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Economic and Social Council	**African Union**

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Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa
Sixteen session

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Proposal for the re-alignment of the RCM-Africa clusters

Background

1.   At the fifteenth session of the regional coordination mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa), the participants called upon the RCM-Africa secretariat to organize a retreat for the coordinators of the RCM-Africa clusters and subclusters, to reflect on the reconfiguration of the clusters and develop a new framework of engagement. The participants recommended that the configuration of the clusters should be based on the new priority areas of the African Union, as set out in Agenda 2063 and the African Union's strategic plan for 2014–2017.

2.   The retreat for the coordinators of the clusters and subclusters took place in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, on 13 and 14 November 2014. At the retreat, the participants called upon the RCM-Africa secretariat to consult with key stakeholders and make proposals at the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa regarding the reconfiguration of the clusters.

3.   The purpose of the present note is to set out a proposal for the reconfiguration of the RCM-Africa clusters in line with Agenda 2063 and the development priorities of the African Union.

I.   Mandate of RCM-Africa

4.   By resolution 32/197 (paragraph 20) of 20 December 1977, the United Nations General Assembly decided that the regional commissions should take responsibility for the coordination of United Nations activities at the regional level, taking into account the special needs and conditions of their respective regions. The role assigned to the regional commissions naturally calls for the holding of regular meetings among United Nations organizations and agencies with a view to improving the coordination of United Nations activities in their respective regions. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1998/46 (annex III, paragraph 13), took this further by recognizing that "the team leadership role of the regional commissions calls for their holding regular inter-agency meetings in each region with a view to improving coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system in that region. In this respect, the Economic and Social Council welcomes the efforts by the Secretary-General to improve coordination within the United Nations system, including his proposal of yearly meetings, to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General in each geographical area, among the relevant entities of Nations system engaged in regional and inter-country activities."

5.   The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was given the mandate to improve the coordination of the work of the United Nations system in Africa and to the partnership between United Nations agencies and African organizations, so that United Nations support to African organizations and to the implementation of NEPAD can be delivered effectively at the regional and subregional levels.

6.   There are over 40 United Nations agencies, organizations, offices, funds and programmes participating in RCM-Africa. In addition, the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and the regional economic communities participate actively in its activities, as do the African Development Bank and the World Bank. The sessions of RCM-Africa are held annually to review its work and provide guidance and direction, so as to ensure greater coherence and coordination of United Nations activities in Africa in support of the development priorities of the African Union.

7.   RCM-Africa functions through a system of clusters and subclusters. There are currently nine clusters, as follows:

(i)   Infrastructure development, consisting of four subclusters: energy; information and communications technology (ICT); transport; and water, sanitation and hygiene;

(ii)   Governance, consisting of four subclusters: economic and corporate governance; human rights; public service and administration; democracy and elections;

(iii)   Social and human development, consisting of six subclusters: health, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases; education and human resources; gender, youth and development; social welfare, protection and human trafficking; labour and employment; and sports and culture;

(iv)   Environment, population and urbanization;

(v)   Agriculture, food security and rural development;

(vi)   Science and technology;

(vii)   Advocacy and communications;

(viii) Peace and security, consisting of four subclusters: the peace and security architecture of the African Union; post-conflict reconstruction and development; emergency preparedness and response; and transitional justice;

(ix)   Industry, trade and market access.

8.   Since 2006, RCM-Africa has grown in membership and stature, with an increasingly high level of representation of the participating organizations. Sessions have been chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and co-chaired by the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission. This is indicative of the strong commitment to the concept of "delivering as one".

II. Challenges

9. Despite the achievements of RCM-Africa, there are number of challenges that hamper the efficient functioning of the clusters and subclusters, including:

(a) Need for greater participation of the various departments of the African Union Commission;

(b) Lack of ownership and leadership by the main stakeholders of the work of RCM-Africa;

(c) Meetings of clusters and subclusters do not take place frequently and the level of attendance and institutional representation is inadequate. In particular, there is no continuity with respect to the level of attendance and representation of agencies and organizations at cluster and subcluster meetings;

(d) Resources to support the implementation of the programmes of RCM-Africa and its clusters remain a major constraint as there is no dedicated budget allocation from the United Nations General Assembly for the implementation of RCM-related programmes and activities;

(e) Communication also needs improvement. Despite progress made in several areas, one of the main challenges is the level of cooperation between the advocacy and communications cluster and the rest of the clusters;

