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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Committee of Experts**  
 Thirty-fourth meeting

**African Union**  
**Committee of Experts**  
 First meeting

**Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union  
 Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary  
 Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration\* and the  
 Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African  
 Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**
**Meeting of the Committee of Experts**  
 Addis Ababa, 25–27 March 2015

## **Note on the convening of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

### **I. Introduction**

The present note is being submitted to the eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in order to inform the deliberations of the participants on the convening of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

The convening of the Forum was mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290. The Forum will provide Africa's collective inputs to the annual meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development established by the same resolution.

### **II. Background**

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in June 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Agenda 21 was adopted as a blueprint for environment and development in the twenty-first century, as well as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The General Assembly dedicated its nineteenth special session, in June 1997, to designing a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in 2002, in Johannesburg, ten years after the Rio Declaration, to renew the global commitment to sustainable development. At the Summit, the participants adopted the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

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\* The Specialized Technical Committee replaces the Conference of African Ministers of Economy and Finance (CAMEF) and the Conference of African Ministers of Integration (COMAI). The Specialized Technical Committee brings together ministers of finance, monetary affairs, economic planning and integration.

The decisions and mandates arising from these forums resulted in the institutional strengthening of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to follow-up on the implementation of Agenda 21 and subsequently the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

These decisions also mandated the United Nations regional commissions, including the Economic Commission for Africa, to deliver on the following action points:

- (i) Work with other bodies to organize regional reviews of the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21;
- (ii) Work with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, regional and subregional organizations and bodies, regional funds and programmes, international financial and trade institutions, and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to organize multi-stakeholder regional implementation meetings and to provide regional inputs into the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development as part of the mandate given to the regional commissions by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/218.

### **III. Rio+20 commitments with implications for the regional commissions**

In 2012 the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, was convened in Brazil. The main objective of the conference was to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, to assess the progress and implementation gaps, and to address new and emerging challenges. The conference focused on two themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

#### **A. Main outcomes of Rio+20**

Some of the main agreements reached at the conference were to:

- (a) Define the format and organizational aspects of the universal, intergovernmental high-level forum that would replace the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- (b) Constitute a working group to develop global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the General Assembly;
- (c) Establish an intergovernmental process under the General Assembly to prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy.

The Conference also adopted other decisions that have implications for the regional commissions, including:

- (a) The regional commissions should contribute to the preparation of the Global Sustainable Development Report. The preparation of the report is led by the Division for Sustainable Development, at the level of New York (resolution 66/288, para. 85);
- (b) The regional commissions should mainstream sustainable development into their respective mandates, programmes, strategies and decision-making processes, in support

of the efforts of all countries, in particular developing countries, in the achievement of sustainable development (para. 91);

(c) Ensure the institutional alignment of the three dimensions of sustainable development to be further mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system, and the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council on the progress made in this regard (para. 93);

(d) Regional and subregional organizations, including the regional commissions and their subregional offices, to prioritize sustainable development through, inter alia, more efficient and effective capacity-building, development and implementation of regional agreements and arrangements as appropriate, and exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned (para. 100);

(e) Strengthen United Nations system support for small island developing States, in keeping with the multiple ongoing and emerging challenges faced by such States in achieving sustainable development (para. 179), and thus follow up on the outcomes of the third Conference of Small Island Developing States;

(f) Undertake a set of coordinated regional actions to promote sustainable development and recognize, in this regard, that important steps have been taken to promote sustainable development through relevant forums, including within the United Nations regional commissions. Subsequent to the adoption of the sustainable development goals (pursuant to para. 248), assist countries to mainstream the goals into their development frameworks, support implementation and effectively monitor progress towards achieving them;

(g) Relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support the regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development (para. 251).

