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**Economic Commission for Africa  
Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa**

Eighteenth session

First joint meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism  
for Africa and the United Nations Development Group

Dakar, 25 and 26 March 2017

**African Union**

## **Consolidated progress report for the period April 2016– March 2017**

### **I. Introduction**

1. It is now 19 years since the regional coordination mechanisms were set up in all five regions, pursuant to resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The first set of regional coordination mechanism meetings was held in 1999 under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General. Since 2000, the meetings have been convened by the respective executive secretaries of the five regional commissions, which are designated as strategic coordinators of the mechanisms and mandated to hold regular meetings of the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system with a view to promoting synergy and coherence for a coordinated response in addressing the priority needs of each region.

2. Member States, through General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, encouraged the United Nations system to strengthen collaboration with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and regional banks, as appropriate and consistent with their respective mandates. They also called upon the regional commissions and the funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other entities of the United Nations development system at the regional level further to strengthen cooperation and coordination among themselves and with their respective headquarters, in close consultation with the Governments of the countries concerned as strategies to enhancing the functioning of the United Nations system (paragraphs 145 and 146).

3. In their statement of collaboration in supporting Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, signed by the Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the coordinator of the regional economic commissions,<sup>1</sup> it was agreed that regional commissions and UNDG teams would enhance

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Group and United Nations Regional Commission, *Statement of Collaboration on Supporting Member States in Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (1 January

cooperation in the regions between mechanisms convened by the regional commissions and the relevant regional UNDG team, with a view to boosting the impact of United Nations development activities in response to regional and subregional priorities of member States. The statement of collaboration calls upon the regional commissions and the United Nations development system to support the follow-up to and review by member States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, regional and global levels – including through the regional forums on sustainable development – and to ensure systemic, timely and coherent nexus and interaction among the three levels, and, when appropriate, by collaborating on regional inter-agency reports.

4. In the African context, the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) has evolved from serving as a consultative mechanism to holding formal, annual sessions at which organizations and agencies of the United Nations system operating in Africa coordinate their strategies and activities for programme delivery in support of African Union programmes such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and now Agenda 2063. These annual sessions review the progress made in improving cooperation, collaboration and coordination between the United Nations and the African Union and its organs, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations support to Africa's development. The sessions also serve as a forum for deliberations on topical and emerging issues of importance to Africa's development agenda and for making sound policy prescriptions.

5. The African Heads of State and Government, by their decision Assembly/AU/Dec.587 (XXV) of 2015, adopted the Framework for a Renewed United Nations-African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027 (PAIDA) as a successor to the 2006 United Nations-African Union ten-year capacity-building programme. PAIDA will therefore serve as an overall platform for United Nations-African Union cooperation that is anchored on Agenda 2063. Accordingly, RCM-Africa will use PAIDA as the framework for "delivering as one" and enhancing coordination and coherence of United Nations support to the African Union, its organs and organizations.

6. The present report captures the work of RCM-Africa over the period April 2016-March 2017. As in past reports, the key achievements of RCM-Africa, the main challenges that it faced and the lessons learned will be considered.

## II. Key achievements

7. RCM-Africa has been playing a major role in strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. RCM-Africa can look back over the year from April 2016 to March 2017 with a sense of satisfaction in terms of deepening consultations and refocusing on ways of strengthening the partnership and scaling up United Nations support to the African Union and its organs. Substantive issues addressed during this period related to strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership, strengthening the United Nations internal coordination for a stronger mechanism, and improving coordination, collaboration and coherence of United Nations support to thematic programmes and priorities of the African Union.

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2016). Available from <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Statement-of-Collaboration-RECs-UNDG-Reg-UNDGs-on-SDGs-1-Jan-2016.pdf>.

## **A. Strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership and regional coordination mechanism for Africa**

8. For the fourth time, the 2017 annual session of RCM-Africa will take place back-to-back with the third session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the fiftieth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Recognizing that dealing with inequality and unemployment is paramount to achieving broad-based and sustainable economic development in Africa, the theme of this year's conference is: "Growth, inequality and unemployment". The eighteenth session of RCM-Africa will be held under the theme: "United Nations system support for harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth." Participants at the eighteenth session will further deliberate on strengthening the regional coordination mechanism and the relationship between RCM-Africa and UNDG. The outcome of the session is expected to be presented to the African ministers at their tenth Joint Annual Meetings.

