

Seventeenth session  
Regional Coordination  
Mechanism for Africa

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## **Aide-memoire**

## **I. Background**

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 1998/46, made the holding of regular inter-agency meetings an imperative for all regions. Accordingly, regional coordination mechanisms were created in 2002 as frameworks for consultation among agencies, programmes, organizations, funds and offices of the United Nations working at the regional level. The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) has evolved from being a consultative mechanism to holding formal, annual sessions at which United Nations bodies operating in Africa share information on their respective activities and agree to coordinate their strategies for programme delivery in support of the African Union's programmes.

2. Furthermore, based on the mandate derived from resolution 57/7, the United Nations system in Africa was called on to coordinate its activities through RCM-Africa, in line with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the overarching development framework for Africa and other priorities of the African Union and its organs and regional and subregional organizations. RCM-Africa serves as a vehicle for enhancing coordination and coherence by engaging increasingly in the joint planning and programming of United Nations activities in order to "deliver as one" on the needs and priorities of the African Union and other regional and subregional partners.

3. The annual RCM-Africa sessions have become a forum for assessing the effectiveness of cooperation, collaboration and coordination between the United Nations system and the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations support for Africa's development. Past sessions have focused on topical and emerging issues of particular importance to Africa's development agenda. The theme of the seventeenth session is "African Union-United Nations partnership for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals".

4. Africa's economic performance over the past decade has been very robust. Over the past two years, the continent has achieved growth of around 4 per cent, which is higher than the global average of 2.5 per cent. Africa has also registered remarkable progress on several socioeconomic indicators despite low initial conditions. However, much more needs to be done to increase youth employment, reduce poverty and improve access to health and education services. Almost one out of every two individuals in Africa lives below the extreme poverty line, and the continent has the highest levels of maternal and child deaths. Approximately 3.2 million of the continent's children did not reach their fifth birthday in 2012, and the maternal mortality rate of 289 deaths per 100,000 live births far exceeds the global average of 210.

5. Studies carried out by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) show that the relatively high levels of poverty are linked to the structure of most African economies. African countries are largely dependent on commodities that are exported with little or no value added, and therefore very few jobs are generated. That is why Africa needs to embark on commodity-based industrialization and through that create decent job opportunities, which in turn will lead to substantial reductions in poverty and the minimization of income and wealth inequalities.

### **A. Agenda 2063 and the first ten-year implementation plan**

6. Agenda 2063, a framework for Africa's structural transformation, was agreed upon by African Heads of State and Government at the twenty-first ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, in May 2013, which also marked fifty years since the establishment of the African Union. In the African Union's fiftieth anniversary solemn declaration, Heads of State and Government pledged to develop and pursue a transformational agenda through eight 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.

7. Agenda 2063 is founded on the African Union's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena". It also builds on the Constitutive Act of the African Union and national and regional frameworks, both past and present, such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme and Minimum Integration Programme, including the Monrovia Declaration, the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community.

8. Agenda 2063 is also anchored on the African Union's general vision and is based on seven aspirations derived from the broad consultations during the drafting process, namely:

1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
2. An integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance;
3. An Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
4. A peaceful and secure Africa;
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics;
6. An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its women and youth;
7. Africa as a strong, resilient and influential global player and partner.

9. The 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 project an Africa of strong identity, culture and values, as well as a strong and influential partner on the global stage making an equal contribution to human progress and welfare – in short a different and better Africa.

10. The aspirations reveal a strong desire to see a continent where the fundamental freedoms of women and young people are guaranteed and where they can assume a leading role in the development of African societies. They are based on the conviction that Africa has the potential and ability to catch up with other regions and take up its rightful place in the world.

11. Agenda 2063 is expected to be implemented in phases of ten years. The first phase covers the period 2013-2023 and addresses the following:

- i. Sustainable inclusive economic growth;
- ii. Human capital development;
- iii. Employment creation;
- iv. Social protection;
- v. Women development and youth empowerment;
- vi. Good governance and capable institutions;
- vii. Infrastructural development;

- viii. Science, technology and innovation;
- ix. Peace and security;
- x. Culture, arts and sports.