## **B. Follow-up on Rio+20 in Africa: recommendations of the Africa regional implementation meeting on the high-level political forum on sustainable development**

As a follow-up to Rio+20, the Africa regional implementation meeting was held from 19 to 21 November 2012 under the auspices of the eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Committee on Food Security and Sustainable Development. The meeting, which focused on the main outcomes of Rio+20, was organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

At the meeting, the participants put forward the following regarding the high-level political forum:

(a) Africa welcomes the impending establishment of a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum to, inter alia, provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development;

(b) The operational modalities of the forum should ensure effective linkages with related bodies from the regional to local levels. These linkages should be based on the principle of subsidiarity in view of its importance in ensuring effective implementation of global sustainable development agreements by means of tangible actions and outcomes at the national and local levels;

(c) The regional implementation meetings should be upgraded to regional high-level political forums for sustainable development, to constitute regional chapters of the high-level political forum. This should build on strong experience gained in convening the regional implementation meetings;

(d) The Economic Commission for Africa should convene the Africa Regional Political Forum in preparation for the sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, together with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, and in collaboration with relevant partners. In doing so, the provision of a strong platform that adequately ensures the enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development should be ensured;

(e) To enhance participation in the Africa Regional Political Forum, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the NEPAD Agency and the regional economic communities should be more actively engaged in the preparation of regional and subregional review reports in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations agencies, as well as in the convening of Africa-RPFs;

(f) Preparations for, and participation in the Africa-RPFs, should ensure adequate coordination among delegations from member States, who are encouraged to include in their delegations representatives from their respective countries, the African missions in Addis Ababa and the African group in New York. Representatives of major groups should also be invited to participate. The composition of such a hybrid group will ensure a richly-informed, well-coordinated and participatory process, and effective linkages between local, national, regional and global-level processes;

(g) The Department of Economic and Social Affairs should work with the Economic Commission for Africa to ensure that the national, subregional, regional and global-level processes and linkages spelled out above are realized accordingly;

(h) In view of the resource implications of ensuring well-coordinated and effective processes at the different levels, Africa calls upon the international community to provide it with adequate support.

### **C. Deliberation on the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes by the Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**

The sixth Joint Annual Meetings, held in 2013, deliberated on the progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

The Committee of Experts recommended that:

- (i) Ministers responsible for finance, planning and economy should take the lead in the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes, including incorporating them into national development policies, strategies and plans;
- (ii) Member States should facilitate the establishment or strengthening of coordination mechanisms at national and subnational levels as well as the design of the institutional framework for sustainable development at the global, regional and subregional levels;
- (iii) There should be coherence and synergy between the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, with a view to ensuring the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes in Africa, including through the urgent preparation of a regional action plan.

In the ministerial statement, the Conference noted that the Africa regional implementation meeting outcome document was a key African input to the Rio+20 follow-up processes and requested the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other relevant partners to expedite the development of a regional action plan for coordinated implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes in Africa. Such a plan should include strategies for the integration of the Rio+20 outcomes into national development policies, strategies and plans, taking into account the need for balancing economic, social and environmental development imperatives. We also urge that necessary steps be taken to achieve an early convergence between the post-2015 development agenda and the Rio+20 follow-up processes, particularly the sustainable development goals, with a view to “Delivering as one”.

#### **IV. Establishment of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implications for Africa**

In July 2013, the General Assembly, through its resolution 67/290, formally established the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The forum is the main United Nations platform dealing with sustainable development. It provides political leadership and guidance and follows up and reviews the implementation of sustainable development commitments and, as of 2016, the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. It addresses new and emerging challenges; promotes the science-policy interface and enhances the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It replaces the Commission on Sustainable Development. The forum meets every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly and every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The forum adopts negotiated declarations.

The General Assembly, through the above resolution:

- (i) Decided that the forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda;
- (ii) Decided that the meetings of the forum would benefit from regional preparatory processes;
- (iii) Acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and invited the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the work of the

forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.

## **V. Conclusion and recommendations**

The 2012 Africa regional implementation meeting and the sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance, held in 2013, provided guidance on the implementation of the outcomes of Rio+20 in Africa. The General Assembly, through its resolution 67/290, called upon the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and stakeholders.

In line with the above, it is therefore recommended that the Economic Commission for Africa should convene a multi-stakeholder Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, together with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, and in collaboration with United Nations agencies and other stakeholders. The Africa Regional Forum will be convened annually to prepare and provide Africa's collective input to the annual meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.