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Sustainable Development Group secretariats for Eastern and
Southern Africa and Western and Central Africa
Marrakech, Morocco, 23 and 24 March 2019

Report of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

I. Introduction

1. The twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) was held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 23 and 24 March 2019. The session was jointly organized by the secretariats of the Mechanism and the regional teams of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Eastern and Southern Africa and for Western and Central Africa. Held on the theme “United Nations system support for the African Union in commemorating 2019 as the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa”, the session took place on the margins of the fifty-second Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

2. The objectives of the session were twofold. The first was to deliberate on the functioning of the Mechanism and its subregional coordination mechanisms, and to assess their achievements and challenges and the way forward towards strengthening the coherent and efficient delivery of support to the African Union and its organs in the context of the African Union and United Nations reforms. The second was to provide a platform for high-level panel discussions on issues pertinent to its theme with a view to promoting interactions and generating solutions that would contribute towards tackling issues related to refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa.

3. The meeting was co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina J. Mohammed, and the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission, H.E. Sarah Anyang Agbor, representing the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission, H.E. Kwesi Quartey. It was attended by representatives of the African Union Commission; African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD); African Peer Review Mechanism; African Development Bank (AfDB); Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); East African Community (EAC); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Intergovernmental

Authority on Development (IGAD); Southern African Development Community (SADC); member States; non-governmental organizations, academia, the media, and United Nations entities, including the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development group teams for Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa and other United Nations funds and programmes operating in Africa. The full list of participants is contained in the annex of the present report.

II. Opening session

4. The Assistant Secretary General and Director of the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, and Chair of the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa, facilitated the opening session.

5. Remarks and statements were made by the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe, the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, H.E. Omar Hilale, and the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission, H.E. Sarah Anyang Agbor, representing the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission, H.E. Kwesi Quartey. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina J. Mohammed, delivered the opening address.

6. In her welcoming remarks, Vera Songwe began by calling on participants to observe a minute of silence for the victims and colleagues that lost their lives in the recent Ethiopian Airlines plane crash. She then recognized all present and extended a special welcome to Ms. Mohammed. She recalled that the regional coordination mechanisms were established through the landmark Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 in which the Council recognized the leadership role of the regional commissions in coordinating the work of United Nations entities in each region of the world. In the resolution, the Council also welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General of yearly meetings, to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General in each geographical area. In that regard, Ms. Songwe recognized the significance of the presence of Ms. Mohammed at the meeting.

7. Ms. Songwe recalled the designation of President Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire) as the champion for Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and underscored the President's emphasis on the importance of ensuring that peace in the Sahel region was maintained and sustained because without it, the rest of West Africa would face instability. That emphasis represented a good illustration of the importance of strengthening the humanitarian, peace and security, and development nexus, an important objective of the ongoing United Nations reforms. Ms. Songwe thanked the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission, Sarah Anyang Agbor, for standing in for the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission and lauded the passion the Deputy Chairperson brings to continental issues, notably science, technology, engineering and math for women.

8. Ms. Songwe said that while Africa was growing by 3.2 per cent annually, 16 million jobs must be created every year to keep up with the increasing demand. According to the ECA "poverty clock", more people were falling into poverty than those that were getting out of poverty. Although Africa was home to the seven fastest-growing countries in the world, it remained characterized by its low gross domestic product (GDP) per capita figures. Any conversation about development must include Africa, as the continent had overtaken India as the geographic area with the largest number of poor people. She underlined the need for the complementary implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development and Agenda 2063 to ensure that the goals embodied in the two agendas were achieved. She thanked all the Commissioners of the African Union Commission for their continued strong partnership with ECA.

9. In his statement, Mr. Hilale reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to target 115 million people with life-saving assistance in the light of the enormous humanitarian need and suffering in the world. He added that the meeting was a strong reminder that the work of the United Nations and its partners must focus on preparing, mitigating and responding to disasters, whose frequency and intensity were exacerbated by climate change, as amply shown by the devastating effects of the recent cyclone that hit Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. In that regard, he said that the theme of the meeting, which was aligned with the 2019 African Union theme, was very pertinent.

10. Mr. Hilale stressed that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 necessitated the adoption of an integrated approach. He reiterated the Secretary General's commitment to bridging the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 to ensure their synergistic implementation and informed the meeting about the voluntary national reviews that would be conducted at the high-level political forum, to be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019. Fifty countries planned to present their voluntary national reviews on progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the forum. He also informed the meeting about the Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Affairs Segment, which would be convened in Geneva from 24 to 26 June 2019 with a focus on economization, inclusion and equality. In concluding, he stressed the important role of the regional economic commissions in the balanced integration of economic social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 necessitated close coordination and strong partnerships between the United Nations and the African Union.

11. Ms. Agbor delivered a statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. She began by expressing the Commission's deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the plane crash in Ethiopia, and victims of the Cyclone Idai in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. She recognized and commended the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union in recent years to find systemic solutions to the development complexities of Africa in the course of the ongoing institutional reforms of the two organizations and underscored the need to ensure that the discussions on that topic were very people-centred, as the African Union sought solutions to the challenges of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa.

12. Ms. Agbor expressed the need to realign the work of RCM-Africa with the seven strategic priorities of the African Union: regional integration, in particular the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Single African Air Transport Market and free movement of persons, goods and services; Silencing the Guns by 2020 in support of peace and security; climate change; gender, women and youth; capacity-building; clear division of labour; and the African Union theme for 2019. She reiterated the commitment of the African Union Commission to strengthen the joint RCM-Africa secretariat through the establishment of an African Union Commission RCM-Africa secretariat to work closely with the ECA-based secretariat and concluded by challenging the participants to translate the outcomes of the deliberations into tangible actions.

13. In her opening address, Ms. Mohammed stated that she was very pleased that the African Union and the United Nations were working together for the same cause and pledged her personal commitment to accompany that work. She asserted that 2019 would be a defining year to deliver on the promises made to humanity through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and indicated that the United Nations had been working to create a more coherent, effective and

efficient support and delivery mechanism through its successive reform programmes to guarantee a better life for all citizens of the world and leave “no one behind”. Available data suggested that the world was not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, raising the need to accelerate implementation to meet the ambitious targets set out in the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, she underscored the need for the United Nations system to work as one at the national, regional and global levels and avoid fragmented approaches.

14. Ms. Mohammed reminded delegates that climate change, rising inequalities, persistent gender discrimination, issues related to social cohesion, conflicts in their many different forms, deteriorating political consensus and the mass movement of people across borders could not be resolved through past solutions and needed to be dealt with urgently. The best assets and leadership around the continent must be brought together, bearing in mind the youth potential, which remained underexploited. She commended the efforts of the United Nations and African Union towards ensuring gender parity, while noting that more needed to be done to close the gender gap.