## **B. Strengthening United Nations internal coordination to better support the strategic priorities of the African Union**

9. The United Nations liaison team, which is composed of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system based in Addis Ababa, serves as a complementary forum to RCM-Africa for articulating and addressing common opportunities and challenges facing the agencies of the United Nations system in their interactions with the African Union organs and organizations, and with the goal of promoting a conducive environment for effective collaboration among its members. The liaison team plays a catalysing role in harmonizing approaches, operations and actions in the United Nations system with the aim of promoting the strategic partnership and providing an effective coordinated support to the strategic priorities of the African Union, in close collaboration with the secretariat of RCM-Africa hosted and resourced by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).<sup>2</sup> Through its well-attended monthly meetings, the liaison team aims to enhance internal coherence, convergence and synergy in the agencies and organizations so as to be able to play a more effective role in strengthening the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the context of RCM-Africa.

10. In its efforts to strengthen United Nations internal coordination beyond Addis Ababa, the RCM-Africa secretariat held an important meeting with the regional UNDG teams for East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa in December 2016. A common call for action during the meeting was a desire to deepen collaboration. One key outcome of this meeting was a proposal, in the future, to hold joint policy dialogues and debates on thematic priority issues. The first of these joint dialogues is scheduled for 25 March 2017, during the eighteenth session of RCM-Africa in Dakar.

11. Other areas of collaboration between the regional UNDG teams for East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa and RCM-Africa include the following:

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, all regional commissions, including ECA, are mandated to improve and strengthen coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies and organizations engaged in regional and intercountry activities through regular consultations. In the case of Africa, RCM-Africa is the structure put in place for this purpose hosted and resourced by ECA.

- (a) The regional UNDG teams are to invite the RCM-Africa secretariat to joint them in strategic prioritization retreats, training courses on programming principles and visioning exercises;
- (b) Possibilities are to be explored of dealing with subregional and cross-border issues through regional programmes, as appropriate;
- (c) The United Nations and the incoming officials of the African Union are to attend a retreat and to invite the regional economic communities, in July in the margins of the Assembly of the African Union;
- (d) The African Union Commission and RCM-Africa are to participate in meetings of the regional UNDG teams and vice versa;
- (e) RCM-Africa and the regional UNDG secretariats are to prepare a concept note and indicate what the clusters and working groups do, so as to identify the support required by country teams;
- (f) Both the secretariat knowledge management teams are to be linked up, to give a good indication of the skills available and tools already in existence, and to foster discussion on how to create a general collaboration space and common tools;
- (g) Meeting needs are to be identified and the development initiated of tools for these compendiums and community of practice spaces. These will serve as a future repository for historical reference and knowledge banks on the various focal themes;
- (h) A knowledge management portal is to be created that describes the regional UNDG teams and RCM-Africa and identifies synergies between them;
- (i) A blog is to be provided on key issues and agendas;
- (j) A skills bank and roster of experts are to be created, making possible the identification of areas of convergence and serving as a quick repository for the engagement of consultants and identification of speakers and moderators for meetings and panels.

### **C. Alignment of the regional coordination mechanism for Africa with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

12. At the seventeenth session of RCM-Africa, members adopted the recommendations made by the working committee composed of African Union Commission and United Nations experts<sup>3</sup> for the operationalization of the following eight clusters:

- (a) Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade, agriculture and agro-processing and regional integration;
- (b) Infrastructure development;
- (c) Human capital development, health, nutrition, science, technology and innovation;

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<sup>3</sup> The working committee comprised the following: Febe Potgiter-Gqubule, Deputy Chief of Staff of the African Union Commission (chair of the committee); Olawale Maiyegun, Director of Social Affairs, African Union Commission; Treasure Maphanga, Director of Trade and Industry, African Union Commission; Chris Kachiza, Acting Director of Strategic Planning, African Union Commission; Salvatore Matata, Head of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Liaison Office to the African Union Commission; Talla Kebe, NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency; and Joseph Atta-Mensah and Adwoa Coleman, joint RCM secretariat.

- (d) Labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility;
- (e) Gender equality, women and youth empowerment;
- (f) Humanitarian matters and disaster risk management;
- (g) Environment, urbanization and population;
- (h) Advocacy, information, communications and culture.

