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Summary and key messages of the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

I. Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), together with the Government of Morocco under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and United Nations system,¹ convened the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16 to 18 April 2019.

2. At its fifth session, the Regional Forum conducted a regional follow-up and review of progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The session provided a platform for peer learning, including

* ECA/RFSD/2019/1/Rev.1.

¹ The following entities of the United Nations system were involved as partners in that process: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteer programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and World Food Programme.

sharing approaches, experiences and lessons learned in conducting voluntary national reviews and other efforts to advance the integrated implementation of the two agendas. The Regional Forum also deliberated and agreed on the priorities and policy recommendations of Africa in the form of key messages as the region's input to the 2019 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019, and the summit meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals,² to be held in New York on 24 and 25 September 2019.

3. The Regional Forum was attended by more than 800 participants, comprising high-level representatives of the Governments of 45 ECA member States, intergovernmental bodies, major groups and other stakeholders, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and other international organizations.

4. Section II contains a summary of the presentations, discussions held and key messages emanating from the Regional Forum.

II. Summary and key messages

5. The fifth session of the Regional Forum was held on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", in line with that of the 2019 meeting of the high-level political forum.

6. An in-depth review of selected Sustainable Development Goals for the high-level political forum was conducted, along with Goal 17 and the corresponding goals set out in Agenda 2063, under the following sub-themes:

- (a) Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education;
- (b) Promoting decent work and inclusive economic growth;
- (c) Ensuring reduced inequalities;
- (d) Scaling-up climate action;
- (e) Ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions;
- (f) Strengthening the means of implementation and the partnership for sustainable development.

7. Twenty-six preparatory and side events,³ held on the margins of the Regional Forum, enriched the proceedings of its main session. Among those events were a regional preparatory workshop for Africa voluntary national review countries at the 2019 meeting of the high-level political forum; the first meeting of the African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum; and a preparatory and capacity development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in Africa.

8. The opening session was moderated by the Officer in Charge of the Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Division of ECA, Oliver Chinganya. The Head of the Government of Morocco, Saad-Eddine El Othmani, made opening remarks and

² Meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, on the theme of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

³ See <https://www.uneca.org/arfsd2019/pages/pre-events-and-side-events>.

delivered the keynote address. The Secretary of State in charge of Sustainable Development of Morocco, Nezha El Ouafi, delivered brief remarks and introduced the Head of Government of Morocco. The opening of the Regional Forum was also addressed by the Permanent Secretary, Environment and Sustainability of Senegal and Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the fourth session of the Regional Forum, Amadou Lamine Guissé, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Giovanie Biha, and the Director of Strategic Policy Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Resource Mobilization, African Union Commission, Mesfin Tessema.

9. In his address, Mr. El Othmani called for efforts to accelerate the pace of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, cautioning that failure to achieve the Goals would have serious impacts in the mid to long term. Highlighting measures undertaken by Morocco to foster sustainable development, he stressed the crucial role of knowledge, leadership and young people in attainment of the Goals.

10. In her remarks, Ms. El Ouafi said that the current session of the Regional Forum was a key step in preparing the African continent for the July 2019 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. As the continent most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Africa suffered the most direct economic, social and environmental consequences, exacerbating migratory trends and political instability. She noted that, by organizing the current session, Morocco was reaffirming its commitment to pursue a path towards sustainable development and inclusiveness in Africa. To that end, it was vital for the session to adopt outcomes that would help to ensure the resilience of the continent and reinforce the potential commitment of its human capital, cultural diversity and unique ancestral knowhow to sustainability.

11. Mr. Guissé recalled that the fourth session of the Regional Forum, held in Dakar in May 2018, had encouraged highly active participation by Africa in the 2018 meeting of the high-level political forum in 2018, which, in turn, had enabled the effective delivery and uptake of its key messages. He underscored the need to build that momentum in implementation of the Goals and, to that end, stressed the importance of a global and holistic approach. In conclusion, he affirmed the important role played by the Forum in identifying strengths and weaknesses, with a view to the formulation of recommendations aimed at improving global implementation and monitoring of the Goals.

