

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR GROUPS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON
“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.
AT THE 5TH AFRICA REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
MARRAKESH, APRIL 16, 2019**

We, representatives of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders met in Marrakesh on 16th April 2019, ahead of the 5th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development themed “*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*”.

We highly appreciate and are encouraged by UNECA and the African Union Commission’s commitment to engage with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders; and their recognition of the role of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders towards realizing Sustainable Development in Africa.

With the forthcoming HLPF July 2019, having the theme “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality” we have the commitment of returning to the five key highlights of the Agenda which are: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership and to question ourselves on the progress Africa has made in terms of these key areas which directly relates to the goals under review at the forthcoming HLPF.

With support from the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, African Governments and their partners need to strengthen their commitment towards empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. To realize this goal in the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063, we recommend the following:

On ensuring inclusive and equitable education (SDG 4) we recommend:

- The enactment, strengthening and implementation of laws and policies that address key barriers to access and completion of education especially for young girls.
- Promote lifelong inclusive and quality education for all, including marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- Strengthen and invest in alternative education system and vocational training including apprenticeship and skills based certification to reduce youth unemployment and pay gaps.
- Ensure enabling and inclusive environment in education institutions to support access by people with disabilities through the design and development of educational infrastructures and equipment.

On promoting decent work and inclusive economic growth (SDG 8) we recommend:

- Address the persisting high levels of youth unemployment through investment in key sectors and create an enabling environment for youth to develop sustainable enterprises through the provision of mentorship and financing for start-ups.
- Implement and enforce policies on investment that create opportunities for partnership with local enterprises, promote worker safety, decent and safe labour practices, safe guard workers' rights.
- Promote investment in skills development, prevent child and indecent labour, and that recognize and reduce unpaid domestic care work for women and girls.
- Prioritize investments and financing in the agricultural sector to boost productivity and deliver decent incomes.
- Remove age restrictive policies on access to microcredit, loans and financial investments and provide social protection for older persons and other marginalized groups to facilitate and improve living conditions.
- Enact and promote policies that safeguards the balance between economic growth, social equity, and environment protection.

On ensuring reduced inequalities (SDG 10) we recommend:

- Encourage the implementation of macroeconomic policies and progressive tax regime that are favorable to all, especially sustainable development of women and girls.
- Improve public financial management to escape the debt trap and advocate for fair trade practices and policies that promote equality and equitable investment.
- Ensure meaningful participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups through the implementation of legal instruments and policies, that promote the rights of older persons, persons with disabilities, women, indigenous people, children and youth.
- There is need to invest and strengthen mechanisms that promote effective collection of desegregated data at all levels and for effective monitoring of Agenda 2030 and 2063.

On scaling-up climate action (SDG 13) we recommend:

- Innovatively mobilize domestic resources and international climate finance to support climate interventions and ensure transparency and accountability on utilization of the received climate funds.
- Implement national and local climate change resilience plans and strategies that have already been developed but not adequately implemented and ensure that they are in line with the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2063.
- Use innovation and environmentally-friendly, affordable and accessible technological tools that compliment traditional/indigenous practices.

- Set or improve monitoring and evaluation frameworks that track and assess implementation of commitments under 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Africa's 2063 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. This should be supported by the creation of or advancement of national databases which can be easily accessed by all stakeholders for inputs and sharing of information.
- Raise environmental awareness and establish national demonstration centers from which everyone can learn techniques for environmental protection.

On ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16) we recommend:

- Institute conflict-resolution interventions in war-torn countries, conflict areas and regions to reduce on the influx of refugees and migrants as well as engaging women in the peace-building missions to instill peace in the conflict zones.
- Create a sustainable future where a culture of integrity, good governance and zero tolerance to corruption will be promoted in all sectors of society.
- Increase financing support to state institutions such as the Gender Commissions, Human Rights Commission and National Peace and Reconciliation Commission for the effective implementation of women's human rights.
- Uphold the rule of law even when undergoing major reforms. Human rights are fundamental and they should be protected at all times.
- Adopt open and inclusive public contracting and design national and regional frameworks that promote accountability and protection of tax payers money.
- Uphold the commitment to safeguard freedom of speech, democracy, and protect the civic space.

On strengthening the means of implementation and partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17) we recommend:

- Institute cross-border joint learnings and benchmarking on SDGs for increased partnership formations.
- There is need to promote and advocate for participatory governance that take the form of bottom up approaches and ensure that the principles of good governance are followed by all members.
- Strengthen and finance the National Statistical Offices for collection of disaggregated data and supporting Citizen Generated Data, to including ensuring access of data by Major Groups and other stakeholders.

- Encourage and support local, national, regional, continental, and global actors to discuss openly, share experiences and challenges, network and collaborate for achievement of the sustainable development goals.
- Enhance a supportive environment to facilitate for multi-stakeholders' engagement.

Lastly, we would like to remind our governments that we are living with the reality that 21 SDG targets have a timeline of 2020, which by the time we hold the HLPF in July will be just 18 months away. We call upon member states to initiate a coherent, transparent and inclusive process of determining how these targets will be continued in order to maintain the ambition and integrity of the 2030 agenda and to ensure No One is Left Behind. This must be done with safeguards to ensure the ambitious 2030 agenda and its SDGs framework is not reopened for discussion.