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**Presentations and discussion on strengthening the Regional
Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa): draft
report on the alignment of the RCM-Africa clusters**

Report and recommendations of the joint committee on the realignment of the clusters of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

I. Introduction

A. Background

1.   At its sixteenth session, held in Addis Ababa on 28 and 29 March 2015, the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) decided that RCM-Africa should maintain the existing configuration of its clusters until the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, scheduled for June 2015, and that it should then align the clusters with the 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063. The decision to wait until June 2015 was prompted by the expectation that the Assembly would discuss and endorse the 10-year implementation plan. The Assembly duly endorsed the Agenda and its 10-year implementation plan by decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 565(XXIV) at that session.

2.   Subsequent to those actions, a draft framework for the reconfiguration and alignment of the RCM-Africa clusters with Agenda 2063 was presented by the RCM-Africa secretariat for discussion at a retreat of RCM-Africa cluster and subcluster coordinators, held on 11 and 12 February, 2016, at Kuriftu, Debre Zeit, Ethiopia. The report of the retreat may be found in document E/ECA/RCM/17/4, circulated for the present session.

3.   Participants at the retreat further requested the committee established to consider the realignment of the clusters to present its report to the RCM Africa coordinators and, following consultations with them, to submit a report with its recommendations to RCM Africa at its seventeenth session in April 2016.

B. Preparatory work by the joint committee

4.   Following the retreat, from 15 to 17 February 2016 a series of internal consultations were conducted with 10 technical departments and directorates of the African Union Commission, facilitated by the African Union component of the joint secretariat. The technical departments and directorates were selected on the basis that their involvement in RCM-Africa as joint coordinators of the clusters or subclusters had equipped them with first-hand experience of the functioning of the system. The 10 departments and directorates were the following: Department of Political Affairs; Department of Economic Affairs; Department of Social Affairs; Department of Trade and Industry; Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture; Department of Infrastructure and Energy; Department of Peace and Security; Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology; Directorate of Women, Gender and Development; and the Directorate of Information and Communication.

5.   The joint committee also reported on its work to the African Union Commission at its meeting on 23 February 2016, with a view to seeking strategic guidance from its political management. The commissioners supported the process of engaging the various departments and emphasized the importance of strengthened coordination between the African Union and the African offices of the United Nations agencies, to ensure the effective implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

6.   The joint committee duly took into account the input provided by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordination Agency, but received no input from the regional economic communities. The African Union Commission undertook to raise this matter at the joint coordination meeting with the communities' chief executives, planned for 11 March 2016, to solicit their views.

7.   In addition, the joint committee, as mandated by the participants at the retreat, made a presentation to the United Nations Liaison Team on 22 March 2016. The inputs arising from that presentation and the subsequent discussion are reflected in the present report.

II. Analysis of the status quo

A. Current configuration of the RCM-Africa clusters

8.   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 actively participate in its activities, as do the African Development Bank and the World Bank. RCM-Africa meets annually to review its work and to give 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.

9.   Currently, RCM-Africa functions through a system of nine clusters, as follows:

        (a)   Infrastructure development cluster, comprising four subclusters: energy; information and communications technology; transport; water, sanitation and hygiene;

        (b)   Governance cluster, comprising four subclusters: economic and corporate governance; human rights; public service and administration; and democracy and elections;

(c)   Social and human development cluster, comprising 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 sport and culture;

(d)   Environment, population and urbanization cluster, which has the objective of tackling the challenges of growing populations and movement of people; rapid growth of towns; environmental degradation and pollution; and the lack of demographic statistics;

(e)   Agriculture, food security and rural development cluster, which works under the overarching framework of the commercial agriculture development plan;

(f)   Science and technology cluster, which has three interlinked pillars: capacity-building; knowledge production and technological innovation;

(g)   Advocacy and communications cluster, originally intended to promote greater understanding of NEPAD globally, build support for NEPAD among Africans and the international community, and promote the work of the United Nations in support of NEPAD;

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

(i)   Industry, trade and market access cluster, which promotes the development of   industries and agribusiness in Africa.

B.   Best practices, lessons learned and challenges relating to the current cluster system

10.   The joint committee observed that there are many examples of joint action by bodies in the United Nations system, the African Union and the regional economic communities from which it is evident how much more can be achieved through coordinated activities than by acting in parallel. Examples identified include the final push during the last five years of the Millennium Development Goals process, to ensure that better results were achieved at the continental level; the work between the regional economic communities and the subregional mechanisms; and issue-based cooperation on such matters as combating HIV, AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and Ebola; and on promoting gender equality.