13. On the basis of the above reconfiguration, the RCM-Africa secretariat developed a matrix mapping the clusters to the goals identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 and the priorities of the African Union Commission in its programme of work for the period 2016-2018. The matrix was considered at the coordinators' retreat in February 2017, which adopted a biennial programme of work for RCM-Africa for 2017-2018 (to be completed based on the outcome of the retreat).

#### **D. Comprehensive long-term United Nations programme of support to the African Union**

14. PAIDA was developed as a framework for United Nations-African Union partnership from 2017 to 2027, anchored on Agenda 2063. It was adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in June 2015, in South Africa. Subsequently, with the active support of the Africa Group based in New York, the new framework was welcomed by the General Assembly in resolution 71/254, adopted on 23 December 2016 (see annex II to the present report for further details).

### **III. Challenges, recommendations and the way forward**

15. Ownership and leadership by the principal stakeholders in the work of RCM-Africa are essential. Increased ownership and guidance by African Union organs related to the activities of RCM-Africa will ensure improved performance. The active participation of the African Union Commission as co-chair of RCM-Africa has been significant for the effectiveness of its operations. Solid foundations have been laid for fruitful cooperation, in terms of the enthusiasm displayed by many members of the African Union Commission senior management. Disparities between the roles and levels of participation of the various departments in the African Union Commission, however, have somewhat affected cluster performance.

16. There is general agreement on the part of both the United Nations system and the African regional and subregional institutions that more needs to be done to enhance RCM-Africa in support of the agenda of the African Union and its organs. An enhanced mechanism would lead to better coordination of United Nations actions, improve coherence and increase cost-effectiveness and impact through the implementation of the activities of the clusters, with a view to achieving meaningful results.

17. Challenges faced by the mechanism are pretty much the same from year to year. They basically refer to resource constraints or the absence of dedicated resources, weak information and communication, planning constraints, lack of an effective monitoring and evaluation framework and difficulties in showing tangible results and achievements.

#### **A. Sustainable resources**

18. To ensure that RCM-Africa effectively plays its role in support of the priorities of the African Union at the regional and subregional levels, the mechanism in general and its secretariat in particular need to be well resourced in ways that allow them to provide more

effective substantive support to mechanism-related measures and activities. This requires the provision of resources on a sustainable basis for the mechanism to be efficient and credible.

## **B. Communications strategy**

19. The communications strategy for advocacy and resources mobilization to support the various programmes of the African Union and its organs was endorsed by RCM-Africa at its seventeenth session. The RCM-Africa secretariat is working on its implementation with a view to increasing awareness, involvement, ownership and leadership at all levels. Regular briefings on RCM-Africa and its activities should continue to be organized for the commissioners and department directors of the African Union Commission, the leadership of the NEPAD Agency and those in charge of the regional economic communities. Newsletters and other means of communication should be strengthened to promote the mechanism. With minimum funding, the advocacy and communications cluster could create new platforms on which ideas could be exchanged in real time using contributions from the other clusters and thus achieve the goal of mainstreaming communication in RCM-Africa. Communication-related activities should be factored into cluster business plans and provided for in their budgets. Clusters should also designate a member to work with the advocacy and communications cluster.

## **C. Planning**

20. It is suggested that a yearly programme of work should be considered and adopted by RCM-Africa at each annual session and this will then be implemented and reported on by the mechanism. The yearly programme of work will be prepared and submitted by the African Union Commission and will include expected accomplishments, key indicators of success, the targets to be achieved against each area of activity, and resource requirements. Any progress or achievement needs to be assessed through the monitoring and evaluation framework already put in place by the RCM-Africa secretariat. Furthermore, the performance of each member in the mechanism should be taken into account in the performance reviews carried out by the member's organization.

21. The commitment and good leadership that has existed to date should continue. African Union co-chairs should show tangible leadership, ensuring that the outcomes sought by the African Union are clearly articulated, thereby enabling the clusters to understand better the areas for their collaboration and provision of support and thus ensuring greater effectiveness.

22. In addition, they should play an important role in facilitating the engagement of other relevant African Union Commission departments, to ensure that "delivering as one" is also the approach taken by the African Union Commission. The United Nations co-chairs must also demonstrate a higher level of commitment and provide complementary leadership to the African Union Commission. This involves the allocation of both the necessary time and the human and financial resources needed for the operationalization of cluster activities.

23. RCM-Africa has proved to be an effective instrument that can contribute to efforts to rebrand Africa as a rising continent. The strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union should be further strengthened in support of Africa's peace and development agendas.