15. She underlined that RCM-Africa should help to galvanize accelerated progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and those embodied in Agenda 2063. She challenged United Nations system agencies to seize the opportunity to undertake the transformational shifts needed to propel progress towards the realization of the Goals. That entailed working together as one, ensuring system-wide coherence and flying one United Nations flag at all levels. At the regional level, the regional coordination mechanisms constituted the rallying platform for all agencies working at that level. In the context of RCM-Africa, its subregional coordination mechanisms should serve as the convergence points of United Nations agencies in support of the priorities and programmes of the regional economic communities. In concluding, she disclosed that the United Nations was set to review its full regional assets with the aim of establishing a new architecture adapted to the priorities and realities of today. She underscored that the United Nations reforms relied on a collective responsibility and the ability to accelerate or scale up actions towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

III. Presentation and adoption of the agenda and programme of work

16. Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa presented the draft agenda and programme of work. Both were adopted without amendments. The agenda was adopted, as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Presentation and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. High-level panel discussion on strengthening the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms in the context of the African Union and United Nations reforms.
4. High-level panel discussions on the theme of the session:
 - (a) Addressing the root causes of refugees and internally displaced persons;
 - (b) Upscaling durable solutions, including addressing the forced displacement-development nexus;
 - (c) Coordinating the work under the compacts on migration, and on refugees;

(d) Support of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa to the African Union agenda on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.

5. African Union-United Nations progress report of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms.
6. Aligning the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Integrated Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. Consideration and adoption of the African Union-United Nations workplan for 2019-2020 of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa.
8. Update on the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in preparation for the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.
9. Other matters.
10. Consideration and adoption of the report of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa.
11. Closing of the session.

IV. High-level panel discussion: Strengthening the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms in the context of the African Union and United Nations reforms

17. The panel was co-chaired by Ms. Mohammed and Ms. Agbor and had the following as panellists: Ms. Agbor; the Chief Executive Officer, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, H.E. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki; the Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, and Chair of the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Eastern and Southern, and West and Central Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa; the Assistant Secretary-General for Programmes, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Kipyego Cheluget; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa, Giovannie Biha.

18. Ms. Agbor recalled the background, the mandate, and modalities of RCM-Africa and suggested a number of ways to strengthen it. Among them were ensuring that the Mechanism anchored its work on the United Nations-African Union partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda for 2017-2027, the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security Framework and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She emphasized the need to revisit the clusters and align their work with the African Union priorities, the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063 Ten-Year Implementation Plan. In that context, she underscored the importance of integrated planning and securing adequate funding for the activities of RCM-Africa, its subregional coordination mechanisms and their secretariats. Joint resource mobilization was key.

19. In his intervention, Mr. Mayaki highlighted four critical elements for strengthening RCM-Africa. He noted the importance of moving to the convergence of institutions, namely the African Union and United Nations,

building on the convergence of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Harmonized reporting was important given the synergies between the two agendas. He emphasized that such reporting should be based on real-time data for evidence-based decision-making. In that regard, it was important to create mechanisms for linking reporting on Agenda 2063 and the voluntary national reviews. It was also important to rationalize and integrate the implementation of the agendas. The work of RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms should be guided by the principles of multisectoralism and rationalization. Their activities should focus on accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

20. Ms. Eziakonmwa highlighted the ongoing United Nations reforms and the genesis of the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group. She noted the importance of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and welcomed the membership of ECA in the Peer Support Group for United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, which was important, as it was necessary to conduct regional and transboundary analysis on issues important to country offices. Mapping of assets had been carried out to tap into relevant expertise. She advised that it was important to go beyond meetings and carry out measurable actions.

21. Mr. Cheluget introduced his intervention by noting that the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) was a building block for the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. He highlighted the achievements of COMESA over the 25 years of its existence. In referring to the mandate of the subregional coordination mechanisms, he noted that the United Nations and the African Union reforms presented an opportunity for the subregional coordination mechanisms of RCM-Africa to focus more on subregional priorities, while the Mechanism focused on regional-level priorities. There was a need for RCM-Africa to adhere to the principle of subsidiarity and the division of labour between the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities, and other continental organizations. It was also important for RCM-Africa to strengthen system-wide coherence to deliver as one, reduce fragmentation and ensure effective implementation.

22. Ms. Biha underlined the importance of making RCM-Africa more effective in order to meet the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the African Union priorities. On ways to make the Mechanism more effective, she highlighted the following: consistent use and alignment of terminologies; making RCM-Africa more strategic; enhanced political commitment and engagement across the United Nations and African Union leadership; aligning the work of RCM-Africa with the priorities of the African Union and the United Nations cooperation frameworks; ensuring that it was well resourced in terms of human and financial resources; and signing joint memoranda of understanding with regional economic communities to avoid overlap and foster efficiency. She disclosed that there was ongoing engagement of the United Nations and African Union entities in the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, but acknowledged the need to strengthen that engagement.

23. In summing up, Ms. Mohammed underlined the following areas as pertinent to strengthening the work of RCM-Africa:

(a) RCM-Africa needs to be results-oriented and ensure that the delivery mechanisms are well-coordinated and effective;

(b) RCM-Africa needs to be more accountable and work with a sense of urgency;

(c) There is a need for real-time data for evidence-based policymaking and analysis. This calls for, among other measures, using existing data to understand trends; the use of common baselines and methodologies is also deemed important;

(d) More importantly, interventions by different United Nations agencies should be framed in the context of a joint United Nations response

using the RCM-Africa architecture as the rallying platform. In this respect, RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanism should foster horizontal and vertical coherence.

V. First high-level panel discussion on the theme: Addressing the root causes of refugees and internally displaced persons

24. The panel was co-chaired by Ms. Mohammed and Ms. Agbor and had the following as panellists: the Director of Economic Cooperation and Social Development, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Elsadig Abdala; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Morocco, Jean-Paul Cavalieri; the International Organization for Migration Regional Director for West Africa, Richard Danziger; and the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Bience Gawanas.

25. In her introductory remarks, Ms. Agbor, stressed that one third of the world's forcibly displaced persons were in Africa, including 6.3 million refugees and asylum seekers, and 14.5 million internally displaced persons. She emphasized that addressing the root causes of refugees and internally displaced persons was important and the causal factors had been well documented, which ranged from conflict fuelled by poverty, political, social and economic inequalities between groups to persecution, in addition to human rights and peace and security, exacerbated by climate change. She highlighted the need for refugees to access education and health opportunities to allow them to be meaningfully engaged in development endeavours and emphasized the importance of coordinating the work under the compacts for migration and refugees.

26. Mr. Abdala highlighted that the Horn of Africa had a good share of the African refugees and internally displaced persons. Root causes of displacement and refugees had been well articulated, but there was a need to focus on durable solutions. Notwithstanding, the history, geography, anthropology, sociology, behavioural and cultural norms of Africa should allow for a better understanding of the root causes. For the Horn of Africa, as well as the Sahel region, climate change was an important factor. The significant reduction in the size of Lake Chad, for example, had had a negative impact on the flora and fauna of the area and was a key factor behind displacement and attendant conflicts in the area. The Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons offered new hope for Africa. Durable solutions called for leveraging the wealth of knowledge and experience of people, strengthening local governance and leaving no one behind, especially, the displaced, returnees and refugees.

27. Mr. Cavalieri noted that at the end of 2017, there were 70 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide; including 26 million refugees and 40 million internally displaced persons, and that in 2019, the world's forcibly displaced population remained at a record high. Eighty-five per cent of the forcibly displaced were hosted in developing countries. The Global Compact on Refugees was intended to address the situation through better and more predictable responsibility sharing among States. Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia are the top five countries of origin of refugees, some of which had been affected by conflict and civil strife for several decades. The triggers of forced displacement were well known; among them were conflict, persecution and generalized violence. The factors behind those conflicts and violence could be very complex, as they often were the result of a mix of political, economic, social and environmental factors. Examples pertaining to the latter include the Lake Chad case study, and the severe drought affecting the North-Eastern part of Syria prior to the conflict. The displacement of population from the drought-affected parts of Syria to the suburbs of

Damascus had put pressure on natural resources, and social infrastructure, which, in turn, caused tensions with the local population.