12. On behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA, Vera Songwe, Ms. Biha thanked Morocco for hosting the current event, and commended the organizing partners and the United Nations system on their consistent support of the Forum. Highlighting the opportunities that the Forum provided for peer learning, she invited participants to reflect on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and the way forward. While good progress was being made globally in that regard, she regretted that, apart from a few countries in North Africa, progress was slow and many African countries would not attain the goals by 2030. She cited the limited alignment of national development plans with the development agendas and stressed the need for the goals of the two agendas to be fully integrated at the national level into policies, plans, budgets, approaches to investment and private sector engagement and development. As a catalyst for action to accelerate implementation of the agendas and a mechanism for peer learning, the Forum should foster strategies, informed by empirical and analytical policy research, for solutions and a practicable road map to support the efforts of countries in Africa. In that way, she concluded, accelerated progress would be assured towards attainment of the development agendas in Africa.

13. Mr. Tessema said that, through its allocation of resources for the Forum, Morocco had set a strong message of its commitment to the development of the continent and realization of the goal of “the Africa we want”, as enshrined in 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. He stressed the need for the African Union and the United Nations to work together in leveraging each other’s comparative advantages and expertise for integrated implementation of the two agendas. Given the key role of the Regional Forum in consolidating that joint implementation and the related processes of monitoring, reporting and resource mobilization, he called on member States to work towards implementation of the two agendas in an integrated manner.

14. To accomplish the set objectives as outlined in paragraph 2 above, the Regional Forum featured a high-level panel dialogue on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality; stepping up action to deliver the commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa; plenary presentations and discussions on the support and progress made at the regional and subregional levels on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; a round table on the voluntary national reviews and peer learning on implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; parallel panel meetings for in-depth review, peer-learning and dialogue on the sub-themes of the Regional Forum; and presentations and discussions of outcomes and proposed key messages emanating from the parallel panel meetings.

15. The following sections summarize the main issues and trends and key messages, including policy recommendations, emanating from the presentations and deliberations during the Regional Forum. The key messages constitute the regional input of Africa to the 2019 meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in July and September 2019. Member States are invited to consider the current key messages, including policy recommendations, in their efforts at national, regional and global levels to empower people and ensure inclusiveness and equality; and to accelerate progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the goals of Agenda 2063.

A. Stepping up action and sustaining momentum to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and implement Agenda 2063

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

16. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to the theme may be summarized as set out below.

17. In 2019, the Regional Forum will complete the first round of the review of progress made in Africa towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The current view is that the Goals are unlikely to be achieved in Africa by 2030 at the prevailing pace and scale of implementation. This can be attributed to extensive challenges faced by the region in multiple fronts.

18. The average economic growth levels for African countries in 2018 of 3.2 per cent are below those needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. To get on track to meet the Goals, Africa needs to triple its 2018 gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth of 0.6 per cent, which is too low to mitigate to any significant extent the high levels of poverty and inequality.⁴ Even though the proportion of Africans living in

⁴ Cost of hunger: the costs associated with child undernutrition alone are huge across Africa, ranging from

extreme poverty declined from 57 per cent in 1990 to 43 per cent in 2012, within the same period, the total number of people living in poverty in Africa increased from 287.6 million to 388.8 million.

19. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Africa needs to meet incremental financing needs estimated at between \$614 billion and \$638 billion per year. Shortfalls in realizing the required financing are clearly demonstrated in the infrastructure sector. The continent only raises approximately 50 per cent of the estimated amount of between \$130 billion and 170 billion annually required to close the infrastructure gap. Accordingly, most of the African countries will unlikely achieve Goal 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all). Limited access to energy and other critical infrastructure, including transport, continue to impede industrialization and the delivery of services that are essential for increasing production in the region.