## Annex I

### Priorities identified for the eight newly reconfigured clusters<sup>4</sup>

<p><b>1. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade, agriculture and agro-processing and regional integration</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accelerated, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.</li> <li>2. Economic diversification and resilience.</li> <li>3. Blue economy for accelerated economic growth.</li> <li>4. Science, technology and innovation for manufacturing.</li> <li>5. Accelerated industrial development and value addition.</li> <li>6. Support for the implementation of the third industrial development decade for Africa, and industrial development cooperation in line with General Assembly resolutions 70/293 of 25 July 2016 and 71/242 of 21 December 2016.</li> <li>7. Development of policies and strategies for the sustainable use of the continent's minerals and commodities, including mining contract.</li> <li>8. Support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme geared to increase production and productivity value addition to ensure Africa's collective food security.</li> <li>9. Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production.</li> <li>10. Value addition in the intra-regional fish trade for food security in Africa.</li> <li>11. Promotion of policies, processes and infrastructure for market access and trade in agricultural products.</li> <li>12. Support for implementation of the gender, climate change and agriculture support programmes.</li> <li>13. Improved private sector engagement and business climate in Africa.</li> <li>14. Support for and monitoring of the enhancement of agribusiness.</li> <li>15. Strategy for the harmonization of statistics in Africa.</li> <li>16. United and integrated Africa.</li> <li>17. Negotiations for the continental free trade area.</li> <li>18. Harmonization of policies and standards to promote regional and continental integration and competitiveness.</li> <li>19. Continental financial and monetary institutions established and functional and resources mobilized.</li> <li>20. Implementation of trade facilitation measures under the framework of the action plan for boosting intra-Africa trade and the World Trade Organization.</li> <li>21. Creation of financial and monetary institutions.</li> <li>22. Identification of alternative sources of funding to strengthen the African Union funding mechanism.</li> <li>23. Establishment of a mechanism for domestic resource mobilization, including alternative sources of funding, with a view to ensuring the predictable and sustainable implementation of</li> </ol>
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<sup>4</sup> A cluster on peace and security, governance and human rights was tentatively re-established in February 2017. Key priorities are being identified with the African Union Commission and other partners, and will be submitted in due course.