28. Mr. Cavalieri said that in Morocco, approximately 80 per cent of refugee applications submitted by asylum-seekers from Africa south of the Sahara had been because they were considered to be economic migrants, and not refugees fleeing war or persecution. They were fleeing poverty, even though they were not necessarily from poor countries, but were compelled to migrate because of lack of economic prospects, social injustice, inequalities and inequities. Accordingly, governance was the trigger factor for migrating to other countries. On a positive note, Mr. Cavalieri cited the Morocco case study on economic integration of refugees. While Morocco used to be known as a country of transit, it had increasingly become a country of destination for refugees. In 2013, the country had launched the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum, which provided for access to legal documentation for refugees and access to essential services, such as education and health, and access to the labour market. The civil society and the private sector were taking an active part in the implementation of the Strategy. A public-private partnership model was in the process of being developed, whereby the private sector was supporting the implementation of a public policy. Through that policy, economic integration in Morocco became possible for refugees. The policy could be associated with objective 2 of the global compact on refugees, “build self-reliance of refugees”. Morocco could showcase that case study at the first Global Refugee Forum, to be held in Geneva on 17 and 18 December 2019.

29. In his intervention, Mr. Danziger described the major structural issues that could lead to displacement, namely climate change and environmental factors and insufficient opportunities to match rapid population growth and growing inequalities in wealth and income both vertically and horizontally. He further highlighted that internally displaced persons were usually individuals and families who were already marginalized economically and socially and were in a situation of extreme vulnerability to sexual and other forms of exploitation and abuse. Strengthening local authorities by supporting them to deliver services, and working to build trust between communities and authorities, could be an effective way to start addressing geographical inequities within the framework of national development plans.

30. Mr. Danziger indicated that legal migration options could be an important safety valve that might contribute towards the prevention of forced displacement. Implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area would foster economic integration and free movement and would, therefore be an important tool in preventing forced displacement. He said that throughout Africa, over the past few years, much of the discussion on migration had focused on irregular migration and the dangers facing migrants, and then emphasized that migration was an enabler of development and should, accordingly, be integrated into development thinking. The Global Compact for Migration and the newly established United Nations Network on Migration were created to support States in implementing their migration priorities in line with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

31. Ms. Gawanas identified natural disasters as one of the root causes of refugees and internally displaced persons, and indicated that they set back decades of development gains in some countries. Cyclone Idai, which affected Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, was a case in point. There remained need for integrated and common approaches and responses to addressing the requirements of refugees and internally displaced persons. She also underlined the need to address the issues of exclusion and marginalization, and emphasized the need for people to be treated with dignity and respect, as that was an important root cause of the problem. The implementation of the seven strategic priorities of the African Union should take into account the humanitarian, peace and security and development nexus.

32. Ms. Gawanas mentioned that the Silencing the Guns 2020 initiative was about fighting poverty and disease and that peace should be defined as the absence of poverty, despair and marginalization rather than the absence of conflict and insecurity. In that respect, she noted that refugees should be considered as active change agents in their communities. Taking the agenda forward, she underscored the need to find synergies between the global and regional mechanisms and to take coordinated action in implementing the mechanisms. RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms, as well as the Inter-departmental Taskforce on African Affairs, should be instrumental in that regard. She stressed the need for Governments to make adequate investments in the places of origin of refugees to ensure that returnees do not become internally displaced persons.

33. The following recommendations emanated from the discussions and were pertinent to addressing the root causes:

(a) United Nations entities should collaborate with a view to leveraging synergies and allocating resources to programmes that focus on broad-based and grassroots level development. This will help to expedite the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and contribute towards mitigating the factors behind refugees and forced displacement;

(b) There is a need to establish a continent-wide system that allows for evaluation and recognition of countries' academic and vocational qualifications to help employers or higher institutions of learning in Africa understand how the qualifications of countries relate to one another. This will promote mutual recognition of educational credentials and enhance access to employment opportunities by refugees and migrants;

(c) At the member State level, there is a need to strengthen governance and local authorities to build links between the people and the State. Governments should be encouraged to invest in preparing the growing populations to meet the demands of an evolving job market. This should be backed by an adequate civil registration system that facilitates biometric data identification to ensure high individual identification accuracy;

(d) Africa needs to take a leadership role in addressing the refugee and migration challenge, which continues to manifest as a complex and divisive issue. In doing so, women and young people should be seen as agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries.

VI. Second high-level panel discussion on the theme: Upscaling durable solutions, including addressing the forced displacement-development nexus

34. The panel was co-chaired by Ms. Agbor and the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Michel Sidibe, and had the following as panellists: the United Nations Women Representative to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, Letty Chiwara; the Regional Director for Eastern Africa, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Ann Theresa Ndong Jatta; the Resident Coordinator, Resident Representative and United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia, Aeneas Chapinga Chuma; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Subregional Coordinator for North Africa, Phillippe Ankers; and the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Dereje Wordofa.

35. Ms. Jatta highlighted that the plight of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees remained a challenge across Africa. The outcomes of the High-Level Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Refugees in the Great Lakes Region, held in Kampala from 5 to 7 March 2019, included recommendations

of durable solutions to the problem. Some of the recommendations dealt with integration of refugees in host countries or repatriation to a third country based on the consent of refugees. It was underscored that in cases in which the sociocultural context of refugees was not taken into consideration in host communities, resettlement on their return to countries of origin was disrupted. She emphasized the need to consider creating opportunities in host communities in providing basic social services and skills through the provision of quality education, access to land for agriculture and the creation of world-class institutions for capacity-building to engage in, among other activities, agricultural best practices for food security and agribusiness. She expressed the need to change the narrative and invest more in refugees and also emphasized the importance of indigenous knowledge in Africa on how movements of populations in the past were managed to ensure the dignity of refugees to build sustainable peace and serve as a building block towards the search for durable solutions.

36. In his intervention, Mr. Chuma highlighted two related reasons why people became refugees, namely, climate change and political upheavals. Regarding climate change, he argued that although little could be done to prevent some of the natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, efforts could be directed towards minimizing their negative effects. Measures for that purpose included the development of early warning systems that entailed establishing the requisite institutions capable of anticipating impending disasters and preparing for them, accordingly. He stressed the need to close the gap between humanitarian assistance and development. Regarding the second reason, he said that the upheavals centred on ethnic conflicts could clearly be prevented, including through good political governance. He then argued that both of the reasons were symptoms of failure of development and inclusion and called upon the United Nations to come up with effective joint development systems.