(f) Many clusters are faced with difficulties of elaborating joint programmes and having a common funding pool for their activities, perhaps due to the fact that their individual governing bodies have different programming and budget cycles. Most of the time, there is a lack of key indicators of success and targets to be achieved against each area of activity;

(g) Clusters and subclusters are not yet in a position to mobilize resources and to commit dedicated resources for planning and implementing joint programmes and joint projects;

(h) Despite their full membership in RCM-Africa, the involvement of the NEPAD Agency and the regional economic communities – which are the main beneficiaries of United Nations support – is still inadequate;

(i) A framework or system for monitoring and evaluating RCM-Africa and its clusters' work is also lacking. A monitoring and evaluation system will help in having a common understanding of the impact, results, outcome, output and activities in the context of RCM-Africa and the proper articulation of indicators of achievement.

10. Going forward, greater participation and involvement of all stakeholders are needed so as to address the above challenges and enhance the efficacy of RCM-Africa. There is also a need to enhance the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union by outlining clear expectations of the type of relationship, support and outcome in the context of RCM-Africa. This should extend to the relationship at the subregional level between the United Nations and the regional economic communities and other intergovernmental organizations. It is also important for there to be a monitoring and evaluation framework to support the implementation of the activities of RCM-Africa and its clusters.

III. Current priorities of the African Union

11.   The United Nations programme of support to the African Union, through RCM-Africa, is expected to be tailored to the developmental priorities of the continent. Currently, development frameworks of the African Union are encapsulated in the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda, Agenda 2063 and its ten-year implementation plan, and the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017. These frameworks have been formulated incorporating sectoral blueprints such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development for Africa (PIDA), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Africa Mining Vision (AMV) and the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA) initiative. The African Union seeks the support of the United Nations in implementing the activities related to these sectoral programmes.

A.   Common African position on the post-2015 development agenda

12.   The common African position represents the aspirations of the African people and their contribution to the global debate on the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. The position is a consensus of African people on common challenges, priorities and aspirations, as well as strategies for addressing key emerging development issues. The position also reaffirm the Rio principles, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the right to development and equity, and mutual accountability and responsibility, as well as policy space for nationally tailored policies and programmes on the continent, including appropriate support for the implementation of NEPAD.

13.   The common African position articulates common priorities, opportunities and challenges of the continent and therefore focuses on the structural economic transformation for inclusive and people-centred development. To achieve this developmental objective would require: productive capacities development, notably in the areas of infrastructure, agriculture, industrial and services sectors development; science technology and innovation; value addition; youth development and engagement; women's empowerment; and sustainable natural resource management. It also requires addressing the challenges posed by climate change, desertification and land degradation, drought and loss of biodiversity; promoting peace and security; and implementing responsive and accountable global governance architecture through, inter alia, the full and equitable representation of African countries in the international financial and economic institutions. The common African position groups Africa's development priorities into six pillars:

(i)   Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth;

(ii)   Science, technology and innovation;

(iii)   People-centred development;

(iv)   Environmental sustainability, natural resources management, and disaster risk management;

(v)   Peace and security;

(vi)   Finance and partnerships.

14.   The common African position recommends that the global post-2015 development agenda give adequate attention to: the development of productive capacity underpinned by value addition,

technology and innovation, and infrastructure development; people-centred development with a particular emphasis on youth empowerment and gender equality; natural resources and disaster risk management in the context of sustainable development; peace and security; and a truly inclusive and transformative global partnership. This is important to achieve an integrated, prosperous, stable, peaceful and secure Africa that is effectively engaged in the global arena.

B.   Agenda 2063

15.   Agenda 2063, a plan for Africa's structural transformation, was agreed upon at the African Union Golden Jubilee Summit, in May 2013. At the Summit, it was decided that the transformational agenda of the continent should be developed and pursued through the following key areas: African identity and renaissance; the struggle against colonialism and the right to self-determination of people still under colonial rule; an integration agenda; an agenda for social and economic development; an agenda for peace and security; democratic governance; determining Africa's destiny; and Africa's place in the world.

16.   The converging voices of Africans of different backgrounds have painted a clear picture of what they desire for themselves and the continent in the future. From these converging voices, a common set of aspirations has emerged which constitute the pillars of Agenda 2063:

(a)   A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;

(b)   An integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance;

(c)   An Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;

(d)   A peaceful and secure Africa;

(e)   An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics;

(f)   An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by women and young people;

(g)   Africa as a strong, resilient and influential global player and partner.

