



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

Statement

Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals

Addis Ababa, 31 October, 2013

Eminent Persons,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All Protocols observed.

The Bank would like to extend a warm welcome to you as you participate in this important event: *the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals*.

Africa is at a critical junction. The Rio+20 outcomes in 2012 set the stage for the articulation of future universal sustainable development goals, and while doing so also explicitly identified Africa as the continent facing the most significant challenges which require international support to be addressed. At the same time, there are less than two years till 2015, to make the final push towards achieving the MDGs; but once again although great progress has been made on this front, the continent lags behind the rest of the world on all goals. Thus, it is imperative that any future development goals should reflect Africa's specific circumstances and priorities.

In this meeting, we are required to think very carefully and critically about the future priorities that will help transform Africa – towards achieving: economic growth and eradication of poverty; social inclusion; environmental sustainability; and good governance. We must consistently and confidently articulate Africa's vision and aspirations for the future; bearing in mind that the form in which the SDGs are articulated will focus, direct and mobilize government political will and multilateral action for decades to come. We cannot afford to miss the opportunity.

1. How far have we come and what have we learnt?

The value of regional consultations: regional and sub-regional consultations on both the UN Post 2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs are ongoing. On the part of the SDGs, the convergence is this current meeting that has brought us together as a continent to articulate and reach consensus on the region's *sustainable development* priorities. The UN post 2015 agenda process in Africa has already resulted in an African common position. Africa is strongest when we speak with one voice, as has been demonstrated through Africa's participation at Rio+20 as a collective and also under ongoing UNFCCC processes. This can assure us that a unified approach is beneficial. Both consultations have pointed to the need to have a unified process that streamlines both the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs to develop a common set of goals.

The MDGs provide important lessons: These can assist us to focus on the issues that will need to be resolved in the future development agenda, such as:

- need to focus beyond goals but also on the means to achieve them;
- importance of institutions, structural transformation and other development enablers;
- need to account for local circumstances and differences in initial conditions between countries; and
- importance of consultation and ownership building at the conceptualization of development goals so as to eliminate perceptions of a donor driven agenda;

To ensure these issues are taken into account is part of the reason we are all here.

The complexity of challenges that need to be addressed: we must face the fact that in the 21st century, **Africa** remains the poorest continent with the lowest access to clean energy, highest fertility rates, lowest labor productivity, lowest education learning achievements, poorest access to essential medicines and lowest technological connectivity. Africa is also the second most unequal region in the world. Furthermore, climate change and environmental degradation threaten to undermine the progress that has been achieved.

2. Setting our priorities for SDGs: defining our future

This is the chance for Africa: It is often said that the participation of developing countries and Africa in particular in the formulation of the MDGs was minimal. How the SDGs are formulated will have a huge impact on Africa. They will shape development priorities and influence the flow of resources within and between nations and institutions. Thus, here and now, is our opportunity to speak. We have enough time as we have started consultations relatively early. But we need to improve the quality and effectiveness of this process by encouraging fuller participation and engagement, and following through till Africa's voice is heard in defining our future development agenda. The documents we are discussing here are not cast in stone. We should be courageous enough to revise them and continually improve them until we have designed the set of goals that will support our development efforts.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, please allow the Bank to reiterate the following points as we deliberate on the proposal on the SDGs:

First, the SDGs should build on **the foundations of the MDGs:** despite identified shortcomings, the MDGs have had a positive impact in terms of galvanizing political

support, focusing on results, their ease of communicating and focus on a manageable number of issues. These lessons should be sustained.

Second, Africa should stay ahead of the game. This has two dimensions. The first dimension: is that it is important for us to make sure that priorities are carefully selected while paying attention to key enabling factors that will lead to success. Consultations so far point towards the following sustainable development priorities:

“...governance and institutions; economic development (including access to energy); social development; environment and natural resources; means of implementation; and partnerships”

The second dimension: is that Africa needs to be well-prepared to sit at the negotiating table with other stakeholders to bargain for these priorities. Framing the final global development priorities, goals and targets will be a complex process involving multiple stakeholders with a range of interests. Leadership is key to this endeavor; we must stay engaged.

Third, we need to align the consultative processes for the post 2015 agenda and SDGs, for a more productive outcome: the two processes are taking place in parallel both in Africa and worldwide and must converge. The issues we need clear strategies to respond to include: how we will coordinate and come up with a coherent set of priorities? How we will handle the competing interests of diverse groups/stakeholders? And how we will coherently and consistently frame Africa's priorities within the global development framework?

Fourth, Adequate attention must be paid to the means of implementation while negotiating the SDGs: looking back, although the MDGs helped improve and increase the targeting and flow of resources for development, discussions and commitments on financing came late during their implementation. Hence, including financing and other means of implementation in the discussions on priorities and goals is a fundamental success factor for the future development agenda.

Fifth, transformative change may require a shift in development pathways: there is the need to shift from the current development paradigm and trajectory towards a transition to ‘green’ development pathways. In addition, and significantly important, is the need to address infrastructure more explicitly as it remains critical for Africa.

3. The role of African Development Bank

The African Development Bank is a development partner of African Countries, expanding infrastructure enabling access to economic opportunities and providing essential services (e.g. energy access). Our support to member states will continue to create employment opportunities, enhance productivity of natural capital; enhance governance and development of service institutions - contributing to economic growth and improvements in welfare. We will continue to finance initiatives that support sustainable development on the continent while supporting efforts at towing a greener development pathway.

The Bank has joined hands with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Africa Union Commission (AUC), and other partners, to support this dialogue on the SDGs. We hope hosting of this continent wide consultation will result in the articulation of an African Common Position on the SDGs.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, everyone's voice counts.

The Bank wishes you fruitful discussions and deliberation. We look forward to hearing from you how we can further support the continent's quest for goals that will further accelerate the continent's developmental efforts.

Thank you very much