37. In her intervention, Ms. Chiwara alluded to the factors behind and gender dimensions of displacements and outlined the triple-jeopardy of displacement faced by women, deplorable harassment, abuse and discrimination. She added that for a solution to that problem to be durable, it must be engendered and take into account the needs of women and girls. She also stressed the importance of bridging the humanitarian and development nexus, and drew the attention of the meeting to successful and replicable programme initiatives, such as the multi-agency programme on rural women's economic empowerment, which had brought together many organizations to address the gendered challenges of the displacement of rural women and ensuring livelihood related issues. The programme was being implemented by the International Fund for Agriculture Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

38. She further cited the network associated with the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse as an initiative of the United Nations system in the context of the Ethiopia Humanitarian Country Team to implement activities that would promote the protection of community members from sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers. Another example was a joint programme coordinated by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), in cooperation with FAO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN-Women, with the view to building the resilience of women and young people in the Sahel region through initiatives focusing on climate smart agriculture. Those initiatives had addressed the root causes and consequences of humanitarian contexts required to inform responses by member

States and other stakeholders. She further called for more action, rather than introducing yet another set of commitments, the strengthening of progressive social security systems and increasing economic investments to avert political and social fragility. She concluded by making a clarion call for stronger regional and international partnerships that would, among other activities, help to mobilize technical and financial resources for gender responsive solutions to the development, humanitarian and security challenges of the continent.

39. Mr. Wordafa began his statement by highlighting the disproportionate negative humanitarian situations faced by women and girls. There was evidence that the cost of violence against women far outweighed the costs of all the wars in the world. When basic services were eviscerated in conflict, people's access to sexual and reproductive health services had become seriously affected. He expressed the need for good migration data that were appropriately disaggregated to inform better decision-making and to develop tailored programmes that would respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. Furthermore, there was a need to strengthen the analytical framework for understanding better the intersection between migration and displacement on the one hand, and violent extremism and terrorism, on the other. Through enhanced partnerships, it would be possible to build on the unique expertise and comparative advantages of the "Africa we want" in which the dignity and the potential of each individual would not be hampered by their movement within or across national borders.

40. Mr. Ankers acknowledged the interventions of the other panellists and emphasized that when addressing the immediate and longer-term needs of forcibly displaced persons and of the community hosting them. Agriculture should not be an afterthought. Maintaining food production and building the agricultural sector were fundamental to maintaining stability for people living in or fleeing from fragile environments. Promoting self-reliance of forcibly displaced persons was crucial in enabling them to become agents of their own development and of the communities hosting them. The possession of skills and the opportunity to access productive activities and decent work had created a sense of hope, which could provide displaced people with a longer-term perspective, breaking the walls of the "limbo" situation that they were confined in.

41. Enhancing human capital and agriculture skills could help reinject hope and raise the overall level of autonomy of displaced populations, Mr. Ankers said before concluding by calling upon the meeting participants to refer to the 2018 edition of the FAO *State of Food and Agriculture: Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development* in which solid evidence on the migration-agriculture-rural development interlinkages was given and support to the realistic and dispassionate debate on rural migration was provided by relating insights on how the challenges could be turned into opportunities and how the benefits could be maximized, thereby contributing to eradicating poverty and hunger.

42. In summing up, Mr Sidibe highlighted the importance of the prevention and anticipation of crises. He encouraged the United Nations and African Union to contribute with member States towards efforts aimed at addressing the decisive root causes of migration, namely the lack of social justice, social inequity and inadequate response to unemployment of young people in Africa. He stressed that harmonious development in Africa using the "leaving no one behind" approach would help in preventing humanitarian and political crises. Protecting women and vulnerable persons was also key to avoid violence based on gender.

43. In the ensuing discussions, participants indicated that on 7 March 2019, in a meeting in Kampala, which dealt with issues germane to the theme of the session, global solutions for refugee challenges were proposed. With respect to that, sharing of information among United Nations agencies should enable

subsequent meetings to focus on additional solutions or build on those already suggested. It was essential to be mindful that many refugees would not go back to their countries of origin. Accordingly, local integration supported by the implementation of regional and continental protocols on the free movements of the people was an important durable solution. Participants underscored that prevention of a refugee crisis started with effective implementation of development programmes, including diversification of the economy for the purposes of raising inclusive economic growth that would lead to the creation of jobs, particularly for young people.

44. Participants also pointed out that anticipation of a refugee crisis, including forced internal displacement, and putting in place measures to avert it, was far cheaper than dealing with the crisis when it occurred. In dealing with unforeseen disasters, there was need to adopt a holistic approach of thinking and doing. In particular, regional and cross-border cooperation was paramount as no single country could deal with all the natural or other forms of disasters. In addition, non-governmental organizations could play a critical role to expedite the delivery of humanitarian assistance in situations of natural hazards.

45. Participants also noted that it was equally important to move away from the dualistic approach to economic development, which was characterized by a productive formal sector versus an unproductive informal one, and to ease the urban-biased development, which only encouraged rural-urban migration with all its associated social and even political negative consequences.

46. The following recommendations emanated from the interventions and deliberations and are germane to upscaling durable solutions, including addressing the forced displacement-development nexus:

(a) Preventative measures should be prioritized as an alternative to dealing with a crisis in the aftermath. In this regard, the development of refugee and migration strategies should be informed by a thorough analysis of the root causes of the underlying prevalence of the refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants situation;

(b) Given the particular vulnerability of women and girls in refugee and displacement situations, a gendered approach should be adopted for humanitarian actions in order to ensure that their concerns and needs are given the attention they deserve and are adequately addressed;

(c) An inclusive approach to economic growth should be pursued, which includes putting in place policies and programmes that are intended to tackle the challenge of income inequality, and contribute towards enforcing social justice with particular regard to vulnerable groups, such as women and young people;

(d) Collaboration among the United Nations, African Union and other humanitarian actors needs to build on promising practices and be aimed at promoting grassroots approaches for effective humanitarian responses. This, among other actions, calls for building the capacity of local and national organizations, including women's and youth groups, to engage in leadership and decision-making in humanitarian structures and responses;

(e) Domestic resource mobilization must be enhanced by, among other measures, strengthening tax laws and administration to generate resources geared towards inclusive development initiatives and the prevention of refugee crises;

(f) Investment in human capital must be enhanced with an emphasis on young people to foster innovative practices, create decent jobs and promote the use of appropriate technologies in agriculture;

(g) Rural development must be promoted and supported in order to revitalize rural areas and create local employment opportunities for young

people. This requires the combination of multilevel governance systems, infrastructure development and innovation. The development of a green economy in rural areas also needs to be fostered.

VII. Third high-level panel discussion on the theme: Coordinating the work under the compacts related to migration, and to refugees

47. The panel was co-chaired by the Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Programmes, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Ambassador Dr. Kipyego Cheluget and the following were the panellists: the Secretary-General of the Arab Maghreb Union, H.E. Taieb Baccouche; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Regional Representative for Western and Central Africa, Liz Ahua; the International Organization for Migration Chief of Mission and representative to the African Union, ECA, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Ethiopia, Maureen Achieng; the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Dereje Wordofa; and the Director of the Global Monitoring Report, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Manos Antoninis.

48. In her introductory remarks, Ms. Tetteh recognized the conclusion of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by Heads of State and Government in Marrakech, Morocco in December 2018, which was inspired by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of 19 September 2016. She observed that although the two compacts are “nonbinding”, they were milestones towards a better world, including attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing Agenda 2063. She stressed the following: migrants and refugees had the same fundamental freedoms, their human rights were universal; and they faced common challenges and similar vulnerabilities, such as poverty, instability, marginalization and exclusion. She underlined the need for collective action, as countries from where migrants came also were transit and destination countries. Citing statistics on refugees, internally displaced persons and the stateless in Africa, she called for collective implementation of both compacts as a way to ensure that the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda would not be missed.

