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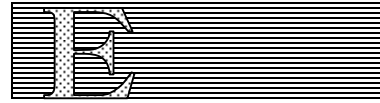


AFRICAN UNION



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable
Development Goals



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I. Background

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) which took place from 20 to 22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro was a major landmark in the pursuit for sustainable development and in translating this into concrete results at global, regional and national levels. The conference adopted an outcome document entitled “The future we want”, which was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in resolution A/RES/66/288. This resolution rendered greater impetus to the follow-up and implementation of the commitments agreed upon by Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives at Rio+20.

The development of sustainable development goals (SDGs) is among the key commitments agreed upon at Rio+20. The compelling need for the SDGs is that they could be useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. The SDGs are intended to advance sustainable development through further integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The aim is to guide and contribute to transformative change as stipulated in the Rio+20 outcome document, in support of rights-based, equitable and inclusive processes that enhance sustainability at global, regional, national and local levels (United Nations Secretary-General’s initial input to the Open Working Group on SDGs).

Rio+20 did not draw up specific goals but stated that the SDGs should be limited in number, aspirational and easy to communicate. Rio+20 emphasized among others things that the SDGs should respect the Rio Principles fully, and address and incorporate in a balanced manner all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages. The Conference recognized the importance and usefulness of a set of SDGs that among others takes into account different national circumstances, capacities and priorities, builds upon commitments already made, and contributes to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major summits in the economic, social and environmental fields. Rio+20 also acknowledged that the goals should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and serving as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Nations system as a whole. Further, the Conference acknowledged the need for progress towards the achievement of the SDGs to be assessed and accompanied by targets and indicators, taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development.

Against the above backdrop, Rio+20 resolved to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that is open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing global SDGs to be agreed upon by the UNGA. In this connection a United Nations General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) comprising 30 representatives nominated by member States from the five United Nations regional groups was established on 22 January 2013 by decision 67/555 (A/67/L.48/rev.1). The OWG is co-chaired by Kenya and Hungary. Member States decided to use a constituency based system of representation whereby most of the seats in the Working Group are occupied by several like-minded countries. The African members of the working group are: Algeria/Egypt/Morocco/Tunisia; Ghana; Benin; Kenya; United Republic of Tanzania; Congo; and Zambia/Zimbabwe. The OWG will submit a proposal on the sustainable development goals to UNGA for consideration and appropriate action.

Africa Consultations on the SDGs

Rio+20 requested the United Nations Secretary-General to ensure that all the necessary input and support were accorded to the work on SDGs, from the United Nations system. In line with this, Rio+20 further requested the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support the Regional Commissions (RCs) in collecting and compiling national inputs to inform this global effort.

As a follow-up to the Rio+20 outcomes, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) organized the Africa Regional implementation meeting (Africa RIM) which was held in November 2012, to deliberate on the main outcomes of Rio+20 and their implications for Africa. This multi-stakeholder meeting, which brought together participants from the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainable development adopted the Africa RIM Outcome Document for the post Rio+20 follow-up processes including the Twentieth Session of the United Nations Commission (CSD-20). This outcome document among others, serves as Africa's collective input to the CSD-20 and the United Nations General Assembly processes on Rio+20 follow-up, including the sustainable development goals.

On the SDGs, the Africa RIM reaffirmed the principles that these goals should be based on, and identified broad priority areas for Africa that should be covered by the goals. In this regard, the Africa RIM agreed on the need to have an effective, broad-based, bottom-up and consultative process to flesh out the goals, indicators and targets that should underpin the SDGs.

An effective bottom-up process is considered pertinent in the case of Africa in order to:

- (i) Effectively prepare Africa to speak with one strong voice to articulate and rally international support for SDGs that are well aligned with its sustainable development priorities;
- (ii) Lay a firm foundation for the ownership, championship, domestication and implementation of activities towards the achievement of the SDGs by regional and subregional organizations, African countries and major groups;
- (iii) Mobilize, enhance understanding and strengthen the capacity of regional and subregional organizations, African countries and major groups on the development and subsequent implementation of programmes and activities towards the achievement of SDGs in particular and sustainable development in general; and
- (iv) Enhance linkages between national-subregional-regional and global levels.

Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: ECA, AUC, AfDB and UNDP jointly organized subregional and regional consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in Africa. These consultations were held as follows: Accra in November 2011; Mombasa in October 2012; Dakar in December 2012; and Hammamet, Tunisia in March 2013. The regional consultation in Hammamet aimed among others things at identifying Africa's priorities for the post-2015 agenda; identifying

enablers and critical success factors for the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and aligning the post-2015 priorities with other development programmes and agendas including Rio+20 and NEPAD – (the) New Partnership for Africa’s Development. The meeting adopted an outcome document in which it agreed that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should incorporate the Rio+20 outcomes and the outcomes of Africa-wide initiatives, national and regional consultations as well as United Nations forums, including *20 years since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+20)* among others.

The meeting also agreed that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should: (a) emphasize inclusive economic growth and structural transformation; (b) reorient the development paradigm away from externally-driven initiatives towards domestically-inspired and funded initiatives that are grounded in national ownership; (c) prioritize equity and social inclusion and measure progress in terms of both the availability and quality of service delivery; (d) pay greater attention to vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, displaced persons; and (e) focus on development enablers as well as development outcomes, particularly structural economic transformation and inclusive growth, innovation and technology transfer, human development, and financing and partnerships.

The Sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the AUC Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development: This conference which was held in March 2013 deliberated on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and implementation of the Rio+20 Outcomes in Africa. In the Ministerial Statement adopted by the meeting, the Ministers *inter alia*:

- (i) Urged that necessary steps be taken to achieve an early convergence between the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Rio+20 follow-up processes, particularly the SDGs, towards ensuring a “Delivery as One” United Nations development agenda; and
- (ii) Called on ECA, AUC and AfDB to ensure that Africa’s priorities identified through the region’s consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda are duly incorporated in the SDGs and Post-2015 Development Agenda that are being formulated. In this connection the Conference also called on the three collaborating institutions to translate the African common position into concrete goals, indicators and targets.

In line with the above and building on it, ECA together with AUC and AfDB spearheaded a bottom-up Africa consultation aimed at supporting African countries to effectively contribute to, and participate in the drawing up of the SDGs. As an integral part of the consultations, five Subregional Reports were commissioned. These were prepared with inputs from member States, major groups and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). An Africa Regional Report on the SDGs was also commissioned. This report was informed by *inter alia*, the five subregional reports and the outcomes of the Africa Process on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

It is against this backdrop that the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development Goals is being organized.

II. Objectives of the Africa Consultative Meeting on SDGs

The main objectives of the meeting are twofold, namely to:

- (a) Enable African countries to identify, articulate and reach a consensus on the region's sustainable development priorities and goals taking into account the outcomes of the Africa consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and
- (b) Prepare Africa to speak with one strong voice and rally international support for the SDGs that are well aligned with the region's sustainable development priorities and aspirations.

III. Format of the Meeting

The meeting will comprise an experts and ministerial segments as follows:

A. Experts segment

The Experts segment is divided into four main plenary sessions:

- (i) *Presentation and discussion on the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

There will be a presentation on the content of the African Common Position and the process that led to its formulation. It will also include an analysis of the High-Level Panel Report and an examination of the links between the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs in terms of both process and substance. This will be followed by a summary of the post-2015-related resolutions arising from the May 2013 African Union Heads of State summit. The presentation will conclude with a road map highlighting the next steps in the process.

Discussions will follow and the main issues arising and recommendations will be synthesized.

