

Opening Remarks for the 10th Committee on Sustainable Development
!7th May 2017 – Fatima Denton – Director , SID, ECA

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2017 session of the tenth Committee on Sustainable Development. This meeting is taking place against the backdrop of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which is being held during the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and third year of implementation of Agenda 2063. This regional forum is strategically placed to link the national and global discourse and serve as multi-stakeholder platform to promote achievement of the SDGs.

Distinguished delegates, the 17 sustainable development goals that will constitute our core business in the next three days represent a blueprint for transformational change. They advocate for qualitative development, development with a conscience, development that places people at the centre stage, development that calls for renewal, not one that embarks on a reckless exploitation of our most sacred capital , our natural capital.

It is about creating a collaborative road map that global leaders have charted to configure a new model that will deliver on inclusive economic growth, shared prosperity and preservation of our environment. It is both about the future we want and our resolve to also explore the limitless possibilities of the present.

But before we get into the why, what and how, let us quickly reflect on our current growth trajectory. The African growth story thus far has been one of

highs and lows. The recent decline in commodity prices coupled with adverse climatic conditions have seen growth tapering off to 1.7% in 2016; although, projections point to a rebound in the coming few years. As a percentage of GDP, manufacturing value added, in 2015, excluding North Africa was only 10.5%, and 11.3% in North Africa. Africa's share in global merchandise remains very low, at about 2.4% in 2015.

Crucially, the African growth story has not come to terms with inclusive development. **Inequality** in Africa is still rearing its ugly head where Africa is home to 7 out of 10 of the most unequal countries in the world. Although poverty in Africa, excluding North Africa, declined from 56.9 per cent in 1990 to 42.8% in 2012, the number of people living in extreme poverty in the continent is estimated to have increased significantly, from about 280 million in 1990 to more than 330 million in 2012, partly due to rapid population growth. In addition, the **pace of job creation** has been insufficient, with skyrocketing levels of unemployment especially among the youth; **unrelenting jobless migration** into urban areas continues unabated against the rising current of **gender inequality and lack of empowerment for women and girls** despite notable trends recorded in the area of literacy with the Millennium Development Goals.

Poverty and food insecurity remain widespread; the **urban poor** continues to amplify in numbers. Indeed, **African economies** as a whole are still primarily agrarian, with little or no value against a weak **infrastructure**, where records of infrastructure penetration remain extremely low.

Natural resource management remains a critical lever for economic growth and for reducing poverty and hunger, yet current natural resource practices are unsustainable and we are gradually pushing the boundaries beyond their capacity for renewal. Crucially, the reliance on natural resources and the primarily agrarian nature of African economies, coupled with low adaptive capacities, make the African region highly vulnerable to climate change. Climate change constitutes a double-edged sword as it could constitute Africa's greatest potential to adapt to impacts and to usher in a new model of sustainable development, but, on other hand, it could also decimate African fragile economies, thus compromising its ability to realize several of the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are as many solutions as there are problems. The continent needs to radically reconfigure its economies away from agricultural practices that are holding hostage many of the hard working smallholder farmers who are unable to adopt modern practices that will transform their businesses into viable enterprises. Yet, we know agriculture is one of the most vulnerable sectors to the impacts of climate change. Indeed, agriculture is one of the most likely sectors through which we can arrive at structural transformation. It is also a sector that holds huge potential for international trade.

Trade infrastructure and facilities will be greatly impacted and rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme events such as flooding and hurricanes will damage or destroy infrastructure thereby having a negative impact on trade. Indeed, the distribution of weather events will largely depend on the level of exposure, and the sensitivity of populations in different

ecosystems. Trade infrastructures and routes will be affected as well as coastal infrastructure.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is why we are working closely with the regional integration and trade division through the African Climate Policy Centre to explore the linkages between agriculture, trade and climate change, and make good on dysfunctional food systems and poor land management policies. To further support national policy making, especially in the wake of the Paris Agreement, we are looking at downscaled regional climate models, crop simulation, land use and agricultural trade models to understand their interactions and to provide the scientific basis for coherent policies on how trade can be configured across key staple crops based on climate related impacts. We are also supporting the deployment of climate information services as a necessary ingredient for reducing poverty and strengthening the predictive capacities of smallholder farmers in a changing climate.

Similarly, we are not just advocating for resource efficiency and green industrialization, our green economy section is providing support to the Climate Resilient Green Economy and the Growth and Transformation Programme in its Phase II implementation in Ethiopia, and the sub-programme is now entering into dialogue with Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in making the transition to green economy with an emphasis on the agriculture/livestock value chain.

Our New Technologies and Innovations section is deeply aware of the correlation between the knowledge economy and development and the gains that can be accrued with a digital based economy, hence, it is working closely

with member states through research and dialogue to promote the use of information and technologies as a catalyst to structural transformation. The organisation of spaces for dialogue working with senior experts across the continent has created an impetus for supporting member states to leverage science, technologies and innovations, a case in point is the dialogue on 'Cities as Hubs of Innovation'.

Recognizing that minerals have to be a formula for expanding growth to other critical sectors, the AMDC is assisting members states to integrate their mineral sector into national and economic and social activities and in the formulation of a domesticated version of the Africa Mining Vision into country mining vision route maps to address old problems of the mineral sector. The AMDC is also working closely with the Macro Economic Policy Division on raising the profile of illicit financial flows as well as preparing key knowledge products on how illicit financial flows can be regulated while supporting countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Malawi and Niger to manage complex contract negotiations with a view to improving revenue generation through minerals and extractives.

Investing in effective management of environmental assets is critical to reducing poverty, hunger, and disease. This is also part of the arsenal required to spur inclusive growth and encourage low carbon technologies. The SID sub-programme tends to focus on adopting new approaches that will offer new solutions, new methods of capacity building and advocate the use of science not as a divisive element, but as a federating agent to unite all the core elements of a sustainable development blueprint.

For this to happen, we continue to rely on your insights in implementing national development plans to guide ECA and the sub-programme on where our support is most useful. This is a partnership, in which we have a common border, and this border is about how we can sever ties with poverty definitively. We want to be an ecosystem that will exploit innovations and technology for shared prosperity; an ecosystem that will use climate action as the new trigger for ushering in a low carbon development, drawing on our wide range of renewable energies; and we want green economy to be synonymous with a new growth model that will create green jobs and new skills for our youth and support our intrinsic right to explore other forms of development. But, to ensure that we leave no one behind, we also want to break even with a mineral sector that for a long time has simultaneously created corridors of power and want. In charting a practical route map, that will crisscross all these goals and aspirations, we rely on your knowledge, insights, strategies, and good will, and the formulation of policies that will support our journey towards structural transformation and inclusive development. Thank you.