49. She expressed the hope that the panellists would address the following: how to formulate people-centred, sensitive, humane, gender and child-responsive implementation measures for the implementation of the two compacts; how, in the face of growing nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments, hate speech and racially driven stereotypes, to ensure that administrative barriers and border control measures did not undermine calls for peaceful co-existence; how to get more States and other actors to embrace the compacts relating to migration and refugees; the identification of the existing strategies for facilitating resource mobilization; how to ensure complementarity and synergetic implementation of the two compacts as refugees and migrant situations tended not to be mutually exclusive; and how to ensure the dignity and safety of returnees to enable them to contribute towards the development of Africa.

50. H.E. Taieb Baccouche emphasized the importance of considering the human dimension of migration, in particular the free movement of people. The AMU Interior Ministers had recommended an AMU strategy on illegal immigration and trafficking be formulated with the objective to strengthen and complement regional and international efforts in that field. He shared the recent efforts of AMU to cooperate with European partners to fight illegal migration. In particular, they had agreed to set up an expert commission to draft a law on

illegal migration to urge member countries to review their legislation and strengthen bilateral mechanisms. They further agreed to set up a cooperation system covering the different aspects of that phenomenon and to organize a system to facilitate the return of illegal migrants to their country of origin.

51. Mr. Baccouche highlighted that cooperation between AMU and its international partners in fighting illegal migration required a global and integrated approach for setting up and developing common policies in respect of human rights, with a shared responsibility. Migration management, including the prevention of illegal immigration, required a comprehensive and integrated approach that would allow for the establishment of common policies based on the principles of respect for human rights, solidarity and mutual trust and shared responsibility. The dialogue on migration and mobility must be deepened, and also better coordination between the parties involved in the fight against illegal immigration is needed. That would help to maximize the benefits of legal migration, ensure the protection of people in need and support the fight against illegal migration. Finally, he emphasized that the return of women to their home countries in the context of Jihad required specific humane treatment.

52. In her introductory remarks, Ms. Ahua expressed her sincere appreciation to the organizers of the session for dedicating the session to the 2019 African Union theme of the year. She also expressed her deep gratitude for her participation as a panellist in the present discussion. She asserted that responding to refugee situations could not be addressed in isolation, as it was a global responsibility that would require collective efforts and burden sharing. In that regard, greater solidarity with host communities, in particular those in developing countries, who bore a disproportionate share of the burden, was essential. Forced displacement was increasingly seen as a development challenge, as more often than not, communities in developing countries were mostly affected. The Global Compact on Refugees served as a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations would not be achieved without international cooperation.

53. Ms. Ahua noted that on 19 September 2016, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in which it invited the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to develop and initiate the application of a comprehensive refugee response framework in specific situations that featured large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. The framework was already being applied in 14 countries, yielding significant results, building on good practices from different refugee-hosting countries. UNHCR had also been engaged in high-level protection dialogues with Governments, including countries of the Lake Chad Basin, which offered opportunities for the implementation of the Global Compact for Refugees.

54. Ms. Ahua informed the meeting that the Global Refugee Forum, which was scheduled to take place in Geneva on 17 and 18 December 2019, would be held at the highest political level to take stock of progress, and showcase good practices that could, in turn, inform the development of future commitments. It would also provide an opportunity to explore ways in which responsibility sharing could be enhanced. In terms of coordinating the two compacts, she asserted that national-level steering committees with supporting secretariats and working groups would be crucial, as would be collaboration at the regional level.

55. Ms. Achieng commended the African Union for its continued leadership on migration issues. She emphasized that issues related to migration should not be looked at in isolation, but instead they should be seen as part of a continued and strident march towards continental integration in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right

of Residence and Right of Establishment, and the Single African Air Transport Market. She highlighted that 152 countries voted for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which showed that most countries were of the view that migration was a global reality that would be best managed by collaborative efforts at the international level, while noting that the aim of the Compact was to enhance cooperation among member States and bring all actors involved together, including migrant associations and migrants themselves.

56. Ms. Achieng emphasized that migration was ultimately an issue for which decisions lie with national Governments, and that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration did not supersede national autonomy. The Compact was a non-binding document and underlined countries' sovereign right on who enters into (and stays) in their country and under what conditions. On the issue of coordination, she noted that a network comprised of 38 United Nations agencies had been established. That would help to deliver on the biannual reporting requirements through the General Assembly as was requested in the Compact during the negotiations phases. She further noted that a fund had been established for initial financing of projects and emphasized the importance of engaging with the private sector and civil society in implementing the Compact. She also called for strengthening regional cooperation mechanisms, such as RCM-Africa, which could be used to monitor implementation and follow up on the Compact.

57. Mr. Wordofa stressed the importance of focusing on women and girls when covering the topic of migrants, refugees and forced displacement. On the issue of coordination, he emphasized the need for the African Union themes to be aligned with and build upon each other to ensure impact over time. He further noted the need for coordination to understand better vulnerability and risks and threats to populations. In particular, there was a need to unpack and see what was forcing people to become refugees or migrants as survival and coping strategies. Analysis was required to understand why some vulnerable persons stayed whereas some ran away, in order to identify appropriate policy measures and interventions. He further highlighted the need to ensure that those on the ground, including women and young refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, were brought to the table with institutions to discuss effective coordination. Finally, he recommended that RCM-Africa should go beyond coordination and translate frameworks into practical actions at regional and subregional levels, supported by a strong monitoring and evaluation framework, to translate commitments into achievements.

58. Mr. Antoninis highlighted that migration and displacement continued to elicit negative responses in many countries. Education, used to promote understanding and tolerance, remained a key element of a durable solution. Migration and displacement could profoundly affect educational systems, which must be inclusive to "leave no one behind". At the same time, it should be noted that education also affected migrants' and refugees' sense of belonging in their host communities. Those considerations had led to the inclusion of education in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, under the following objectives of the Compact: 2 (brain drain), 15 (right to education), 16 and 17 (discrimination), 18 (recognition of qualifications) and 20 (financial education). Similarly, in the Global Compact on Refugees, the shared responsibility for refugee education and the need to include refugees in national education systems was reemphasized.

59. In the ensuing discussion, Ms. Tetteh raised concerns about the issue of coordination, noting that "we coordinate coordination". She questioned the rationale for setting up new mechanisms instead of building on existing ones and promoting coherence. In response, Ms. Achieng pointed out that the United Nations Network on Migration was not new, and that the Global Migration Group promoted bottom-up rather than top-down interventions. She noted that RCM-Africa offered a platform for follow-up and review of the Global Compact

for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Africa. Mr. Wordofa noted that although it was important for coordination mechanisms to reinforce and support each other, it was also important to identify overlaps that might render them unproductive.

60. Participants emphasized the need to understand better why individuals migrated and to address root causes, such as poverty and inequality. It was noted that the conclusions of the meeting should highlight the crucial importance for action to ensure that young people and women would be given opportunities to remain home. Therefore, long-term solutions should be home-grown. In response, Mr. Antoninis highlighted that there was no doubt that the most durable solution would be to prevent the problem in the first place, but that the opportunity to seek asylum and refuge elsewhere was also important. He opined that the typical response to maintaining desires to return home was to offer temporary solutions to cater to displaced peoples' needs. Yet, temporary solutions were not the appropriate response. For example, in the field of education, a temporary solution meant the quality of education provided was poor, which would make it more difficult to facilitate integration into society. He, therefore, stressed the need to offer refugees and displaced persons viable prospects as an alternative plan.