- (ii) *Presentations and discussions on the subregional reports on Sustainable Development Goals*

There will be presentations of each of the five subregional reports on SDGs for Eastern, Central, North, West and Southern Africa. Each presentation will include an assessment of the subregional sustainable development priorities, opportunities and challenges; the proposed set of SDGs and associated targets and indicators for the subregion. There will also be action-oriented recommendations and way forward on the implementation of the proposed SDGs within the context of the subregion.

Discussions will follow each presentation and the main issues arising and recommendations will be synthesized.

- (iii) *Presentation and discussion on the Africa Regional Report on Sustainable Development Goals*

The meeting will hear a presentation on the Africa regional report on SDGs. The presentation will include an assessment of Africa's sustainable development priorities, opportunities and challenges; the proposed set of SDGs and associated targets and indicators for the region; and action-oriented recommendations and way forward on the implementation of the proposed SDGs within the context of the region.

Discussions will follow and the main issues arising and recommendations will be synthesized.

(iv) Consideration of the working document of the outcome of the consultative meeting

During this session the experts will have before them the draft working document of the outcome of the meeting for consideration. The experts will make observations, comments and inputs that will be incorporated into the working document. The session will conclude with the experts adopting a draft Outcome Document of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the SDGs to be considered by the Ministerial segment.

B. Ministerial segment

The Ministerial segment will comprise three main sessions:

(i) Opening session

(ii) A high-level policy dialogue on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs

This will be an interactive session with the objective of forming a consensus and providing high-level political guidance on the following themes:

- The Post-2015 Development Agenda and Africa's sustainable development priorities;
- Enhancing convergence between the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs process; and
- Strategies for ensuring that Africa's priorities are effectively articulated and negotiated at the global level.

Detailed guidelines for the high-level policy dialogue will be circulated in due course.

(iii) Consideration and adoption of the Outcome Document and Report of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the SDGs

The Ministers will be given the drafts of the Outcome Document and Report of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the SDGs for consideration and adoption. They will make comments and observations on the drafts, which will be recorded. The amendments on the Outcome Document will be incorporated directly for adoption by the Ministers, while the Report will be adopted with the understanding that the agreed amendments will be incorporated in the final report to be circulated to all participants at the earliest possible time after the meeting.

IV. Expected Outcomes

The following are the expected outcomes of the meeting:

- (i) Enhanced understanding of Africa's Post-2015 Development Priorities and priority sustainable development issues;
- (ii) High-level political guidance and consensus on achieving convergence between the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs process;
- (iii) Adoption of Africa's common position on the SDGs; and
- (iv) Guidance and strategies for Africa's unified approach to the global level consultations and negotiations on SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

V. Expected Outputs

The following will be the main outputs of the meeting:

- (i) The Outcome Document of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the SDGs;
- (ii) Report of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the SDGs;
- (iii) Press releases; and
- (iv) Web publications.

VI. Meeting Documentation

The following reports will serve as inputs to the meeting:

- (i) The five subregional reports on SDGs for Eastern, Central, North, West and Southern Africa;
- (ii) Africa Regional Report on SDGs;
- (iii) Working document of the outcome of the consultative meeting; and
- (iv) Outcome documents of the Africa Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Other reports that will serve as background documents for the meeting are:

- (i) The Africa RIM Outcome Document;
- (ii) Report of the Africa RIM;
- (iii) The Rio+20 Outcome Document; and
- (iv) Africa regional and subregional reports on Rio+20 objectives and themes.

VII. Participants

The following are expected to attend the meeting:

- (i) All 54 African countries (ministers, and experts from ministries/agencies in charge of planning/finance, environment and social affairs and African diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa, and New York);
- (ii) African regional and subregional organizations;
- (iii) Representatives of major groups (women; children and youth, indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers);
- (iv) United Nations and other International agencies and organizations; and
- (v) Observer States and development partners.

VIII. Working Languages

The meeting will be conducted in English and French, with simultaneous interpretation in both languages.

IX. Dates and Venue

The Consultative meeting will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 31 October to 5 November 2013.

X. Administrative Arrangements

These will be provided in a separate information note.