11.   The joint committee stressed that this joint work must be consolidated, as the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities seek to ensure that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 starts off on a proper footing. Concerted efforts must be made to tackle the challenges facing the current RCM-Africa clusters that inhibit their efficient functioning, and that should be remedied by the reconfigured cluster system. These include:

(a)   The need for greater participation by the various departments within the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Agency and the regional economic communities as the main stakeholders in the work of RCM-Africa, to ensure stronger ownership and guidance by the organs of the African Union;

(b)   The need for greater coordination among participating United Nations agencies, which have tended to compete with one another for turf and

shown a preference to engage with the African Union Commission outside the RCM-Africa cluster framework;

(c) The perception on the part of African Union departments that there is some reluctance by the United Nations system to give priority to African Union programmes and priorities, a position which is seen as the single most important factor behind the decline of African Union participation in cluster meetings;

(d) The infrequency of cluster and subcluster meetings and the inadequate attendance and institutional representation at those meetings and, in particular, the lack of continuity in respect of the level of attendance and representation of agencies and organizations at cluster and subcluster meetings;

(e) The lack of resources to support implementation of the programmes of RCM-Africa and its clusters, as there is no dedicated budget allocation from the General Assembly for the implementation of RCM-Africa-related programmes and activities; difficulties faced by many clusters in elaborating joint programmes and creating a common funding pool for their activities, because of different programme and budget cycles set by their governing bodies; and continued inability of the clusters to mobilize resources and commit dedicated resources to the planning and implementation of joint programmes and projects;

(f) The need for better communication: despite progress in several areas, there has been inadequate cooperation between the advocacy and communications cluster and the other clusters;

(g) The lack of clarity regarding the allocation of roles and responsibilities for specific activities among the United Nations agencies themselves, on the one hand, and between those agencies and the African Union Commission, on the other;

(h) The weak monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the mechanism, the work of its clusters and the key indicators of success and targets to be achieved in each area of activity. An effective monitoring and evaluation system will help to ensure a common understanding of impact, results, outcome and activities in the context of RCM-Africa and the proper articulation of indicators of achievement;

(i) The failure by the current RCM-Africa system to factor in other coordination mechanisms between the United Nations system, the African Union and the regional economic communities in existence on the continent.

C. Joint programming approach

12.   The retreat considered presentations outlining examples of effective coordination, which were based on joint programming and which took the subregional coordination mechanism for Eastern and Southern Africa as a model structure. The presentations looked at the implementation of flagship projects such as the tripartite free trade area, the upcoming negotiations on a continental free trade area and development corridors in the regions concerned. The exercise in joint planning around a specific programme conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission and the International Planned Parenthood Federation was highlighted as another example meriting consideration, as was the coordination mechanism for the African Union Support to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa mission, set up in Addis Ababa during the Ebola epidemic in 2014-2015.

13.   The broad principle of a coordination system based on the joint planning and implementation of activities under specific programmes was

contrasted with the current cluster system, based on very broad development areas. It was agreed that, even if clusters were to be based on broad areas, each should have one or two flagship projects which defined the areas of cooperation and whose outcomes could be measured and monitored for impact.

D. Multilateral and bilateral arrangements between the African Union Commission and the United Nations and other international organizations

14. Participants at the retreat briefly reviewed current coordination arrangements between the African Union Commission and United Nations and other agencies and identified a number of trends, as outlined below.

15. In many areas of work, cooperation between specific African Union departments and United Nations agencies takes place outside the RCM-Africa cluster framework, because the programmes concerned are bilateral in nature. Resources are available for bilateral programmes, such as those between the African Union's Department of Infrastructure and Energy and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), or those between the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), or those between the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

16. Cluster systems work best where there are a multiplicity of stakeholders involved with an issue, where there are more than one United Nations and other international agencies involved and where there are more than two African Union departments involved. An example of such successful cooperation is the joint programme on labour migration management mounted by ECA together with the African Union Commission, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which involves at least three departments of the African Union and also the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A programme of such complexity with such wide implications would be well-nigh impossible to conduct on a bilateral basis. The clusters under the current system which function most effectively therefore include the environment, population and urbanization cluster, and also the subcluster on labour and employment of the parent social and human development cluster.