61. Participants proffered the following recommendations to contribute towards the coordinated implementation of the two compacts:

(a) More effort should be made to ensure that the contents of the global compacts on refugees and migrants inform the programmes and initiatives of member States;

(b) Coordinated implementation of the two compacts calls for collaborative approaches at national and regional levels. In this regard, joint steering committees supported by adequately resourced secretariats and working groups should be seen as being essential;

(c) RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms should be leveraged in promoting the coordinated and synergistic implementation of the two compacts;

(d) In-depth analysis should be conducted to identify vulnerability, risks and threats to populations to understand better what is forcing people to become refugees or migrants and to inform policy measures and interventions in the originating and host countries.

VIII. Fourth high-level panel discussion on the theme: The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa's support to the African Union agenda on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons

62. The panel was chaired by Ms. Gawanas and had the following panellists: the Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture Department, African Union Commission, H.E. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko; the President, Economic Community of West African States, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou; the Director and Regional Representative United Nations Environment Programme, Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo; and Ms. Tetteh.

63. Ms. Sacko pointed out that the African Union theme of the year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the African Refugee Convention and the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), which demonstrated the commitment of the organization to tackling the growing issue of refugees and internal displacement facing the continent. She noted that the statistics indicated that the continent had more than 6.3 million refugees and

asylum seekers, 14.5 million internally displaced persons, and more than 700,000 stateless people. She disclosed that the root causes behind that include conflict, poor governance, human rights violations, food insecurity and natural disasters that were exacerbated by climate change.

64. With regard to legal instruments on refugees and internally displaced persons, Ms. Sacko pointed out that nine member States were not part of the 1969 Refugee Convention, and 30 member States had not signed the Kampala Convention. However, the 2019 African Union theme presented an opportunity for RCM-Africa, in particular through cluster 6 on humanitarian and disaster risk reduction, to assist the organization to advocate the ratification of those treaties and incorporate them into domestic legislation in order to ensure that refugees were assisted with dignity. She called for strengthening existing early warning systems at the continental level, and building adequate responsive capacity in supporting the ongoing efforts to build resilience within member States. Additionally, she emphasized the need to enhance the capacity of member States and support risk capacity interventions to ensure that the African Union achieved its dream of the “Africa we want”.

65. Mr. Brou expressed his satisfaction with the African Union theme, as the issue of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons was a growing issue with more than three million of them exposed to extremist and terrorism activities. He pointed out that the root causes of the issue, such as natural disasters, climate change, food insecurity and armed conflicts, were beyond national borders, and accordingly, an efficient regional response and cooperation among partners were needed. Interventions in the ECOWAS region were being carried out within the Plan of Action of the ECOWAS Humanitarian Policy (2018-2023), the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the ECOWAS Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the plan on stateless persons based on the 2016 Abidjan Declaration.

66. Mr. Brou explained that key responses should be grounded on tangible humanitarian action plans, mitigating disaster risks, and having a clear policy on stateless people to allow for effective responses in the short, medium and long term. In the short term, access to humanitarian funds was necessary in order to provide adequate support to individuals in distress. Clear mechanisms of interventions were also need to be in place to support data provided by early warning mechanisms. Additionally, medium-term actions should be aimed at reducing conflicts with a focus on democracy and good governance processes, through adequate support in electoral processes. Furthermore, long-term actions should be conducted in close collaboration with partners based on subsidiarity, effectiveness and efficiency principles. Finally, there was need to set up a regional information mechanism on displaced persons to better identify required action.

67. In her intervention, Ms. Koudenoukpo underscored the environmental degradation and human mobility nexus, recalling that in the past 50 years, 60 per cent of conflicts in Africa were related to access and exploitation of natural resources. Environmental degradation through deforestation, desertification, and water scarcity was redrawing the map of Africa and had affected how and where people could live. Those phenomena had resulted in displacement and migration and affected the lives and livelihoods of communities, in particular the poorest and most vulnerable groups. Cyclone Idai had amply demonstrated that peoples’ vulnerability and low level of resilience were key factors of displacement. Unfortunately, exposure to hazards would increase in the near future. She underscored the need to mitigate environmental displacement, intensify efforts to reduce vulnerability and address the low level of human development and stressed that the scale of environmental displacement was determined largely by the location of homes, which had political and economic dimensions, as poverty had limited the level of resources available to invest in building resilience and to recover from disasters. In terms of supporting the

African Union theme of the year, she called for more coordination and the mapping of the existing gaps instead of creating new institutions or bodies.

68. Ms. Koudenoukpo explained that climate change combined with extreme weather events had increased vulnerability and displacement in Africa. She indicated that environmental migration could be tackled by drawing up solutions involving academia and policymakers. An example of such collaboration was the Hugo Observatory on Environment, Migration and Politics, which was established within Liège University. In addition, several United Nations initiatives were aimed at addressing the challenges, including the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, the Task Force on Displacement within the framework of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. She emphasized the need to address environmental degradation, vulnerability and mismanagement, key factors forcing displacement, while exacerbating conflicts in the continent. She also underlined the need to strengthen the capacities of communities to build resilience and for cooperation among all stakeholders. She observed that while African countries were not more exposed to weather extremes, they were less prepared to respond to them because of inadequate technical, infrastructural and financial resources.

69. Ms. Tetteh expressed her appreciation to the African Union Assembly for the theme of the year and commended the development of the African Union road map of activities related to the theme. While commending Africa for its solidarity and keeping the continent's borders, doors and hearts open to millions in need, she regretted the inadequate attention paid to addressing causative factors, especially chronic deficits in governance, human rights violations, climate change, environmental degradation and the impact, especially on innocent women, girls and children.

70. Ms. Tetteh stressed that the basic premise for addressing the challenges faced by refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and migrants was to acknowledge that the phenomenon was inherently not a political and security issue, but that it was transnational in nature, and that sustainable solutions were required for regional and multilateral collaboration underpinned by the spirit of solidarity, burden and responsibility-sharing. In that regard, she commended the relatively more advanced structures and systems of some of the regional economic communities and called for not only leveraging the regional economic communities-African Union Commission-United Nations resources guided by the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity, efficiency and efficacy, but also recognizing that regional economic communities were at varying levels in terms of capacities.

71. She recommended that the African Union Commission and regional economic communities comprehensively address the issue of division of roles and responsibilities. In recognition of the relative strengths and capacities of the regional economic communities and the African Union Commission, and with due regard to the subsidiarity principle, she recommended that ongoing discussions on the division of roles and responsibilities under the African Union Institutional Reform process clarify at what stage the continental bodies needed to take the lead if the regional level capacities were deemed inadequate to address a specific challenge. Furthermore, she called for avoiding, to the extent possible, replicating institutions and mechanisms.

72. With reference to the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security concluded in April 2017, Ms. Tetteh called for greater emphasis on strengthening prevention, mediating conflicts and sustaining peace to avoid situations that would result in refugees and internally displaced persons. Additionally, she called for addressing the root causes of conflicts to sustain peace, prevent relapse into violence, and ease pressures on host countries through

comprehensive approaches that integrated people and built resilient communities. She stressed that in the context of the peace, security, human rights and development nexus, there was need to adopt progressive and integrative approaches in addressing the refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons' phenomenon and that such approaches should be inclusive of women and young people as active participants in peace processes at the national, regional or international levels.