12. The first ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 calls upon African countries to fast track the implementation of flagship projects identified as having the potential to have an immediate positive impact on growth, such as the integrated high-speed train network, the Grand Inga Dam, the single aviation market, the outer space programme, the Pan-African e-Network, the annual African consultative platform, the virtual university, the African passport and the free movement of persons, the continental free trade area, silencing the guns by 2020, the development of a commodity strategy, and the establishment of continental financial institutions, including an African central bank by 2030.

13. In addition, the implementation strategy of Agenda 2063 spells out 20 goals and 34 priority areas. The goals and priorities include: poverty reduction; the expansion of education at all levels; improved maternal and child health care, water and sanitation facilities; industrialization of the African economy; greater resilience to the effects of climate change and prioritized adaptation; modernized farming methods for increased production, productivity and value addition; better and more sustainable management of natural resources, including mineral and agricultural resources; the establishment of a continental free trade area and significantly developed intra-African trade; and a well-developed infrastructure network.

14. Furthermore, the observance of good governance, the rule of law and human rights, and the cessation of all inter-country and intra-country conflicts on the continent are also goals to be attained by 2023. Also to be achieved are goals in the realm of culture, including full engagement with the African diaspora, the development and wider use of African languages, and the growth of the creative arts and cultural industries. The empowerment of women and young people is also an important goal to be pursued, as is the need to increase Africa's presence and voice in global affairs.

## **B. Sustainable Development Goals**

15. The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, at a time when billions of people are living in poverty, inequality is rising, and there are enormous disparities in terms of opportunity, wealth and power. Other challenges include gender inequality; rising unemployment, particularly among young people; global health threats; conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and the forced displacement of people; and natural resource depletion, climate change and rising global temperatures and sea levels. The impact of climate change on coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries, many of which are least developed countries and small island developing States, is a particular cause for concern as it is reversing much of the development progress made in recent decades.

16. The Sustainable Development Goals are made up of 17 goals and 169 associated targets. The goals were globally agreed upon through an inclusive process of intergovernmental negotiations and take account of different national realities, capacities, levels of development, policies and priorities. The targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each Government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies.

17. Africa's input into the development of the Sustainable Development Goals was through the Common African Position. The Common African Position, which has the same tenants of Agenda 2063, is Africa's consensus on the continent's challenges, priorities and aspirations, and the strategies for dealing with them. It therefore reflects Africa's development priorities upon six pillars: structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; science, technology and innovation; people-centred development; environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management; peace and security; and finance and partnerships. It is the view of the African Union that Agenda 2063 is in sync with the Sustainable Development Goals because most of the recommendations of the Common African Position were taken on board by the General Assembly and therefore there is an alignment between Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **C. Need for a common approach to the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals**

18. African countries have committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as Agenda 2063. They also have their own national development plans and strategies. It is therefore important to have a common strategy for the implementation of both frameworks so as to achieve the goals and targets and minimize the challenges associated with implementing both agendas.

19. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals are in congruence with the goals of Agenda 2063. For example, Goal 1 of Agenda 2063 aims at achieving "a high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens". Goals 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere), 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), 6 (ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all), 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries) and 12 (ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) of the Sustainable Development Goals are clearly consistent with achieving Goal 1 of Agenda 2063. The alignment between most of the goals of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals provides an opportunity to implement both within a single framework without unduly burdening policymakers with multiple development frameworks.

20. Despite some level of alignment between Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals, some of the goals of Agenda 2063 are unique to Africa. These are Goal 8 (a united Africa, federal or confederate), Goal 9 (establishment of functional continental financial and monetary institutions), Goal 14 (a stable and peaceful Africa) and Goal 15 (a fully functional and operational African peace and security architecture).

21. Equally important is the need for better coordination to ensure effective implementation and follow-up, addressing areas of convergence as well as those unique to Africa. That is why a coherent and common framework that integrates both Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning frameworks is needed. The Sustainable Development Goals attempt to respond to the global dimensions of Africa's development challenges, while Agenda 2063 responds to the regional dimension. Implementation of both will require advocacy and sensitization about the details of both frameworks, strengthened capacities to integrate in a coherent fashion such initiatives into national planning frameworks, and research to support evidence-based policymaking.