17. Participants at the retreat also identified arrangements where other coordination systems are already in existence or are in the process of being created. These include the existing mechanism on peace and security; the emerging mechanisms on governance, such as the multi-stakeholder African governance architecture convened by the African Union's Department of Political Affairs, and the Coalition for Education, in which the Department of Human Resources and Science and Technology is enlisting the involvement of a number of stakeholders around the African Union strategy for education; or the ad hoc forums convened with relevant stakeholders by the Union's Women, Gender and Development Directorate.

E. Convergence between Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals

18. Participants at the retreat agreed that the adoption of Agenda 2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan by the African Union in 2015 and of the Sustainable Development Goals by the General Assembly at its seventieth session and the common areas between the goals of these two framework

documents provide an opportunity to improve coordination, joint planning and programming, thereby also improving the relevant coordination structures.

19.   For the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and to harness the transformative impact of Agenda 2063, there is a critical need for joint implementation and coordination, in order not to divide or duplicate efforts and resources. Participants observed that this requirement places a heavy burden on member States.

III.   Conclusions and recommendations

A.   Underlying principles for the realignment of the clusters

20.   In the light of the discussions at the retreat and the work of the joint committee, the following principles are suggested for the realignment of the RCM-Africa clusters:

    (a)   The work of RCM-Africa should be framed by Agenda 2063 and an Africa-specific approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

    (b)   The clusters should focus on cooperation in specific programmes, consistent with the goals of the first 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals;

    (c)   Joint programme planning and implementation should be accompanied by resource planning and resource mobilization by all parties;

    (d)   The coordination processes should involve the regional economic communities and the sub-regional coordination mechanisms in an effective manner;

    (d)   The development of common indicators and a monitoring and evaluation framework for the goals of the first 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, which will be presented to the ministers of finance, economy, planning and integration at the Conference of Ministers in April 2016.

21.   The table below shows the current clusters counterposed with the two options for their realignment that were identified in the discussions at the retreat: first, that the clusters should be aligned with the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063, with the relevant subclusters (in line with the ECA proposal); and, second, that the clusters should be reconfigured in line with the goals of the first 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, an approach conducive to greater programmatic cooperation.

Current clusters	Option 1: based on the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063	Option 2: based on the Agenda 2063 goals and the Sustainable Development Goals

1. Infrastructure development cluster 2. Governance cluster 3. Social and human development 4. Environment, population and urbanization 5. Agriculture, food security and rural development 6. Science and technology 7. Advocacy and communications 8. Peace and security 9. Industry, trade and market access	1. Inclusive growth and sustainable development 2. Regional integration, trade and infrastructure 3. Governance and human rights 4. Peace and security 5. Culture, heritage and shared values 6. Women and youth 7. Advocacy and global partnership	1. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth 2. Human capital development 3. Employment creation 4. Social protection 5. Gender equality, women's development and youth empowerment 6. Good governance, human rights and capable institutions[a] 7. Infrastructure development 8. Peace and security[b] 9. Culture, art and sport[c]

a. There is no need to create a cluster on governance, capable institutions and human rights, since the African Governance Architecture platform and the Interdepartmental Task Force on Post-Conflict Reconstruction (which brings together the African Union Commission, the African Union Department of Political Affairs and the African Union Peace and Security Department) already include all the relevant institutions in a working multi-stakeholder arrangement.

b. It is recommended that the peace and security cluster be disbanded and use made instead of the existing mechanisms established for the purposes of peace and security between the African Union Commission and the United Nations.

c. There is no real need for a sport and culture cluster: United Nations agencies are not involved in sport, while the Sports Division of the African Union has other bilateral and multilateral arrangements. The issue of culture and heritage is dealt with by only one agency, UNESCO, and there is therefore no need for a cluster on culture. The Culture Division of the African Union has bilateral and multilateral arrangements with organizations other than UNESCO.