73. During the discussions, participants posed several questions related to coordinated activities that had been carried out in response to Cyclone Idai. It was pointed out that at the level of the United Nations, an inter-agency steering committee was bringing together agencies to provide support to affected member States. However, the challenge of aligning that support to the African Union humanitarian action remained.

74. Participants highlighted some activities that had been carried out and were planned in commemoration of the African Union theme of the year in the context of the road map and implementation of the activities related to the theme. It was emphasized that the theme of the year was not a stand-alone event, but a process that would extend beyond the designated year – 2019. Designation of the African Union theme in any particular year was intended to highlight and focus efforts on an existing challenge. Initiatives and activities to tackle the challenge would continue after the year in question.

75. The following recommendations emerged from the interventions and discussions:

(a) There is a need to move away from a firefighting mode to a prevention mode in tackling key emergency issues, and to adopt integrated approaches to interventions. This necessitates increased investment in preventive measures, with member States taking the lead and the United Nations system acting in a supportive role;

(b) The United Nations system should support the strengthening of early warning systems at all levels in order to bolster the resilience of communities. This should include the establishment of a database of vulnerable areas for improved early warning and emergency response actions;

(c) The structural root causes of displacement need to be tackled decisively, including addressing climate change, disasters, conflict and migration, as well as gaps in the fundamentals that underlie the peace and security and development nexus. The United Nations system should support this endeavour by strengthening the capacity of member States to develop and implement climate and disaster risk reduction strategies and plans in the context of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and align the work of the regional economic communities, the African Union Commission and United Nations agencies to promote better coordination of interventions, efficiency and effectiveness, taking into consideration the principles of complementarity and subsidiarity;

(d) In supporting the implementation of the African Union road map on the theme, cluster 6 (humanitarian matters and disaster risk management) of RCM-Africa should work with all relevant clusters and the subregional coordination mechanisms for optimal results.

IX. Presentations and discussion on progress in the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, alignment with the peace and security and development frameworks, and consideration of its workplan

A. African Union-United Nations progress report of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms

76. Agbor Ambang, Head of NEPAD Coordination Unit at the African Union Commission presented the progress report of RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms. He began by highlighting the achievements of the joint secretariat, including events organized and studies commissioned, and reviewed the achievements of the nine clusters of the Mechanism¹ in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. They included support to the implementation of flagship projects and major initiatives of the African Union across the areas of focus of the nine clusters. In the presentation, key initiatives in support of the priorities of the Regional Economic Communities across all five subregions of Africa through the subregional coordination mechanisms were also highlighted.

77. During the presentation, Mr. Ambang looked at how the mechanisms could be further strengthened to improve accountability and effective delivery. The challenges faced by the mechanisms were issues pertaining to representation, continued bilateral engagements with the African Union organs, lack of clarity in the terms of reference of some clusters, too many planned cluster activities without commensurate human and financial resources, and lack of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. Recommendations towards addressing the challenges related to increased and improved consultations in joint planning, better alignment with the goals of Agenda 2063 and the African Union development priorities, rationalization of activities for better focus, enhanced commitment and engagement, more involvement of substantive divisions and departments of ECA and the African Union Commission, inter-cluster coordination, collaboration and information-sharing, and preparation and implementation of innovative resource mobilization strategies.

B. Aligning the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Integrated Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

78. Isatou Gaye, Chief of NEPAD Section of the Regional Integration and Trade Division of ECA, gave the presentation. She initially recalled the recommendation made at the nineteenth session of RCM-Africa that the

¹ 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, communications and culture; and cluster 9 - governance, peace and security.

Mechanism should align its work with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In order to determine how the alignment could best be realized, the joint RCM-Africa secretariat carried out an analysis of the two frameworks and of the Framework for a Renewed United Nations-African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027, which currently guided the work of the Mechanism.

79. During the presentation, Ms. Gaye highlighted that the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development featured details of intervention areas and action points in the interlinked areas of peace and security and the development agendas. Together, they neatly complemented the Framework for a Renewed United Nations-African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027, which provided a broad framework for the work of RCM-Africa. In terms of alignment with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, it could be achieved through clusters 6 and 9. With regard to alignment with the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, areas of focus and overlap suggested that it could be achieved through clusters 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. Alignment with the African Union strategic priorities would directly involve clusters 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9 and the subregional coordination mechanisms.

80. Ms. Gaye explained that holistic and integrated approaches would ensure that all relevant clusters and the subregional coordination mechanisms were meaningfully involved in the implementation of the two frameworks and the African Union priorities, which would also foster inter-cluster coordination and collaboration. During the presentation, she also emphasized the need to strengthen the mechanisms and their secretariats and for improved working modalities that would foster communication, coordination and collaboration.

C. Consideration and adoption of the African Union-United Nations workplan for 2019-2020 of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

81. Mr. Mohammed Aw-Dahir of FAO presented the African Union-United Nations RCM-Africa workplan for the 2019-2020 biennium. During the presentation, he highlighted that at the seventeenth session of RCM-Africa, the cluster system was reconfigured and it was agreed that effort would be directed towards enhancing coordination and joint implementation for efficient and effective delivery in support to the African Union development agenda. The consolidated workplan presented was informed by the seven African Union priorities and Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The workplan included the activities of RCM-Africa clusters and the subregional coordination mechanisms.

82. He explained that to ensure inclusivity, the respective cluster co-ordinators convened coordination and consultation meetings in the lead up to the RCM retreat, which was held in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, from 26 February to 1 March 2019. During the retreat individual cluster progress reports for 2018 and the draft workplan with input from cluster members were presented. After the retreat, follow-up consultation meetings were convened by the cluster co-

coordinators to finalize and consolidate the workplan. During the presentation, it was explained that while the cluster workplans had been finalized, those of the subregional coordination mechanisms required further consultations with their respective constituencies before being finalized. Consequently, approval was being sought for the cluster workplans and the meeting might take note of progress in the preparation of the workplans of the subregional coordination mechanisms.

83. It was explained that for effective delivery, the clusters had agreed to focus on fewer activities for better results and high impact, while for the purpose of accountability, they had agreed to appoint lead agencies for each activity and to organize quarterly coordination meetings to review progress and ensure timely reporting. During the presentation, the need to allocate sufficient joint resources (human, financial and time) for effective implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting were stressed and it was noted that United Nations agencies and the African Union Commission had agreed to appoint technical focal points and alternates to the clusters to ensure consistency and continuity.

84. The presentations evoked interesting discussions. The need to articulate the link between the workplans and the initiatives and national-level activities of the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups was raised. It was explained that the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group secretariats for Eastern and Southern and West and Central Africa participated in the preparation of the subregional coordination mechanisms workplans, which were informed by the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group strategic initiatives and the expressed priorities of the regional economic communities. With regard to the involvement of United Nations country teams, it was explained that their participation would be realized through the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group secretariats.

85. Participants noted that the presentation on the progress report did not include all the work carried out in the context of RCM-Africa. It was pointed out that in the presentation, selected activities were highlighted and all activities as reported by the clusters were contained in the progress report circulated at the meeting. In terms of reporting, a uniform reporting format would be adopted for all the clusters except cluster 9 for which the reporting format being used to report on the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security would be adopted. Participants also called for the harmonization of terminologies to avoid confusion in reporting and communication.