	<p>African Union development priorities as defined in Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.</p> <p>24. Finalization of the African passport and free movement of people.</p>
<b>2. Infrastructure development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrated high-speed network.</li> <li>2. Unification of African air transport, single African aviation market.</li> <li>3. Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam project.</li> <li>4. Support for the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa.</li> <li>5. Improved connectivity, reliability and cost-effectiveness of transport and tourism networks and services on the continent.</li> <li>6. Increased access to modern energy for Africa's social and economic development.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Human capital development, health, nutrition, science, technology and innovation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotion of key policies and programmes on the use of outer-space for social and economic development.</li> <li>2. Support for the pan-African university, including the African virtual and e-university.</li> <li>3. Support for pan-African e-network.</li> <li>4. Prioritization by the African Union Commission of the establishment of the centre for disease control for strengthening capacity for outbreak detection and response in Africa.</li> <li>5. Promotion of and support for key policies and programmes on primary health care and prevention, and nutrition, while ensuring alignment with the African Health Strategy, the African Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025) and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme framework.</li> <li>6. Supporting and mainstreaming the African Union Catalytic Framework to end AIDS, TB and malaria, as the continent's largest pandemics.</li> <li>7. Facilitating the implementation of the 10-year science, technology and innovation strategy for Africa.</li> <li>8. Establishing the Africa Medicines Agency, scaling up the implementation of the African Medicine Regulation and Harmonization Programme, and supporting the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incomes, jobs and decent work.</li> <li>2. Poverty, inequality and hunger.</li> <li>3. Social security and protection, including for persons with disabilities.</li> <li>4. Modern and liveable habitats and basic quality services.</li> <li>5. Mainstreaming migration in development planning and strategies through regional and national migration policy frameworks.</li> <li>6. Preventive and protective measures to tackle irregular migration, including human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, in line with existing African Union frameworks.</li> <li>7. Creation of alternative channels of regular migration, including enhanced intra-African mobility.</li> <li>8. Diaspora engagement and remittances.</li> <li>9. Platforms for increased inter-State and regional cooperation on migration.</li> </ol>
<b>5. Gender equality, women and youth empowerment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategy to ensure that the promotion and protection of the rights of marginalized groups and people with disabilities are developed, disseminated and implemented at the national level.</li> <li>2. Support for the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa for the period 2016-2025.</li> <li>3. Expedited implementation of a continental initiative on demographic dividend for Africa.</li> </ol>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Mainstreaming of gender perspectives in policies, programmes and initiatives in the area of peace and security.</li> <li>5. Advocacy of the implementation and roll out of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment programme.</li> <li>6. Commitments to deal with violence and discrimination against women and girls.</li> <li>7. Promotion and implementation of programmes and policies on women's employment and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>8. Development and promotion of policies that will enhance access to productive resources, including financing for women.</li> <li>9. Mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all priority areas.</li> <li>10. Efforts to ensure that education systems provide the young generation and in particular young women with quality education that leads to a culture of lifelong learning and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>11. Development and implementation of programmes and policies on youth employment.</li> <li>12. Development, dissemination and implementation at the national level of a strategy for the promotion of the rights of girls and boys.</li> <li>13. Development and implementation of continental initiatives, laws and policies leading to the eradication of harmful practices such as early forced child marriage and female genital mutilation.</li> <li>14. Development of a road map of key deliverables and milestones of the African Union 2017 theme: "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth," to be undertaken in 2017 and beyond.</li> </ol>
<p><b>6. Humanitarian matters and disaster risk management</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Response to African humanitarian crisis situations and concerted efforts to achieve sustainable solutions to the problem of forced displacement on the continent.</li> <li>2. Building resilience, early warning systems and capacity to respond to disasters in the context of the post-2015 Africa Programme of Action and Sendai Framework.</li> <li>3. Alignment of the extended programme of action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction with the Sendai Framework.</li> <li>4. Support for efforts by regional economic communities and member States to align their disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management strategies, plans and programmes with the Africa Programme of Action and Sendai Framework.</li> <li>5. Advocacy of the Africa Programme of Action and Sendai Framework.</li> <li>6. Promotion of and support for disaster risk reduction and management in the context of the Africa Programme of Action and Sendai Framework.</li> <li>7. Strengthening of the Africa Working Group and the Africa Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction.</li> </ol>
<p><b>7. Environment, urbanization and population</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support for the implementation of priority programmes on environment and natural capital, including climate change, desertification, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, and environmental monitoring.</li> <li>2. Efforts to ensure the Implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.</li> <li>3. Alignment of programmes with the African Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and the Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology (weather and climate services).</li> <li>4. Implementation of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development and support for the functioning of the African Population Experts Committee.</li> </ol>

<b>8. Advocacy, information, communications and culture</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Foregrounding of Agenda 2063 with internal and external audiences of the African Union.</li><li>2. Creation of a people-centred African Union through an active communication and advocacy strategy articulated around human rights.</li><li>3. Support for efforts by the Economic and Social Council to implement Agenda 2063.</li><li>4. Support for the implementation of legacy projects such as the African diaspora volunteer programme, the African diaspora skills database, the diaspora investment funds and the marketplace for African development.</li><li>5. Encouragement for the ratification of all appropriate international conventions, which focus on the safeguarding of heritage, protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization conventions (1954, 1970, 1972, 2001, 2003 and 2005).</li><li>6. Support for the processes of institutional and individual capacity development for safeguarding Africa's cultural tangible and intangible heritage.</li><li>7. Development and implementation of policies to support the growth of cultural and creative industries,</li><li>8. Improved subregional cooperation on the prevention and fight against illicit traffic of cultural objects.</li></ol> <p>Strengthened linkages of cultural resources to national development plans.</p>
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## Annex II

### General Assembly resolution 71/254

In its resolution 71/254, of 23 December 2016, the General Assembly:

...*Calls upon* relevant entities of the United Nations system, through the Regional Coordination Mechanism, to align their programmes and activities with the priorities enshrined in the Framework, as appropriate;

6. *Calls upon* the secretariat of Regional Coordination Mechanism to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Framework as the successor programme to the 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union;

7. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to provide, as appropriate, predictable support for full, effective and efficient implementation of the Framework;

8. *Calls upon* Africa's bilateral and multilateral partners and the international community at large to lend their full support to the implementation of the Framework in concrete and enabling ways;

9. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, working in collaboration, to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the Framework, and requests the Secretary-General to report on a biennial basis to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Framework within the context of his report on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.