

THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



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The adoption of the post-2015 development agenda/sustainable development goals (SDGs) and accompanying targets is a victory for Africa in many ways. Most importantly, the outcomes of the post-2015 negotiations “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development” are relevant to Africa’s development priorities as contained in the Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 development agenda (CAP). This outcome was a result of Africa’s active, and by all indications, successful engagement in the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. Getting to the negotiations stage, however, was preceded by a process of identifying Africa’s priorities for the new global agenda, which ultimately resulted in the CAP. Through the negotiations, Africa ensured that many of its priorities identified in CAP were taking the sustainable development goals (SDGs) into consideration. At the continental level, Agenda 2063 spells out Africa’s development aspirations, some of which extend beyond the SDGs. Thus, the African Development Goals (ADGs) are

being developed to articulate Africa-specific goals and targets. The ADGs will facilitate tracking of progress on the implementation of Agenda 2063.

THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

CAP was developed through a consultative process that started as far back as November 2011 across a wide range of stakeholders that included governments, civil society, academia, etc. It followed a decision of the African Union Summit for African development institutions to identify Africa’s priorities for the post-2015 agenda through a consultative process. This decision was in part based on the fact that Africa had not been consulted in the formulation of the millennium development goals (MDGs). And yet, Africa is the continent with the most pressing development challenges that require global attention.

The MDGs attempted to respond to some of Africa’s development challenges, but there were problems with the formulation and monitoring of the MDGs that impacted their

implementation. Such problems included their limited focus on economic growth and structural transformation as pathways for poverty reduction; weak emphasis on the quality of service delivery and access to services; limited attention to inequalities; disproportionate focus of the MDGs on Official Development Assistance as opposed to domestic resource mobilization; failure of the MDGs to take into account initial conditions of countries in the assessment of progress; and lack of focus on the role of development enablers like infrastructure, peace and security in facilitating socio-economic development.

Under the auspices of the High Level Committee on the post-2015 development agenda, CAP was developed. CAP identified substantive issues of importance to Africa, as well as key priorities and strategies that had to be reflected in the new development agenda. It was hinged on six pillars that are critical to the realization of Agenda 2063, Africa's long-term vision. These pillars were 1) structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; 2) science, technology and innovation; 3) people-centred development; 4) environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management; 5) peace and security; and 6) finance and partnerships.

CAP underscored Africa's commitment to completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and prioritizing outcomes that would elevate Africa into a global growth pole. Its pillars respond to the challenges of the MDGs and are relevant for the realization of structural transformation in Africa. Transformation can play a role in creating resilient economies and decent job opportunities, eradicating poverty and minimizing income and wealth inequalities. Pillar one of CAP, for example, is dedicated to structural transformation and it commits African countries to: inclusive growth that reduces inequality;



Table 1. Relationship between SDGs and Africa's development agendas.

sustainable agriculture, food self-sufficiency and nutrition; diversification, industrialization and value addition; developing the services sector; and infrastructure development. One of the reasons for the establishment of this pillar was the recognition that economic growth in Africa, although strong, has not been accompanied by jobs, hence curtailing progress on poverty reduction. Additionally, African countries are largely dependent on commodities, which are exported with little or no value added, essentially exporting jobs with them.

AFRICA IN THE POST-2015 INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS

CAP was endorsed by African Heads of State and Government in January 2014. This set the stage for advocacy, building alliances around Africa's priorities and securing political buy-in. Integrating CAP into the global post-2015 process was an important step in ensuring global recognition of Africa's priorities for the new development agenda. Thus, there was a concerted effort to reflect CAP in UN-related global post-2015 processes. These processes included the UN task team, the High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda, UN regional consultations on the SDGs and the Open Working Group (OWG). The outcome of the OWG was of utmost interest given that it was the proposal for the SDGs, and later became the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015

development agenda. An analysis and mapping of the proposed SDGs (and their accompanying targets) revealed great convergence with the priorities, goals and targets of CAP.

Given the convergence between the proposed SDGs and CAP, the decision to use the outcome document of the OWG as the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations was a step in the right direction as far as Africa's priorities were concerned. It was thus critical to consolidate this through the negotiation process and ensure that the Africa's priorities indeed featured in the globally negotiated post-2015 development agenda. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) supported the Africa Group of negotiators in New York with technical support throughout the negotiation process for both the post-2015 development agenda and the third international conference on financing for development (FfD). This was of particular importance because the outcome of the FfD framework was hinged to the post-2015 development agenda. Hence, support to the African Group in the FfD negotiations was important in arming the negotiators with the technical information on the key issues relating to the means of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda/SDGs.