20. Rising debt stocks and associated debt servicing costs are a concern and a major challenge in the effort to increase the mobilization of financial resources in Africa. Recently, there has been an upsurge in public and foreign debt levels, which rose to approximately 50 and 27 per cent, respectively, in 2018, from 48.4 per cent and 26.5 per cent in the previous year. The continent's total debt-to-GDP ratio rose to 37.6 per cent in 2018 from about 35.5 per cent in 2017. Foreign debt stocks are high, especially in the oil-importing and mineral-rich countries where they are estimated to be 45.4 and 62 per cent of GDP, respectively.

21. Africa is experiencing rapid demographic changes of increasing proportions of older people despite its large youthful population. This increase is taking place in a context where laws, policies and programmes about and for older people have not been modified to cope with older people's longevity, capacities and complex vulnerabilities. Governments and development partners have limited technical capacity on ageing and older people's rights, and lack adequate evidence to inform appropriate policy direction and resource allocation.

2. Key messages

22. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Africa faces substantial challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Accordingly, national efforts and the mobilization of global support, in particular for countries facing major challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063, must be intensified;

(b) African countries need to do more to raise domestic resources to finance sustainable development, including through improving tax revenue management, plugging illicit financial outflows, reducing the cost of remittances and developing capital markets to attract private investment;

(c) In their effort to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, countries need to consider the objective set in both agendas to make a bold, transformational change to build fairer, more inclusive, healthier, more prosperous and more resilient societies that use natural resources sustainably and create opportunity for all;

(d) Greater mobilization of resources is needed to catalyse, strengthen and

16.5 to 1.9 per cent of annual GDP.

increase the number of productive individual and concerted actions aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of the 2063 Agenda. To effectively reach and engage all stakeholders, especially at the subnational level, more attention must be directed to capacity development and formal and non-formal education. In this regard, subnational governments, the private sector, academic institutions and civil society must be empowered to contribute towards the implementation of the two agendas;

(e) To set Africa firmly on the path to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, the goals of the two agendas must be fully integrated by countries into their policies and plans, national budgets, approaches to investment and private sector engagement and development. Efforts should, therefore, be intensified to strengthen the alignment of national development frameworks, including budget allocations, monitoring and evaluation frameworks and bilateral and multilateral development cooperation frameworks with the goals of the two agendas;

(f) Stronger action by countries and their development partners is needed to ensure that an integrated and coherent approach is taken in the efforts to mobilize resources and financing for the implementation of key regional and global frameworks, including, among others, the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. Otherwise, a fragmented, silo or piecemeal approach to the implementation of these frameworks could lead to the dissipation of efforts and imbalanced and short-lived outcomes that, in turn, would undermine the integrated and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, the importance of leaving no one behind and efforts to attain balanced integration of the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainable development;

(g) Improving governance and strengthening of institutions to incorporate laws into domestic legislation, implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and monitor and report progress in the implementation of the two agendas are critical for the realization of sustainable development in Africa.

B. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

23. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to this sub-theme may be summarized as set out below.

24. Achieving goals covered by this sub-theme is of critical importance to economic growth and poverty reduction. It is also important in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. A host of social and non-market benefits can be gained through education, such as increased child well-being, health status, greater consumer choices, and social capital. In Africa, the positive spillover of education can also be gauged by the decline in adolescent (15–19 years of age) fertility rates based on the increased enrolment in secondary schools.

25. Primary school completion has broadly improved in some African countries. Nonetheless, two thirds of the countries in Africa have yet to reach the target of full completion in primary education. A critical aspect contributing to lower completion rates is the large increase in student enrolment, which is affecting classroom size. The supply of trained teachers at the primary and secondary school levels is an important constraint

on the provision of quality education. Africa has the lowest proportion of trained teachers globally. In addition, in Africa, excluding North Africa, gender parity in primary to lower secondary schools increased between 2005 and 2015 from 0.96 to 0.98. The gender parity ratio, however, was lower at the upper secondary level, at 0.82 because of a number of factors, including child marriage, resulting in increased pregnancy, which affects school attendance of adolescent girls.