17.   These aspirations reflect the desire of Africans for prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, with freedom from conflict and improved human security. They also embed a strong desire to see a continent where women and young people have guarantees of their fundamental freedoms and where they assume a leading role in development of African societies. They are based on the conviction that Africa has the potential and capability to catch up with other regions of the world and take her rightful place in the global community.

18.   The aspirations presented above are overarching ones reflecting expectations of African people of where they want to see their continent in the next 50 years. However, it is important to stress that there is great variability among African countries. All these different categories of countries face key distinct conditions and features which determine development paths and strategies to pursue, although they share similar problems such as high poverty levels; literacy; disease; and high child, infant and maternal mortality. Consequently, Agenda 2063 should be seen

as a shared vision within which African states individually and collectively will chart development paths to achieve the vision of a prosperous, united and integrated Africa.

19.   Agenda 2063 is expected to be implemented in phases of 10 years. The first phase of 10 years has been crafted to cover the period 2013–2023 and addresses the following:

(a)   Sustainable inclusive economic growth;

(b)   Human capital development;

(c)   Employment creation;

(d)   Social protection;

(e)   Gender and women development and youth empowerment;

(f)   Good governance and capable institutions;

(g)   Infrastructure development;

(h)   Science, technology and innovation;

(i)   Peace and security;

(j)   Culture, arts and sports.

20.   African Union expects that the implementation of the ten-year plan will lead to: poverty reduction; the expansion of education at all levels; improved maternal and child health; better water and sanitation facilities; industrialization of the African economy; greater resilience to the effects of climate change; better and more sustainable management of natural resources, including mineral and agricultural resources; the establishment of a continental free trade area as well as a significantly increased intra-African trade; and a well-developed infrastructure network.

C.   Strategic plan for 2014–2017

21.   The African Union is charged with spearheading Africa's rapid integration, prosperity and sustainable development by promoting political and economic unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and African States, as well as developing new partnerships worldwide.

22.   In a bid to achieve the vision of the Union, the African Union Commission has since its inception developed and implemented two successive strategic plans (frameworks for the periods 2004–2007 and 2009–2012). The Commission's third strategic plan (2014–2017) has been prepared to guide the interventions and programmes of the African Union Commission in the medium term.

23.   The 2014–2017 strategic plan takes into account the shortcomings of the previous plans. It has been developed with elaborate results framework and in clarifying roles and responsibilities of key actors and stakeholders; internally as well as externally.The goals and objectives of the Plan are to be met through the implementation of programmes and activities that are derived from five pillars: peace and security; social, economic and human development; integration, cooperation and partnerships; shared values; and institutions, capacity-building and communication.

24. The overall goal of the strategic plan is to: "Accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and inclusive Africa, at peace with itself, playing a dynamic role in the continental and global arena, effectively driven by an accountable, efficient and responsive Commission**."** To achieve this goal, the Commission has identified eight oritiespri:

(a)   Promote peace and stability, including regional initiatives, good governance, democracy and human rights as a foundation for inclusion, security and the development of the continent and its people;

(b)   Expand agricultural production, developing the agro-processing and businesses sectors, increase market access and attain Africa's collective food self-sufficiency and nutrition through promotion of smallholder agriculture, sound environment and natural resource management, including climate change;

(c)   Promote inclusive economic development and industrialization through the acceleration of infrastructure development projects that will aid economic integration and utilization of the continent's mineral and other natural resources;

(d)   Build Africa's human capacity through the prioritization of Primary Health Care and Prevention; Education, skills development and investment in science, research and innovation, access to clean water and sanitation with inclusion of the vulnerable groups;

(e)   Mainstream the participation of women and the youth in all priorities and activities of the Union and the continent;

(f)   Implement strategies of resource mobilization, with special emphasis on alternative source of funding, and/or additional funding to enable Africa to finance its programmes and development;

(g)   Strengthen a people centred Union through active communication of the programmes of the African Union, the branding of the Union and participation of Member States and other stakeholders in defining and implementing the African agenda;

(h)   Strengthen the institutional capacity of the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities and other organs, and its relations with strategic and other partners.

25.   Derived from the strategic plan are seven strategic outcomes to support the implementation of the strategy. The seven strategic outcomes of the plan are as follows:

(a)   **Outcome 1:** Peace and stability, good governance, democracy and human rights as foundations for development and stable societies promoted**.**

(b)   **Outcome 2:** Policies and institutions for sustainable development, increased agricultural production, food and nutrition security, expanded value addition and market access, and sound environmental and natural resource management implemented.

