivalries; poor articulation of frameworks for partnering with the private sector in order fully to exploit its potential contribution; and absence of long-term vision, which led to the implementation of unsustainable and incoherent short-term projects largely tied to countries' electoral cycles.

## **Recommendations**

In order to take the efforts of the region to the next level, this report recommends the following:

### **Institutional and Policy Framework for Sustainable Development**

- ✦ NEPAD should continue to be upheld as a framework for sustainable development in the region and its programmes adequately funded in order to achieve the development results that Africans need. Sustainable development strategies must place emphasis on the social pillar so that the poor and less privileged are adequately targeted through social protection and development programmes.
- ✦ A systematic programme should be put in place to assist countries in the region in the development and implementation of National Strategies for Sustainable Development. In addition to this programme, UNECA should lead a process of creating a platform for learning and knowledge-sharing among National Councils for Sustainable Development in order to facilitate experience sharing, information exchange and networking.
- ✦ National and regional development strategies should be driven by sustainable development frameworks in order to enable targets to be set for the achievement of sustainable development objectives. Countries and RECs should not simply integrate sustainable development objectives and policies in their development strategies. Present national sustainable development strategies should be made more comprehensive and capacity development programmes should be aligned with sustainable development needs.
- ✦ Countries need to step up progress in harmonizing institutions responsible for sustainable development through integrated planning, and to promote coherence in policies. National Councils for Sustainable Development need strengthening.
- ✦ AU should see to it that all countries in the region develop comprehensive national sustainable development strategies and implementation plans with clear milestones for the achievement of results in each of the pillars of sustainable development.

### **Leadership and Political Commitment**

- ✦ Effective political leadership is at the heart of the drive for sustainable development. Renewed commitment by African leaders to sustainable development is needed. The emergence of a new generation of leaders should be encouraged through credible electoral processes that respond to the need for change, reform and new perspectives in the pursuit of sustainable development.
- ✦ Countries in the region need to step up awareness of sustainable development issues and provide appropriate incentives to encourage participation by all national stakeholders. Lead-

ers in all sectors of the economy and society must take the lead in promoting sustainable development-compliant practices and ensuring commitment by all stakeholders.

### **Governance, Processes and Programmes**

- ✦ There is a need to enhance the comprehensiveness of the AU-NEPAD programme. The ten-year review of the implementation of NEPAD provides an excellent opportunity further to strengthen its focus on sustainable development. The implementation of the various components of the programme should be anchored in integrated and interlinkages approaches to growth and development.
- ✦ The APRM is a good initiative for strengthening governance in the region. All countries should be encouraged to accede to it and undergo the review process. An Africa Sustainable Development Fund (ASDF) might be envisaged to earmark resources to help countries to implement the national plans of action (NPoA) resulting from APRM reviews. Only countries with NPoA should qualify for access to resources from the ASDF.
- ✦ The APRM process should now include measures for assessing the extent to which policies and programmes in its national plans of action comply with sustainable development.

### **Human and Institutional Capacity Framework**

- ✦ The Africa region needs a new capacity development strategy that will be a clear response to Africa's capacity development needs to achieve of sustainable development. Most current frameworks are inadequate and need revisiting in order to bring them into line with sustainable development needs. Institutional capacity to deliver on the new strategy should be strengthened. The operational capacities of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and the APRM Secretariat should be substantially enhanced. In particular, the structure, operations and capacity of the Agency will need to be revisited in order for it to play a robust role as an AU think tank and help to drive the sustainable development agenda at the regional level.
- ✦ NPCA should be strengthened to enable it to lead implementation, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development commitments in the NEPAD agenda. It should have a regional capacity development strategy that is aligned with the pillars of sustainable development and should be in a position to offer technical support to the RECs and countries in developing and implementing sustainable development-compliant policies and programmes. To this end, the AU-NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework should be substantially revised to provide a basis for the building of capacity for implementing sustainable development commitments.
- ✦ UNECA should be strengthened and supported in order to implement effectively its sustainable development-related mandates at the regional and subregional levels in a manner that will benefit Member States and yield tangible sustainable development outcomes.
- ✦ UNEP Regional Office for Africa needs to be transformed and strengthened into a full-fledged regional institution providing technical guidance for sustainable environmental development in the region. It should be appropriately capacitated and resourced to undertake this responsibility.
- ✦ Educational curricula should be reformed to include the development of knowledge and skills for sustainable development at all levels. Major private sector firms should be encouraged to endow chairs in sustainable development in universities in the region.

- ✦ Regional and subregional institutions, including NGOs that promote Africa's sustainable development agenda, need to be strengthened.

