

Key Outcome Messages

APRM-UNDESA Continental Workshop on VNRs and Domestication of Agenda 2063

Abuja, Nigeria, 28-30 March 2022 ¹

On the alignment and domestication of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063, participants noted the following:

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 are the most powerful frameworks for change for the creation of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development in Africa. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 needs to be enhanced with a full appreciation of the interlinkages and synergies between both Agendas.
- The First and second Continental Reports on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 (2019 & 2021), that were prepared following various technical workshops and data validation consultations held between 2018 and 2020 under the auspices of the AU Commission and supported by AU organs including APRM, are a consolidation and evidence-based assessment of country and regional-level progress reports. However, member States are encouraged to bridge the gap between knowledge and application of both Agendas and engage in more awareness raising activities, particularly on Agenda 2063.
- Notable progress integrating both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into national development plans (NDPs) and planning instruments was taking place in a growing number of African countries. Tailoring the SDGs to NDP priorities and local contexts is imperative to localizing the SDGs and delivering on people's expectations. Domestication is defined by context, as the national circumstances determines local approaches in each country.
- Alignment and domestication both benefit from a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that involves, among others, collaboration, knowledge sharing, financing and funding, strategic planning, and monitoring with indicators to measure progress and results that can be replicated. Engagement of youth, women, and other stakeholders has proven to be effective when it comes to enriching and strengthening the delivery of results through committees, working groups, meaningful partnerships, consultations and collaboration.

¹ The three-day capacity building workshop included a half- day capacity building for Nigerian SDGs focal points.

- The most successful alignment structures ensure bottom-up approaches that reflect capabilities of local authorities. Mechanisms for monitoring implementation require review and approval by

local authorities, budgetary allocation, and measures to ensure that the right indicators are in place.

- The lack of disaggregated data remains one of the most pressing issues facing African countries and the importance of ensuring that systems are in place to collect data was noted. Timely and disaggregated data is a challenge in decentralized planning systems, and there can be more reliance on administrative data, which is easier to access than survey data. New digital tools offered by organisations such as the APRM, UNECA and UNESCO are significant to fulfil data gaps on SDG 16/Aspiration three.
- The overarching theme of both Agendas is that of leaving no one behind. There is a challenge to reach people living in poverty and the most vulnerable populations in rural and remote areas.

On the institutional framework and coordination mechanisms, participants noted the following:

- Key actions are being taken by African Governments to implement inclusive, effective and accountable institutions and raise ownership of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Public institutions should be empowered to handle shocks and disasters specially to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. More transparent mechanisms as well as coordination amongst government bodies to minimize illicit financial flows and corruption are needed.
- The Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development, which were developed by the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, were reaffirmed as highly relevant to meeting Africa's governance and inclusive development challenges. The principles can also guide and inform reporting and review processes at local, regional, and national levels, and constitute a powerful tool for assessment of national and local progress in both Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). The application of the principles of effective governance can advance the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and can guide countries towards whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to achieve sustainable development.

- Further capacity building activities to enhance awareness of the CEPA Principles and provide more focused support to facilitate their adoption in practice are needed. The APRM, as the AU autonomous mechanism for the promotion of good governance on the continent, should be supported by the UN system, including UNDESA, to assist in building the capacity of member States on the principles of effective governance and the integration of both Agendas into national development plans, including at sub-national level. Further workshops, study tours and digital platforms should be created to develop peer-learning, capacity building and training in Africa.

On Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), participants noted the following:

- The VNRs should be substantive, and knowledge based, as well as open, inclusive, participatory, and transparent for all people, with a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those at risk of being left behind. The VNRs are evolving in their depth and scope, illustrating how countries have progressed with integration and localization of the SDGs and inclusion of stakeholders.
- Inclusion and participation in the VNR preparation process is crucial, and a whole-of-society approach is important for efforts to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholder engagement, including the private sector and civil society, is necessary to ensure an inclusive process and effective overall development planning.
- Noting that 21 African countries will be presenting VNRs at the 2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the sharing of good practices, including on national development planning and on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda, was encouraged. Peer-learning between African countries, including sharing of experiences, challenges and opportunities as well as an exchange of lessons learned is crucial for VNRs. The scope for learning and cooperation on COVID-19 recovery scenarios and governance responses was underlined.
- The UN Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs provide a framework for common elements within the VNR reports, facilitating comparison of VNR reports from different countries, as well as chronological comparison of VNR reports from the same country over time.

- First time VNRs aim to align their national goals with the 2030 Agenda and set a framework for follow-up. Second and subsequent reports focus more on continuity and comparability, highlight actions that show progress from earlier VNRs, and report on the process of implementation regarding institutions, stakeholders, and baseline data.

On Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), participants noted the following:

- Localizing the SDGs and Agenda 2063 entails integrating them in the design, implementation and monitoring of sub-national plans through the VLR process. VLRs are growing at an expeditious pace and are recognized as advancing implementation and localization of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 from the bottom-up.
- VLRs enable subnational authorities to conduct self-assessment and reflection on progress, improve coordination transparency/accountability, cooperation (horizontal and vertical), and awareness of the SDGs. Relevant examples of local involvement in national responses to COVID-19 are important for an analysis of what has worked for strengthening multi-level governance and vertical integration.
- The link between VLRs and VNRs should be further strengthened, and local perspectives and fully participatory and inclusive community involvement should be enhanced. Participants highlighted the need for peer learning for VLRs in Africa.
- In addition to DESA's Global Guiding Elements on VLRs, APRM and UNDESA should also publicize the VLR guidelines prepared by UNECA that take into account Africa's context and specificities.

On gender, participants noted the following:

- A gender perspective should be integrated into all reporting processes, including through more effective inter-ministerial coordination and inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships. In reporting and review processes, including VNRs and VLRs, countries are encouraged to look at gender gaps across all SDGs from an intersectional perspective.
- Sex-disaggregated statistics and gender-specific indicators were important to assess progress towards gender equality and countries should develop guidelines on gender mainstreaming in planning and budgeting processes.
- Leveraging access to finance for women, for example for micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) helps empower them and reduce the impact of disasters and shocks.

- Regional Mechanisms in Africa like the APRM should assist countries in fulfilling data gaps concerning gender equality through governance assessment and targeted reviews. Coordination with AUC and UN Women is imperative to enhance data collection.

On youth, participants noted the following:

- The importance of meaningful and active participation of children and young people in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its monitoring and review processes, including in preparation and presentation of the VNRs and VLRs, was recognised.
- Young people should be seen, not only as beneficiaries of government programmes, but as crucial contributors to the development process. Africa has the largest generation of young people ever who face significant obstacles to achieving their full potential. Efforts to ensure that young people are included at all levels of decision-making and strengthening civic education for sustainable development and leadership training, including for the youth, to advance intergenerational equity is crucial.
- The African Union through the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and APRM have coherent youth programmes which can be promoted to offer a regional platform for youth, and particularly girls, to express their views and initiatives for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and ensure a whole of society approach in sustainable development decision making.

On financing development and partnerships, participants noted the following:

- Effective fiscal and debt management, financing for development and capacity to mobilize domestic resources are key to ensure recovery for African economies from the COVID-19 pandemic. Sound institutions to ensure the resilience of financial frameworks to future shocks were crucial. Additionally, in many African countries, there is a need to strengthen the link between budgeting and planning.
- National planning processes should be integrated with the national and external financing for development strategies, including through integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs).



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- Reducing reliance on donor countries' assistance and transformation to technical assistance and knowledge sharing programmes are favoured by African countries for sustainable finance. Investment in green economy, mobilization of domestic resources for climate resilience and sustainable food systems are priorities.