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Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa
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Mechanism for Africa and the regional United Nations
Sustainable Development Group

African Union

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Proposed working modalities for the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

I. Substantive work

A. Background and introduction

1. The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa serves as a platform for enhancing coordination and cooperation among United Nations agencies working in Africa and relevant organs of the African Union for the purposes of efficient and effective delivery on Africa's development agenda. The work of the Mechanism is currently guided by the Framework for a Renewed United Nations and African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017–2027. As a result of various studies on the effectiveness of the Mechanism that have been conducted over the years, however, the need to improve working modalities in terms of joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is quite evident.

2. In order to address that challenge, a key recommendation emanating from most of the annual sessions of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa calls for clusters of the Mechanism to prepare joint workplans informed by the priorities identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and those of the African Union, including those embodied in its strategic plan, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. In that context, the Mechanism secretariat organized a retreat, held in Nairobi from 24 to 27 April 2018 to facilitate the preparation of joint workplans for clusters of the Mechanism. The consolidated joint cluster workplan was adopted at the nineteenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, held in Addis Ababa on 12 and 13 May 2018. Despite the fact that some of the joint plans were incomplete, the adoption of a consolidated workplan for the clusters was deemed significant in terms of improving working modalities and achieving concrete results.

3. At the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Subregional Coordination Mechanisms, held in Nairobi on 3 and 4 December 2018, the African Union Commission communicated seven strategic priorities of the

African Union for support in the context of the Mechanism. They were regional integration; the African Continental Free Trade Area; the Single African Air Transport Market; the free movement of persons, goods and services; silencing the guns; climate change; and gender and youth. Organizing the work of the clusters around the priorities of the African Union was considered an opportunity to improve working modalities and the targeting of support.

4. At the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Monitoring and Evaluation in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, held in Nairobi on 5 and 6 December 2018, participants initiated a mapping exercise of the joint cluster workplans for the seven strategic priorities of the African Union. The exercise was to have been concluded at a retreat of the Mechanism, held in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, from 26 February to 1 March 2019. Additionally, the nineteenth session of the Mechanism recommended that its Clusters should align their work with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The joint Cluster workplans and, to the extent possible, those of the subregional coordination mechanisms should therefore be informed by the strategic priorities of the African Union and the two frameworks.

5. At the Mechanism retreat, the African Union Commission conveyed modifications to the initial priorities that were brought about by the ongoing African Union reforms. The priorities were as follows: regional integration with a focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Single African Air Transport Market and the free movement of persons, goods and services; silencing the guns; climate change; gender and youth; capacity-building; division of labour between regional economic communities, member States and other international actors; and addressing the African Union theme of the year. Informed by the new strategic priorities and the two cooperation frameworks of the United Nations and the African Union, the Clusters and the subregional coordination mechanisms produced draft biennial joint workplans for 2019–2020.

6. While it was agreed that the joint Cluster workplans would be consolidated and finalized before the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 23 and 24 March 2019, it was noted that the joint workplans of the subregional coordination mechanisms would need to be subjected to further consultations and validated at their annual sessions before they could be considered final. Furthermore, it was expressed at the retreat that it would be necessary for the ongoing study on monitoring and evaluation in the Mechanism to be finalized without further delay in order to make available to the Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms an operational results-based framework that builds on the joint Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. This would facilitate the preparation of subsequent joint workplans and enhance results-based reporting. Implementation of the joint Cluster workplans for the period 2019–2020 was expected to commence during the second quarter of 2019.

B. Proposed implementation approach

7. Based on their areas of focus, relevant Clusters and subregional coordination mechanisms will lead the implementation of joint initiatives and activities on the seven strategic priorities of the African Union and the two frameworks. The Clusters are currently configured as follows:

<i>Clusters of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa</i>	
Cluster 1	Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, industry, trade, agriculture and agro-processing and regional integration
Cluster 2	Infrastructure development
Cluster 3	Human capital development, health, nutrition, science, technology and innovation
Cluster 4	Labour, employment creation, social protection, migration and mobility
Cluster 5	Gender equality, women and youth empowerment
Cluster 6	Humanitarian matters and disaster risk management
Cluster 7	Environment, urbanization and population
Cluster 8	Advocacy, information, communication and culture
Cluster 9	Governance, peace and security
Subregional coordination mechanisms	
Subregional coordination mechanism for Central Africa	
Subregional coordination mechanism for East and Southern Africa	
Subregional coordination mechanism for North Africa	
Subregional coordination mechanism for West Africa	

9. Clusters 1, 2, 3, 7 and 9 are expected to lead in the implementation of the strategic priorities. The subregional coordination mechanisms are expected to lead on division of labour. The African Union theme of the year, which changes on an annual basis, will potentially be led by all Clusters and subregional coordination mechanisms.

10. The Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda both feature details of intervention areas and action points in the interlinked areas of the agendas. Together, they neatly complement the Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda, which provides a broad framework for the work of the Mechanism in its support for African Union development priorities and frameworks at regional and subregional levels. In terms of alignment, the Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security constitutes the main area of work of Cluster 9 and, to a large extent, Cluster 6, thereby justifying a close working relationship between the two. Moreover, the focal entities of the United Nations and the African Union for Clusters 6 and 9 and the Framework are the same.