2. Key messages

26. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

- (a) The monitoring of progress in Africa towards attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 is limited by the lack of available data and of the disaggregation of such data. For this reason, good quality data on special needs children are vital for inclusivity and fulfilment of the global and regional agendas. A top priority for the continent is the development of statistical systems to enhance empirically grounded educational policy direction. To do this, the coverage and frequency of censuses and surveys need to be increased and administrative systems, including civil registration and vital statistics, must be modernized. This entails significant investment in data technologies, capacity, infrastructure and human and financial resources;
- (b) Strengthening the production of disaggregated data (equity variables within and across countries) and their use as evidence for policy formulation and decision-making will improve the quality of data and development of the education sector;
- (c) Inclusiveness of education, in particular across gender, age, disability and location, needs to be enhanced through specific policy interventions, including, among others, through gender-sensitive and transport policies;
- (d) Supply side constraints, including qualified teachers and books for students, are impeding efforts to improve educational systems. Innovative financing mechanisms need to be implemented to ensure a level playing field for all;
- (e) Education budget allocations need to be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The larger scope associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the consequent resource requirement need to be computed and anchored within national and sectoral plans to ensure national ownership, alignment between country-specific priorities and the 2030 Agenda and policy coherence between national line ministries and finance;
- (f) There is a need to scale up technical and vocational education and training to improve the match between educational production and labour demand;
- (g) To improve completion rates across school cycles, investment in early childhood development education is critical;
- (h) Infrastructure is needed to develop and ensure child-friendly schools and complementary pedagogical materials that reflect inclusion, in particular for children with disabilities;
- (i) The uneven progress towards educational attainment on the continent necessitates a stronger orientation towards peer learning and information sharing across countries.

C. Promoting decent work and inclusive economic growth

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

27. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to this sub-theme may be summarized as set out below.

28. Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all remains a daunting challenge for African countries. Unemployment rates in Africa are generally low, averaging 6.8 per cent in 2018. Underemployment and informal employment are widespread, however, with large numbers of people involved in precarious and vulnerable employment. Most of the employment opportunities in Africa are in the informal economy, which is characterized by low productivity and poor working conditions. Africa has the highest rate of estimated informal employment in the world, at 85.8 per cent of total employment, and the highest rate of vulnerable employment globally, averaging 66 per cent. Lack of sufficient productive and decent jobs is complicating efforts to end poverty on the continent. Over the past few years, Africa has recorded the highest rate of population growth globally, averaging 2.6 per cent per annum, and by 2050, 25 per cent of the world's population will be on the continent. As millions of young Africans join the labour market, the pressure to provide decent and productive jobs increases.

2. Key messages

29. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Employment creation requires a proactive, comprehensive and gender, age and disability-responsive approach to employment policy that includes coordinated demand-side and supply-side measures. There is a need to recognize and make use of the skills and capacities of older persons and to ensure that the creation of jobs is mainstreamed in all macroeconomic and development policies and that all such policies contain clear employment targets and benchmarks. Incentives for foreign and domestic investment must be linked to local content and local employment. Importantly, the adoption and implementation of national employment policies that are anchored to effective broad-based social dialogue and consultations are key to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 and the related goals of Agenda 2063;

(b) The private sector has a crucial role to play in terms of employment creation and in bridging the extensive finance gap. Accordingly, it is important to implement doing business reforms to promote and unlock greater private sector investment, which is vital for the generation of additional revenue and the creation of jobs;

(c) Transformation of the rural and informal economies through sustained investments in physical and social capital is essential to the enhancement of productivity and the strengthening of intersectoral linkages between agricultural and non-agricultural activities. In particular, investments in rural infrastructure are needed to create jobs, reduce poverty and boost local economic development;

(d) It is important to strengthen information systems in order to ensure the availability of reliable and timely data that are disaggregated for gender, age and disability, in particular, labour market data and statistics, which are required for assessing labour markets and specific challenges, shaping appropriate policies and

programmes, and monitoring, reviewing and reporting progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, it is important that African countries standardize their reporting on labour statistics by implementing recent resolutions such as, in particular, that concerning the statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization and the other concerning the statistics on work relationships, the guidelines on measuring informality, and all other guidelines associated with the decent work indicators. This undertaking should include recognition of the unpaid economy constituted primarily by women and older persons, through data collection and analysis within the national accounts system. There is a need to ensure non-discrimination and equality of treatment for all workers, migrants, indigenous people and nationals abroad and at home;