B. Proposed operational principles for the realigned clusters

22. The joint committee identified the following principles for the realignment of the clusters:

(a) Existing African Union-United Nations mechanisms that are effective, such as those in the areas of peace and security, or those convened by the African Union in the area of governance (African Governance Architecture platform, task force on post-conflict reconstruction) or the coalition for education under the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology, or the continental free trade area process under the Department of Trade and Industry, should be continued in their current forms, but a mechanism should be found to ensure that their reports are included in the RCM-Africa reports;

(b) The other reconfigured clusters should meet and agree on priority and flagship programmes based on the indicators adopted by ministers of finance, economy, planning and integration, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2063 flagship projects;

(c) The reconfigured clusters should discuss the mobilization of resources for their priority and flagship programmes and report thereon to the coordinators;

(d) The reconfigured clusters should make recommendations on subclusters, based on their priorities and resources, and guidance in this regard should be provided by the RCM-Africa secretariat;

(e)   The RCM-Africa programme and the United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda for 2017-2027 should be aligned, with a view to the adoption of the partnership by the General Assembly;

(f)   Work should be undertaken with other comparable arrangements, such as the African Union Partners Group, to promote cooperation and joint implementation and monitoring;

(g)   A multi-year programme should be developed for the clusters, within the broad framework set out in the annex to the present report.

C.   Recommended realignment of the clusters

23.   In the light of the experience gained with the current cluster system and the inputs from African Union departments, the joint committee recommends the following configuration of clusters, based on a merger of the goal-based option set out in the table above with elements of previous clusters and aspects of the second option, aligned with the Agenda 2063 aspirations. The footnotes indicate the elements of the second option that have been included and how they have been modified:

1. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade and regional integration

2. Infrastructure development

3. Human capital development, health, science, technology and innovation

4. Labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility;

5. Women and gender equality and youth empowerment

6. Humanitarian matters [1]

7. Environment, urbanization and population

8. Advocacy, information, communications

D.   Further recommendations to strengthen the cluster system

24.   The joint committee also put forward the following recommendations, not directly related to its mandate, but which should reinforce the reconfigured cluster system:

(a)   That a monitoring and evaluation framework for the RCM-Africa cluster system should be put in place, to assist with the process of joint evaluation of the performance of the United Nations on the continent, in the context of the implementation of RCM-Africa business plans and programmes;

(b)   That United Nations agencies should be encouraged to allocate 30 per cent of their budget to the implementation of RCM-Africa programmes, as a first step towards improved funding and resource mobilization;

(c)   That, following the suggestion of a number of African Union departments, the decision taken by RCM-Africa at its sixteenth session and endorsed

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[1]   It is recommended that a humanitarian cluster be created, to bring together members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for Humanitarian Affairs comprising the African Union Commission, relevant United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations, including Oxfam International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

in the two triennial reviews of the United Nations ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union should be implemented, to the effect that a joint African Union Commission-United Nations secretariat for RCM-Africa which properly represents both the African Union and the United Nations should be constituted and operationalized, to replace the existing set-up, which is merely consultative in function. This would also help meet the need to strengthen both components of the joint secretariat, and to mobilize funding from regular and predictable sources;

(d)   That, based on the concern expressed by the African Union commissioners and departments, the United Nations agencies should make greater efforts to deliver as one, to ensure better coordination with and support for the African Union and other continental institutions;

(e)   That the African Union should assume its responsibility to exercise ownership and leadership of continental development and RCM-Africa processes.

Annex

Proposed RCM Africa-African Union joint cluster programme framework: 2016-2017

In view of the convergence between Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, the African position is for a concerted and deliberate drive for joint implementation and monitoring, between the United Nations system, the African Union, the regional eoncomic communities and other institutions working on the continent.

Agenda 2063, together with the goals and indicators of its first 10-year implementation plan, builds on past frameworks such as the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa (1980-2000), the Abuja Treaty and the NEPAD programme, and also on other sectoral frameworks such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the action plan for accelerated industrial development in Africa and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa.

The table below maps out the proposed clusters aligned to the goals and priorities of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Table

Mapping of the clusters to the goals of Agenda 2063 and the Afrian Union priorities for 2016-2017

Cluster 1:	Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade, agriculture and agro-processing and regional integration
Goals	**Priorities 2016-2017**
Transformed economies	- Sustainable and inclusive economic growth - Manufacturing driven by science, technology and innovation, industrialization and value addition as identified in the United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda for 2017-2027, the African Mining Vision and the envisaged African commodities strategy - Economic diversification and resilience - Improved private sector engagement and business climate in Africa - Implementation of the African Charter on Statistics and the strategy for the harmonization of statistics in Africa - Formulation of a commodities strategy - Launch of the continental free trade area negotiations - Provision of technical advisory services to member States in the areas of mining contract negotiations, domestication of the Africa Mining Vision, and development of policies for the sustainable use of the continent's minerals - Work with the regional economic communities to implement projects identified in the action plan for accelerated industrial development in Africa