86. On matters related to the strengthening of the mechanisms, it was clarified that the secretariats of the regional and subregional mechanisms needed to be strengthened in terms of human and financial resources to be able to carry out their functional support role effectively. Financial resources were also needed to ensure the effective implementation of the joint workplans.

87. In responding to a question on the rationale for the regional coordination mechanisms, it was pointed out that that was clearly articulated in the Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, by which the Council established the regional coordination mechanism in all the United Nations regions. In the Africa region, RCM-Africa had evolved from a consultative to a coordination and collaboration mechanism of the United Nations system agencies supporting the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme to a joint United Nations-African Union mechanism supporting the development agenda of the continental body at the regional and subregional levels.

88. It was observed that the coming into effect of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area once ratified by 22 countries would not signal the end, but rather, the beginning of the hard work ahead in order for

member States to benefit from it. For example, infrastructure needed to be built, regional value chains must gain traction, and countries needed to truly liberalize their trade regimes. More importantly, the private sector must lead and benefit from the free trade area agreement. Furthermore, countries needed to ratify the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment, as it was complementary to the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The intervention was duly noted. It was indicated that with regard to private sector involvement, the African Union Commission had taken deliberate steps to engage the private sector and would continue to step up its efforts in that regard.

89. The meeting adopted the consolidated joint workplans of the clusters, but with regard to cluster 9, the meeting noted that given the ever-evolving nature of peace and security challenges and the implied interventions, that the workplan of that cluster would be informed by the programmes and activities agreed upon and regularly reviewed by the partnership review and implementation mechanisms of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. The meeting further took note of progress in the preparation of the workplans of the four subregional coordination mechanisms and called upon their respective secretariats to work towards their expeditious finalization.

90. The main recommendation emanating from the deliberation was for future sessions of RCM-Africa to dedicate sufficient time to discussing matters relevant to its functioning and delivery on the African Union priorities and the two United Nations-African Union frameworks in order to register tangible results and the desired impact.

X. Update on the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in preparation for the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development

91. Charles Akol of the Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Division of ECA briefed the meeting on the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to be convened in preparation for the 2019 high-level political forum. Regional forums were part of the follow-up and review mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda. The Africa Regional Forum was convened annually by ECA in collaboration with the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, and the United Nations system, to follow up on and review progress made towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. He highlighted that there was growing interest and engagement of the United Nations system in the work of the Forum.

92. Focusing on the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum, he indicated that it was being organized by ECA and the Government of Morocco in collaboration with the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and United Nations entities. The Forum would take place in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16 to 18 April 2019 on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. It would feature an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063. The outcomes of the Forum would feed into the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, to be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019 and the first high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly (Sustainable Development Goals Summit), to be held in New York on 24 and 25 September 2019.

93. Mr. Akol informed the meeting that for the upcoming session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, there was more extensive

and active engagement of the United Nations family including in planning and preparing background papers. United Nations entities demonstrated overwhelming interest to co-organize side events. They would be actively involved in the various activities during the proceedings of the Regional Forum. He concluded by reiterating the invitation to all member States, regional and subregional organizations, major groups and other stakeholders, bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other development partners to participate in the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

94. The meeting thanked Mr. Akol for the useful briefing.

XI. Other matters

95. No other matters were raised.

XII. Consideration and adoption of the report of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa

96. The main recommendations of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa were presented to the meeting for consideration. The meeting, cognizant that time could not allow the secretariat to present the full report, suggested that the latter consolidate the full report and circulate it for consideration at the earliest possible time after the meeting.

XIII. Closing of the session

97. The closing session was facilitated by the Assistant Secretary General and Director of the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, and Chair of the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa.

98. In her closing statement, Ms. Agbor expressed her deep appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the twentieth session of RCM-Africa. She said that the meeting provided a high-level platform to discuss and interact on issues pertinent to the development of Africa, especially on the 2019 African Union theme, and ways to effectively “deliver as one” in the context of RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms. She commended the participants for their attentiveness, engagement and useful interventions and noted that the session provided the impetus to rethink the operationalization of the vision and development strategies and attendant impacts at national level.

99. Ms. Agbor noted that it was also an opportunity to, among others, look closely at the issues faced by refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, the root causes, triggers and drivers of displacement, and how to strengthen RCM-Africa and its subregional coordination mechanisms in the context of the ongoing African Union and United Nations reforms. She noted that the meeting also had examined durable solutions in addressing the issues of the forced displacement-development nexus and how the compacts on refugees and migration could be implemented in a synergistic fashion. She stressed the need to support refugees to access quality education and health care and underlined the need to move beyond written recommendations, and to take focused actions to put in place policies and strategies that facilitated movement of persons across the continent regardless of their country of origin.

100. She requested participants to pay particular attention to issues of harmonization and alignment raised by the eminent panellists and participants. It was important to implement recommendations taking into account the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity among key stakeholders. She observed that the session was a wake-up call to take tangible actions with timelines as the preparations for the next session of RCM-Africa were being launched. She called for increased engagement of African Union and United Nations entities in RCM-Africa, while noting that the Mechanism would only succeed through collective efforts. Accordingly, its success or failure would be determined by the participant's commitment and engagement. She called for appropriate documentation of the various recommendations in order to transform them into actionable plans.

101. Ms. Songwe expressed her gratitude to Ms. Agbor for her commitment and active participation in the twentieth session of RCM-Africa. She also thanked all delegates for their useful contributions to the deliberations and acknowledged that the high number of people present at the closing session was indicative of their interest and commitment to RCM-Africa. With regard to the ongoing reforms of the United Nations and African Union, Ms. Songwe highlighted the challenge of implementation in an environment in which two or multiple entities were simultaneously undergoing institutional repositioning. She said that lack of comprehension and disagreements was a normal part of the change process environment. Nevertheless, she underscored the importance of forging ahead and to avoid inaction regardless of disagreements that might arise. In that regard, she challenged participants to embrace the spirit of the ongoing reforms.

102. Ms. Songwe reiterated the high level of commitment of the United Nations and the African Union to collectively recognize and address the peace and security and development nexus, while leaving no one behind and getting more people over the poverty line. She thanked the joint RCM-Africa secretariat, and all the colleagues that had contributed to the success of the session. She reassured participants that the draft report would be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting for consideration and noted that the recommendations would inform collective actions with a view to achieving the desired impacts quickly. In concluding, she echoed a quote by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda to the effect that moving faster together was better than moving fast alone. That, she stated, aptly exemplified the spirit of RCM-Africa.

103. Ms. Eziakonwa noted that the meeting provided an opportunity to connect. She said that the issues embodied in the theme of the meeting should not be seen as threats, but instead as opportunities to contribute to tackling humanitarian and development issues in the context of sustainable development. They also provided avenues to strengthen partnerships in all spheres of development. Road maps must ensure coherence and collaboration among partners, bringing their individual institutional mandates, expertise, experience and resources, including financial and human and institutional capacities, to take forward collective actions and enhance convergence. She thanked the African Union for the clear priorities communicated to guide the work of RCM-Africa. She then called for more inclusive planning processes for sessions of RCM-Africa by leveraging relevant platforms between the sessions.

Annex

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