Africa made many gains in the negotiations, leading to a beneficial outcome, reflective of Africa's priorities. Like CAP, the SDGs aim to address the unfinished business of the

Aspirations of Agenda 2063	Pillars of CAP	SDGs
A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development	Pillar 1: structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; Pillar 2: science, technology and innovation;	Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
	Pillar 4: environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management;	Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
2. An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance		
3. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law	Pillar 5: peace and security;	Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
4. A peaceful and secure Africa	Pillar 5: peace and security;	Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics		
6. An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children	Pillar 3: people-centred development;	Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
7. Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner	Pillar 6: finance and partnerships	Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

MDGs with goals on ending poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, ensuring equitable and inclusive education, and achieving gender equality. More interestingly, there is greater focus on the quality of and access to services, especially education, health and financial. Another gain is expansion of some of the goals to cover broader development challenges. Under SDG 3, for example (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), one target speaks to ending tropical and communicable diseases (among others), which are also a serious challenge for the continent.

The SDGs have also been a catalyst in calling for a data revolution, and developing global indicators for tracking progress. The MDGs were largely criticized for lack of data and weak capacity for monitoring and evaluation. Cognizant of this, articulating Africa's priorities in CAP was supplemented by a process of formulating goals, targets and indicators for the CAP which are currently informing the region's contribution to the global indicator process for the SDGs. Consultations with African National Statistics Offices, National Planning Offices, Civil Society Organizations, the private sector and representatives of the African Group of Negotiators resulted in a proposal for national, regional and global indicators for the SDGs. In June 2015, Africa presented its proposal for the global indicators at the first meeting of the Interagency and Expert Group on SDGs Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). At that point, Africa was the only region to propose indicators for the SDGs, putting it ahead of all other regions.

THE SDGS AND AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

As mentioned, Africa's development aspirations are embedded in the continent's long-term vision called Agenda 2063. Even though Africa engaged in the intergovernmental

negotiations with the CAP, it should be noted that CAP is only a sub-set of Agenda 2063. Agenda 2063 reflects Africa's "desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want".

Some critical aspirations of Agenda 2063 are very specific to Africa, and thus do not fit within the realm of the global development agenda. Examples of the more Africa-specific aspirations are: "An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance"; "An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics"; and "Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner".

Table 1 maps the SDGs onto the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and CAP. It reveals that all of Africa's pillars in CAP found expression in the SDGs. On the other hand, not all of the aspirations of Agenda 2063 made it into the SDGs. Hence, the global goals do not speak to some of Africa's aspirations.

Cognizant of the fact that some of Africa's development priorities do not feature in the new development agenda, the continent has developed Agenda 2063, which is underpinned by the ADGs. The ADGs form a monitoring mechanism that facilitates tracking and follow-up of Agenda 2063 by articulating concrete and specific goals and targets. These goals and targets will address the gaps between African aspirations and SDGs. Agenda 2063 converges the diverse and disparate development initiatives at the continental level into a coherent whole. More importantly, it focuses on areas that are of particular importance to Africa that are not covered by the global goals, effectively preventing the watering-down of Africa's concerns and priorities.

CONCLUSION

Africa has had a successful run in not only contributing to the post-2015 development agenda/SDGs, but also in ensuring that its development priorities find expression in the new global development agenda. However, not all of its priorities are contained in the SDGs. The aspirations of an integrated and politically united continent based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance are very specific to Africa: a continent with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics; and one that is strong, united and an influential global player and partner. Therefore, a more effective mechanism to achieve these is through African development frameworks like Agenda 2063 which is underpinned by the ADGs.

At the global level, a next critical step is preparing for implementation of the SDGs. ECA is preparing for this by mobilizing resources to assist its member states in raising awareness about the post-2015 development agenda; building their capacity to integrate the new development agenda in their national planning frameworks; and giving advisory support and training for policy design and implementation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Carlos Lopes is the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa at the level of UN Under Secretary-General. He has more than 24 years of senior leadership experience at the United Nations that include serving as Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, Director of the UN System Staff College, Director for Political Affairs in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, all at the level of Assistant Secretary-General; and UN Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe and Brazil. Specialized in development and strategic planning, he has been an author or editor for over 22 books and has also taught at various academic institutions.