	• Support for efforts by member States to implement trade facilitation measures within the framework of the action plan for boosting intra-Africa trade and the World Trade Organization.
Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production	• Support for the implementation by member States of priority programmes under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme • Support for and monitoring of the enhancement of agribusiness • Promotion of policies, processes and infrastructure for market access and trade in agricultural products • Support for implementation of the gender, climate change and agriculture support programmes
Blue economy for accelerated economic growth	• Addition of value in the intra-regional fish trade in food security in Africa • Implementation of the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy
United and integrated Africa (federal or confederate)	• Finalization of the African passport and free movement of people • Harmonization of policies and standards to promote regional and continental integration and competitiveness
Continental financial and monetary institutions established and functional and resources mobilized	• Creation of financial and monetary institutions • Identification of alternative sources of funding to strengthen the African Union funding mechanism • Establishment of a mechanisms for domestic resource mobilization, including alternative sources of funding, with a view to ensuring predictable and sustainable implementation of African Union development priorities as defined in Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Cluster 2:   Infrastructure development

Goals	Priorities 2016-2017
World-class infrastructure criss-crossing Africa	• Integrated high-speed train network • Unification of African air transport, single African aviation market • Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project • Support for implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa • Improved connectivity, reliability and cost-effectiveness of transport and tourism networks and services in the continent • Increased access to modern energy for Africa's social and economic development

Cluster 3:   Human capital development, health, science, technology and innovation

Goals	Priorities 2016-2017
Well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation	• African virtual and e-university • Pan-African e-network • Outer space • Promotion of key policies and programmes on the use of outer-space for social and economic development • Support for the pan-African university • Facilitated implementation of the 10- year science, technology and innovation strategy for Africa
Healthy and well-nourished citizens	• Prioritization by the African Union Commission of the establishment of the centre for disease control • Promotion of and support for key policies and programmes on primary health care and prevention, and an African regional nutrition strategy • Capacity strengthened for surveillance, detection and response to disease outbreaks and threats to public health, including through establishment of the centre for disease control

	• Scaling up of implementation of the African Medicine Regulation and Harmonization Programme in two regional economic communities and development of a database on health indicators
Well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation	• African virtual and e-university • Pan-African e-network • Outer space • Promotion of key policies and programmes on the use of outer-space for social and economic development • Support for the pan-African university Facilitated implementation of the 10- year science, technology and innovation strategy for Africa

Cluster 4:   Labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility

Goals	Priorities 2016-2017
High standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens	• Incomes, jobs and decent work • Poverty, inequality and hunger • Social security and protection, including for persons with disabilities • Modern and liveable habitats and basic quality services
Migration as a driving force for development and growth, and protection of vulnerable groups	• Mainstreaming migration in development planning and strategies through regional and national migration policy frameworks • Preventive and protective measures to tackle irregular migration, including human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, in line with existing African Union frameworks • Creation of alternative channels of regular migration, including enhanced intra-African mobility • Diaspora engagement and remittances • Platforms for increased inter-State and regional cooperation on migration

Cluster 5:   Women and gender equality and youth empowerment

Goals	Priorities 2016-2017
Full gender equality in all spheres of life	• Mainstreaming gender in the area of peace and security • Violence and discrimination against women and girls • Programmes and policies on women employment promoted and implemented
Engaged and empowered youth and children	• Youth empowerment and children • Programmes and policies on youth employment promoted and implemented

Cluster 6:   Humanitarian issues and disaster risk management

Goals	Priorities 2016-2017
	• Responding to African humanitarian crisis situations and striving for sustainable solutions to forced displacement on the continent • Building resilience, early warning systems and capacity to respond to disasters

Cluster 7:   Environment, urbanization and population

Goals	Priorities 2016-2017
Environmentally sustainable and climate-	• Support for the implementation of priority programmes on environment and natural resources, including climate change,

resilient economies and communities	desertification, ,biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, environmental monitoring
CLUSTER 8: Advocacy, information, communications	
Goals	**Priorities 2016-2017**
Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful coexistence	• Foregrounding Agenda 2063 with internal and external audiences of the African Union • Creation of a people-centred African Union through an active communication and advocacy strategy articulated around human rights • Support for efforts by the Economic and Social Council to implement Agenda 2063 • Support for implementation of legacy projects (African diaspora volunteer programme; Africa diaspora skills database; Africa diaspora investment funds and marketplace for African development)

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