(c)   **Outcome 3:** Infrastructure development and environment for inclusive economic development, industrialization, and private sector led intra-African Trade and sustainable utilization of natural resources created.

(d)   **Outcome 4:** Policies and programmes to enhance health, education and employable skills underpinned   by investment in services, science, research and innovation implemented by Member States.

(e)   **Outcome 5:** Strategies for resource mobilization, including alternative and additional sources of funding, to enable Africa to finance its programmes and development in place.

(f)   **Outcome 6:** A Commission that communicates with and engages member States and stakeholders in defining and implementing the African agenda.

(g)   **Outcome 7:** Institutional capacities of the African Union Commission improved, and relations with the regional economic communities, organs of the African and strategic partners strengthened.

26.   The strategic plan also includes a framework for implementation which defines the roles and assigns responsibilities to various elements in the hierarchy of the organizational structure of the African Union Commission. Two components of relevance to RMC-Africa are the technical clusters and the departments and directorates. These are defined in strategic plan document as follows. Four out of the eight African Union Commission departments have been designated as lead departments for the first four cluster outcomes above, and three directorates for the last three. Participating departments and directorates have also been identified for each output and associated activities of each outcome area.

IV.   Proposals on the re-alignment of the clusters

27.   Until now, RCM-Africa has been functioning through a network of clusters. However, given the current frameworks of the African Union, the current configuration of the clusters may not be capable of supporting the implementation of the developmental priorities of the continent. This section makes proposals on potential cluster systems to support the functioning of RCM-Africa.

Scenario 1: Status quo

28.   Under this scenario, there will no changes to the current configuration of the cluster system. This will mean that we maintain the current nine clusters:

(a)   Infrastructure development;

(b)   Governance;

(c)   Social and human development;

(d)   Environment, population and urbanization;

(e)   Agriculture, food security and rural development;

(f)   Science and technology;

(g)   Advocacy and communications;

(h)   Peace and security; and

(i)   Industry, trade and market access.

29.   However, the current clusters have not been meeting regularly and many have not prepared work programmes with the African Union Commission. With the exception of the peace and security cluster, which meets regularly and supports the African Union's Department of Peace and Security in the implementation of its work programme, most of the clusters are not very active. In addition, the current cluster system completely excludes the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission, as it is not part of any the clusters.

30.   One reason for the lack of work programmes is that the clusters are not anchored to one of the departments of the African Union Commission, as they cut across departments. Hence, the leadership of a cluster does not rest with a Commissioner.

Scenario 2: Anchoring the clusters around the outcomes of the strategic plan of the African Union Commission for 2014–2017

31.   Under this scenario, the clusters will be developed and aligned to the strategic outcomes elaborated in the strategic plan for 2014–2017. Hence, RCM-Africa will have seven clusters, one for each outcome, as follows:

(a)   Peace and stability, good governance, democracy and human rights;

(b)   Sustainable development, agriculture, food and nutrition security, value addition and market access, environmental and natural resource management;

(c)   Infrastructure development and environment for inclusive economic development, industrialization, and private sector, intra-African trade and sustainable utilization of natural resources;

(d)   Health, education, employment, investment, science, research and innovation;

(e)   Resource mobilization to finance Africa's development;

(f)   Communication and advocacy of the African agenda;

(g)   Institutional capacities for strengthening the organs of the African Union.

32.   Under this scenario the clusters cover all eight of the departmental focus areas of the African Union Commission. However, all the clusters cut across one another, and there are overlaps and therefore potential duplication of activities. If this scenario is adopted then the current nine clusters will have to be collapsed into seven clusters. It has to be noted that the challenges faced by the current nine clusters of RCM-Africa would not be removed by the adoption of this scenario. Also, what happens after the strategic framework expires in 2017?

Scenario 3: Anchoring the clusters around the strategic pillars of Agenda 2063

33.   As indicated earlier, the aspirations of the people of Africa are captured in seven pillars of the Agenda. These pillars are consistent with the common African position on the post-2015

development agenda. Based on the pillars, the clusters of RCM-Africa can be configured in seven areas:

(a)   Inclusive growth and sustainable development;

(b)   Regional integration;

(c)   Governance and human rights;

(d)   Peace and security;

(e)   Culture, heritage and shared values;

(f)   Women and youth;

(g)   Global partnership.

34.   The adoption of this scenario will imply that the current clusters will be reduced to seven. Clearly, this scenario will be fully anchored on the pillars of Agenda 2063 and therefore facilitate United Nations support for the implementation of the accompanying ten-year implementation plan. However, it is not clear how the clusters will be anchored around the departments of the African Union Commission as they cut across departments. Leadership by a department of the African Union Commission will be difficult for some of the clusters, particularly for the last three clusters. In addition, this cluster system is prone to overlaps and duplications.