22. Accompanying a common framework for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals should be monitoring and evaluation tools. Such tools would reinforce the culture of managing for results with regard to the implementation of the common

framework. A monitoring and evaluation framework, by setting targets and milestones, would also ensure that all parties involved work towards achieving the development goals. It would also ensure that the causes of non-performance were identified and addressed through evaluation processes.

## **II. Objectives of the seventeenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa**

23. The sessions of RCM-Africa are an important forum for dialogue between the United Nations and the African Union on issues pertinent to the development agenda of Africa. That is why the theme of the seventeenth session is “African Union-United Nations partnership for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals”. The session will give the United Nations system the opportunity to contribute to finding a common strategy for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The session will chart the way forward on the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, particularly its first ten-year implementation plan.

24. In addition to the reflections on the theme, participants at the seventeenth session will also deliberate on the mechanism for implementing the framework on United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa’s integration and development agenda for 2017-2027, as the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union expires at the end of 2016.

25. The session will also consider the alignment of the RCM-Africa clusters to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The need for alignment comes from a decision of the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa that “RCM-Africa should maintain the status quo of the clusters until the June 2015 Assembly of the African Union and should hold a meeting after that Assembly to align the clusters with the ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063”. Through Assembly/AU/Dec. 565(XXIV), African Union Heads of State and Government endorsed Agenda 2063 and its implementation plan. Following that, the secretariat of RCM-Africa will make a proposal at the seventeenth session for the reconfiguration and alignment of the RCM-Africa clusters to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The seventeenth session will also consider other measures aimed at strengthening RCM-Africa.

## **III. Expected outcomes**

26. The session is expected to result in the following outcomes:

(a) Consensus on United Nations support to the African Union in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Consensus on a mechanism for implementing the framework on United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa’s integration and development agenda for 2017-2027;

(c) Consensus on the alignment and reconfiguration of RCM-Africa to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals and the operational modalities to effectively implement the goals, targets and priority areas.

## **IV. Outputs**

27. The following outputs will be delivered:

- (a) Outcome document;
- (b) Meeting report;
- (c) Press releases;
- (d) Web publications.

## **V. Format**

28. The first day of the seventeenth session of RCM-Africa will consist of in-depth discussions on the theme. The second day will be devoted to matters of significant importance in the strengthening of RCM-Africa.

29. A pre-session meeting for cluster and sub-cluster coordinators was held 11 -12 February 2016.

30. The seventeenth session of RCM-Africa will be chaired jointly by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

## **VI. Provisional agenda**

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and the programme of work
3. Discussion on the theme of the session, “United Nations system support to the African Union in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals”
4. Discussion on the implementation of the United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa’s integration and development agenda
5. Review of the progress report of RCM-Africa and the subregional coordination mechanisms
6. Review of the alignment and reconfiguration of RCM-Africa to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals
7. Other business
8. Summary of conclusions and way forward
9. Closing of the session

## **VII. Meeting documentation**

31. The meeting documents include the following:

- (a) Aide-memoire;
- (b) United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa’s integration and development agenda;
- (c) Alignment and reconfiguration of RCM-Africa to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (d) Consolidated progress report on the activities of RCM-Africa;
- (e) Brochure on the achievements of RCM-Africa;
- (f) Outcome of the pre-session meeting of the cluster and sub-cluster coordinators;
- (g) Promotional materials on United Nations system-wide support to the African Union.

## **VIII. Participants**

32. Participants will include:

- African Union Commission
- African Development Bank
- NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency
- African Peer Review Mechanism secretariat
- Economic Community of West African States
- Economic Community of Central African States
- East African Community
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
- Southern African Development Community
- Community of Sahel-Saharan States
- Intergovernmental Authority on Development
- Arab Maghreb Union
- All agencies and organizations of the United Nations system working in support of Africa, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
- Partners and friends of RCM-Africa, including bilateral organizations

## **IX. Dates and venue**

33. The seventeenth session of RCM-Africa will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa on 2 and 3 April 2016. It was preceded by a meeting of cluster and sub-cluster coordinators, in February 2016.

## **X. Contact details**

34. For further information about the meeting, please contact:

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## **XI. Administrative arrangements**

35. An information note providing details of administrative arrangements and logistics related to the meeting will be distributed shortly.