11. There are areas of overlap between the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda and the areas of focus of the nine Clusters of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. They are advocacy and awareness-raising; gender and young people, and social development in general; joint analysis and planning for threats to sustainable development, including cross-border risk; the thematic areas of trade and regional integration; and nexus between peace and security, human rights and development. Notwithstanding, the areas of overlap present opportunities for alignment with Clusters 1, 5, 6, 8 and 9. With regard to integration and mainstreaming; policy research and analysis; data generation; the strengthening of statistical capacity; and joint monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the areas of overlap between the two agendas and the Framework, the main entry point should be Cluster 1, which covers sustainable and inclusive economic growth among other areas of work.

<i>African Union priorities</i>		<i>Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security</i>	<i>Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda</i>	
1. Regional integration				
African Continental Free Trade Area	Cluster 1	Cluster 9	Policy analysis and integration	Cluster 1
Single African Air Transport Market Free	Cluster 2	Cluster 6		

Movement of People, Goods and Services				
2. Silencing the guns	Cluster 9		Gender and young people, and social development in general	Cluster 4 Cluster 5
3. Climate change	Cluster 7		Cross-border risks	Cluster 6
4. Gender and youth	Cluster 5		Advocacy and awareness-raising	Cluster 8
5. Capacity-building	Cluster 3		Nexus between peace and security, human rights and development	Cluster 9
6. Division of labour	subregional coordination mechanisms			
7. African Union theme of the year	All clusters			

12. The issues embodied in the African Union priorities and the frameworks are multidimensional, however, and require complementary interventions, which cut across clusters. Optimal implementation therefore requires the adoption of holistic and integrated approaches, which would promote interlinkages and synergistic implementation for the attainment of expected results in an efficient and effective manner. It would also promote intra- and inter cluster collaboration, each bringing to bear the comparative advantages of their participating entities.

13. The production of knowledge products will, as necessary, be informed by pilot or case studies to be conducted at the national level. In that connection, the subregional coordination mechanisms, through the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, will work with the United Nations country teams to conduct studies in selected countries. Implementation results will be discussed at the annual sessions of the Mechanism. They will also be tabled at meetings of the subregional coordination mechanisms. The events will serve as platforms to deliberate over the findings, offer solutions and promote knowledge networking on the strategic priorities and focus areas of the two frameworks.

14. In terms of linking with global level advocacy and support for the African Union Development Agency and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) under the responsibility of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Africa Day of the annual Africa Dialogue Series organized by that Office will provide a platform to further showcase results. The proposed approach will strengthen linkages and ensure coherence of actions at the national, subregional, regional and global levels, a key tenet of the reinvigorated United Nations system. Furthermore, the results of the initiatives and activities undertaken would form the basis for joint technical assistance and advisory services to relevant African regional and subregional organizations, as well as member States.

15. The expected results would be evidenced by tangible implementation progress in the priority areas, including the formulation and updating of

frameworks, policies, strategies and programmes by relevant organs of the African Union, such as the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD, the regional economic communities, other intergovernmental organizations and member States.

II. Functioning

A. Joint secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

16. At present, the NEPAD Section of the Regional Integration and Trade Division of ECA in collaboration with designated staff of the African Union Commission serve as the joint secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. At the Mechanism retreat, the African Union Commission reiterated that the Commission leadership was committed to establishing a secretariat for the Mechanism that would be based at the African Union Commission and would interface with the secretariat based at ECA for better coordination. It was noted that the secretariat was to be led by a Director General at the D2 level. Such an approach would enhance the capacity for mobilizing resources from various sources, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of the Mechanism.

17. The Framework for a Renewed United Nations and African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017–2027 spells out the functions of the joint secretariat as follows:

- (a) Serve an institutional anchor for the Mechanism;
- (b) Coordinate activities of the clusters and subclusters;
- (c) Support joint programming and implementation;
- (d) Carry out day-to-day management of the mechanism;
- (e) Convene and service meetings;
- (f) Undertake policy research and provide policy guidance and direction;
- (g) Prepare and disseminate reports;
- (h) Monitor and evaluate cluster activities;
- (i) Mobilize resources.

18. In that regard, there will be a need to prepare guidelines on working arrangements, including roles and responsibilities and a clear division of labour for the joint secretariat. In spelling out those functions, the Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda recognizes the need for a well-resourced secretariat supported by a robust information and communication strategy. It also recognizes funding as a major constraint, and in that respect, recommends the following:

- (a) The General Assembly should allocate requisite budgetary support for the effective functioning and operations of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, its subregional coordination mechanisms and joint secretariat;
- (b) Extrabudgetary resources should be mobilized.