### **Financial Resources**

- ✦ Africa needs substantial financial and technical resources to meet the requirements of sustainable development. A funding window within present development assistance frameworks could encourage the creation of an Africa Sustainable Development Fund to assist with special interventions. Clear eligibility criteria would need to be in place for access to Fund resources. The Fund would provide stimulus for priority areas, which could include capacity development and reform of institutions and processes; research and development to support innovation and the generation of new knowledge; exploration of policy options and testing the efficacy of environmental taxes; developing mechanisms for technology transfer, adaptation and application; and infrastructure policy reforms.
- ✦ Country-level sustainable national development trust funds should be created as joint ventures between the government and the private sector to provide resources for joint research and development programmes to be carried out in institutions of higher learning and specialized research centres on various sustainable development issues.
- ✦ The NEPAD Agency, in collaboration with UNECA, AfDB and AUC, should explore mechanisms for mobilizing domestic resources for the implementation of sustainable development programmes in the region. Part of this effort should include helping countries to identify and develop innovative financing mechanisms to supplement government and development partner funds.
- ✦ The resources and allocations made to countries for projects by the Global Environmental Facility should be increased substantially. Land degradation that was not catered for in the GEF-4 RAF should be eligible for intervention under the Facility.
- ✦ The Rio+20 Summit must shore up support for adequate financing of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, as it is the least resourced of all the Rio Conventions.
- ✦ There is a need for countries to develop payment systems for services provided by ecosystems and to institutionalize community-based resource programmes.
- ✦ The current concentration of inflows of foreign investment in only a few countries leaves a number of countries disadvantaged. Conscious efforts are needed to even out such inflows.

### **Partnerships and Shared Responsibilities**

- ✦ The APRM provides for corporate, social and environmental responsibility, which the private sector has a significant role in implementing. The countries of the region need price-based instruments and incentives for firms to engage in innovative processes, apply cleaner technologies, and invest in R&D. International trade must respond to the challenge. It is essential to remove barriers to trade in clean technologies and the entry of new firms, and to improve the conditions for entrepreneurship, especially in light of growing evidence that new-generation firms represent a more dynamic source of innovative processes. There is also a need for more effective and inclusive multilateral cooperation in science, technology and the development of new knowledge. A sustainable development strategy has to address such issues and consider challenges relating to cooperation across countries, funding arrangements, capacity-building and international technology transfer. With evidence that there is considerable potential for



further development and deployment of renewable energy, energy efficiency and other low-carbon technologies, tapping into this potential will be critical for the energy sector in Africa.

- National, regional and global institutions, as well as development partners, must work together to help African countries to achieve sustainable development goals. Changes in production processes and consumption behaviour are fundamental to sustainable development. They must support a reduction in the use of scarce environmental resources; promote technological innovation that supports increased efficiency; raise awareness; improve knowledge; and step up regional and international cooperation and partnerships. Interventions will require a mix of policy instruments, including market-based approaches, regulations and standards, measures to incentivize R&D, and information-based instruments to facilitate consumer choices. If clear market signals are to be given, correct pricing of pollution and the exploitation of a scarce resource through taxes, natural resource charges or tradable permit systems should be a key element of the policy mix. Market-based instruments alone will not be enough to bring about a shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns, however. Regulations will be needed in cases where market failures result in weak responses to price signals or when a complete ban on certain activities is necessary, for example the production and use of toxic chemicals. Other approaches, such as voluntary instruments and information-based measures, such as energy efficiency ratings and well-designed eco-labelling, can play an important supporting role in raising consumer and producer awareness of the environmental impact of specific activities and the availability of clean alternatives.

### **Integration, Monitoring and Evaluation of Programmes and Performance**

- Countries need support in applying integrated approaches and tools to the management of the pillars of sustainable development. Regular reporting by countries to the Africa-CSD through UNECA should be instituted, and matters relating to NCSDs included in the agenda of Africa-CSD meetings in order to ensure a proper and regular review of the institutional requirements for effective implementation of sustainable development commitments.
- UNECA should enhance its work on promoting balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in the region. It should draw the region's attention to the need to give prominence to desertification and drought, which are major challenges to sustainable development.
- UNECA should work with other regional institutions on the development and application of monitoring and evaluation frameworks for sustainable development in the region; development of a database to facilitate performance tracking; and the provision to countries of technical support on sustainable development strategy, policy and programmes.
- With assistance from African countries and development partners, UNECA should establish a mechanism for systematically and regularly collating, processing and storing data and information on each of the components of sustainable development in the region. The aim should be to provide ready access to the data and information required by policymakers and development managers to monitor progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments.
- UNECA should continue to lead consultative meetings and processes to monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of commitments by the region.
- Platforms for all-stakeholder dialogue on sustainable development at all levels – regional, subregional and national – should be encouraged in order to promote a common understanding of what sustainable development means in the African regional context and how



best to implement commitments and share the lessons of experience, and in order to determine what works and what does not work and why.

- UNECA should ensure that future progress reports on sustainable development are compiled using a participatory approach, with each country in the region reporting on its performance.

Sustainable development is not simply one option among many for the transformation of national economies and societies. It is a challenge that has to be addressed in order to ensure the long-term well-being of the region. In doing so, the region has to be mindful of the fact that the overarching priorities for Africans are still poverty eradication and wealth creation, and the provision of socio-economic infrastructure and services and food security. The main challenge is that, with a large number of African economies heavily dependent on natural resources and the rural economy home to the majority of the poor who rely on subsistence agriculture, the vulnerability of the environment to economic and social development and unsustainable cultural practices remains very high.

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