Scenario 4: Anchoring the clusters around the departments of the African Union Commission

35.   A challenge faced by the current cluster system is that they have not been configured around the departments of the African Union Commission. Hence, with the exception of the peace and security cluster, which is nested in the Peace and Security Department, there is no cluster which is led by a Commissioner. This has made the formulation and implementation of joint programming extremely difficult. With a view to addressing these challenges, one option is to have the clusters anchored around the departments and directorates of the African Union Commission, as follows:

(a)   Peace and security;

(b)   Political affairs;

(c)   Trade and industry;

(d)   Infrastructure and energy;

(e)   Social affairs;

(f)   Agriculture, rural development, environment and natural resources;

(g)   Human resources, science and technology;

(h)   Economic affairs and integration;

    (i)   Communication and advocacy;

    (j)   Women and young people.

36.   Under this scenario, the number of clusters would increase to ten formulated around the eight departments of the African Union Commission (the last two clusters under this scenario are directorates in the office of the Chairperson). With the exception of the clusters for communication and advocacy as well as women and young people, each cluster will be lead by the Commissioner of the relevant department.

37.   The advantage of this scenario is that the cluster system is configured around the eight departments of the African Union Commission, which are responsible for the implementation of the frameworks of the African Union, including Agenda 2063, the common African position and the strategic plan. This scenario is consistent with the implementation arrangements where departments are responsible for developing and nurturing the appropriate relationships with stakeholders and strategic partners. Under this arrangement, the work programmes of clusters will be derived from the planned work programmes of the departments of the African Union Commission. This arrangement also removes overlaps and duplications currently present in cluster system.

38.   It has to be also noted that under this scenario, we will have a new cluster for economic affairs and integration anchored to the activities of the Department of Economic Affairs of the Commission.

Scenario 5: Anchoring the clusters around the specialized technical committees of the African Union

39.   It was decided at the twelfth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, in February 2009, to reconfigure the specialized technical committees as follows:

    (a)   Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;

    (b)   Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration;

    (c)   Committee on Trade and Industry and Minerals;

    (d)   Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructures, Energy and Tourism;

    (e)   Committee on Gender and Women Empowerment;

    (f)   Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs;

    (g)   Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment;

    (h)   Committee on the Public Service, Local Government, Urban Development and Decentralization;

    (i)   Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control;

    (j)   Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons;

(k)   Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports;

(l)   Committee on Education, Science and Technology;

(m)   Committee on Communication and ICT;

(n)   Committee on Defence, Safety and Security.

40.   One school of thought is that the clusters should be aligned to the specialized technical committees. However, as there would be 14 clusters, their management, and the management of all the subclusters, would be challenging. It would also be difficult to prepare the work plans and business plans of the clusters. Consequantly, this scenario may not be appropriate.

V.   Recommendations and conclusions

41.   As noted above, RCM-Africa has made modest achievements. The United Nations family continues to support the African Union in the implementation of its developmental priorities. The African Union Commission's commitment and involvement in the work of the clusters is evident at the highest level of decision-making at the Commission.

42.   However, like all institutions, there is a need for improvement in the functioning of RCM-Africa. The efficiency of the cluster system is an area of concern, and the mechanism continues to face challenges, perhaps due to the lack of clarity about who is responsible for the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of RCM-Africa. There is also a lack of follow-up action on decisions taken. As a result, decisions are not implemented.

43.   There is a clear need for more clarity on the mission, objectives and processes of RCM-Africa itself, so that the cluster business plans accurately reflect the priorities of the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities and other organs. This calls for further strengthening of coordination in the cluster and subcluster system.

44.   Adoption of Agenda 2063, the common African position and the strategic plan for 2014–2017 as the guiding framework for RCM-Africa will ensure that the mechanism's work is guided by the aspirations of the African people for a better socioeconomic development of the continent.

45.   The effectiveness of RCM-Africa depends on having a practical structure and functions of the cluster system anchored firmly in the development priorities of the African Union and its organs. That is why the system of clusters needs to anchored around the departments of the African Union, with a Commissioner leading each cluster. The secretariat therefore recommends that the participants at the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa adopt the proposal made under scenario 4, which would ensure that each cluster directly supports Africa's development priorities as identified in Agenda 2063, the common African position and the African Union Commission's strategic plan.