19. With regard to the recommendation pertaining to the allocation of budgetary support, the joint secretariat will table the matter of the strengthening of the Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms at the twentieth session of the Mechanism, and subsequently at the fifty-second session of ECA

Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in order to seek a resolution from the latter for the consideration of the General Assembly. The submission to the Assembly should be supported by United Nations agencies participating in the mechanism and the African Union Commission and the African Group. In relation to recommendation ii, the joint secretariat will prepare a resource mobilization strategy to raise extrabudgetary resources with the support of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The matter of strengthening the joint secretariat should take into account the needs of the secretariats of the subregional coordination mechanisms.

20. Pending the mobilization of adequate resources for the functioning of the secretariat, United Nations agencies participating in the Mechanism should make financial contributions and/or second staff to the joint secretariat. Financial contributions should extend to the organization and servicing of retreats and annual sessions of the Mechanism. In that regard, the 2019 retreat urged the joint secretariat to submit to the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes its resource requirements to enable them to explore the possibility of seconding staff and making financial contributions. Furthermore, Clusters should contribute to preparing documents and reports related to the Mechanism, including guidelines, resource mobilization strategies and substantive publications.

B. Communication and collaboration

21. The Communication and Advocacy Strategy of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa needs to be operationalized. In that regard, Cluster 8 should review the existing strategy to decide on modalities for its operationalization. Communication-related activities should be factored into joint cluster workplans and budgets and Cluster 8 should ensure representation in the other clusters. The recently developed electronic information-sharing and collaboration platform should henceforth constitute the main channel of communication for the Mechanism. The platform should be used by the teams of the clusters, the subregional coordination mechanisms and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group teams to exchange information and ideas in real time with a view to enhancing collaboration. The platform could also feature the work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications responsible for global advocacy and support for the African Union and the African Union Development Agency – NEPAD, thereby strengthening collaboration with the two entities.

22. In order to enhance communication efficiency, foster coherence among cluster members and their coordinators, and contribute to the effective functioning of the clusters, there is a need for a well-defined communication channel between the joint secretariat and the clusters. For example, communication should be from the joint secretariat to cluster coordinators and vice-versa. The cluster coordinators should extend communication to their members, who in turn should channel communication via their coordinators.

23. Clusters should submit reports to the joint secretariat in a timely manner. The reports should be results-based and informed by activities implemented in the context of the joint workplans and should include agreed joint activities, implementation progress and achievements; challenges and constraints; and the way forward. Cluster reports should not be an account of individual agency activities implemented outside the agreed joint workplans. The monitoring and evaluation framework currently being developed will help to improve cluster reporting. There is a need to harmonize the ECA report to its Conference of Ministers on support for the African Union and the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD; the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on support for the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD, compiled by

the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; and the report of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the social dimension of the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD. Furthermore, given that the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa is a joint mechanism of the United Nations and the African Union, the African Union Commission should consider presenting a similar report to the African Union Summit.

24. On the organization and substantive servicing of sessions of the Mechanism, the joint secretariat should work closely with all cluster coordinators, in particular the cluster whose area of work aligns with the annual theme of the African Union. That cluster should take the lead in drafting the issues paper to inform deliberations and discussions during the annual sessions of the Mechanism and provide inputs to the other background documents, including the programme of work. Cluster members should contribute to preparing the list of invitees and securing participation. They should also be members of the drafting team for the session report and support the joint secretariat to disseminate the final report as widely as possible.

25. The joint secretariat will continue to participate in the annual meetings of the subregional coordination mechanisms and bring to bear the work of the Mechanism at such meetings. Likewise, the subregional coordination mechanisms will continue to participate in the retreats and annual sessions in order to adequately reflect the subregional dimension in the documents and deliberations. Invitations to meetings of subregional coordination mechanisms should be extended to cluster coordinators. The reports of the annual sessions of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the final reports of the meetings of the subregional coordination mechanisms should be shared through the electronic platform of the Mechanism on information-sharing and collaboration for wide dissemination by all. The platform should also be used to share minutes and reports of all meetings of the subregional coordination mechanisms and Mechanism clusters.

26. The clusters and the Chair of the United Nations Liaison Team should invite the joint secretariat to their meetings. The joint secretariat should endeavour to attend the meetings to the extent possible. It should communicate its participation or otherwise in the meetings in a timely manner. Cluster coordinators should share minutes of meetings with the secretariat and their counterparts in other clusters.

27. In the context of the ongoing United Nations reforms, the Mechanism is expected to play a facilitative role in the organization and convening of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The Forum is designed to track and showcase progress, generate regional approaches and common positions on key regional and global development frameworks – the 2030 Agenda and Africa 2063, in particular – and related platforms, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The engagement of RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms in the Forum will contribute to its success, enhance visibility of the mechanisms, and contribute to strengthening advocacy and mobilizing global support for the strategic priorities of the African Union.

28. The joint secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa should explore how existing mechanisms such as the Joint Secretariat Support Office, which brings together ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, and the Coordination Committee Chief Executives of ECA, the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities and the African Development Bank could facilitate the functioning of the secretariat to have more impact, in particular in the light of the ongoing reforms relating to the division of roles and responsibilities of African Union organs and structures.

III. Submission

29. The present document will assist in informing the preparation of operational guidelines for the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms, which will build on the document entitled “Guidelines for enhancing coordination: a compilation of programming tools for better development results”.