(e) There is need to enhance the employability of young people, including through, the strengthening of intergenerational knowledge transfer from older persons, and technical and vocational education and training. Easier access to quality apprenticeship must be ensured for disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities. Business and digital skills must be mainstreamed into school curricula, to equip young people with the requisite business and digital skills to foster entrepreneurship. African countries must leverage and scale up digital economy-driven local initiatives, including e-cooperatives such as the Yam Token West Africa Solar Pack, to promote youth entrepreneurship and employment;

(f) Recognizing that social security is a basic human right, it is imperative that African countries extend social security coverage to workers in the informal economy and migrant workers. In line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), African countries should establish and maintain social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees, necessitating increased public investment in social protection, health and education. It is also important to adopt and implement policies that aim to guarantee a level of wages that is compatible with the needs of workers and families and with the requirements of the development strategies pursued.

(g) Social protection and flexible working arrangements need to be provided in order to facilitate and improve conditions for older persons in the informal and formal labour markets. Thus it is important to remove age restrictive policies on access to microcredit, loans and financial investments.

D. Ensuring reduced inequalities

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

30. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to this sub-theme may be summarized as set out below.

31. Since 2000, significant gains have been made in lifting people out of poverty and reducing inequalities, however, large disparities remain regarding income and wealth, and access to food, health care, including long-term and palliative care, social protection and pension systems, education, land, clean water and other assets and resources essential for living a full and dignified life. The share of the bottom 40 per cent of the population in seven of the thirteen countries in Africa with comparable data increased much more slowly than that of the total population between 2008 and 2015.

32. Increasing wealth and income at the bottom – along with increasing access to non-

income opportunities and achieving greater equality of outcomes – is one way of reducing inequality.

33. In 2015, only 43 per cent of the rural population in Africa, excluding North Africa, had access to safe drinking water services compared to 82 per cent of the urban population. Similarly, only 37 per cent of the rural population had access to electricity, compared to 88 per cent in North Africa.

34. Migration contributes positively towards the achievement of inclusive growth and sustainable development. Facilitating, instead of restricting, migration should be a priority, as it is expanding the possibilities for people to realize their human development aspirations and potential through mobility.

2. Key messages

35. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Midway into the implementation of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and four years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, more efforts are needed to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and ensure the expansion of productive employment opportunities, in particular for women and young people, in order to reduce inequalities;

(b) Given the interlinkages between Goal 10 and the other Sustainable Development Goals, a comprehensive approach is needed, with strong coordination among national agencies, to the implementation of and reporting on the various indicators of Goal 10;

(c) Inequality relates not only to inequality of income or consumption but also includes non-monetary aspects such as horizontal inequalities, gender inequality, intergenerational inequalities and the so-called “digital divide”. Appropriate measures and stronger action are needed to enhance access to education, health and employment opportunities for girls and young women, vulnerable and other marginalized groups, such as indigenous people and people in rural areas, by integrating these issues into national development plans and budgets;

(d) Higher levels of mobilization of domestic financial resources, through rationalization of taxes, curbing illicit financial flows and other means, are needed to improve social investments in skills and capacity-building, education, apprenticeships, training, adequate infrastructure and health care, and food and nutrition security and social protection. There is a need to revamp and expand access to social protection interventions with examples and good practices for policies and sustainable financing. This is especially urgent in the case of young people and women, many of whom work in the informal sector doing low-skilled jobs. It is important to recognize the contribution of the informal sector and small enterprises and to examine the role of informal employment in reaching people and reducing inequality;

(e) Efforts need to be intensified to mobilize the necessary resources and assistance to modernize agriculture, enhance food security, build community resilience and strengthen emergency preparedness;

(f) The recent adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is a significant step towards leveraging the potential of migration for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To realize the potential offered by migration in reducing inequalities, actions are urgently required to strengthen

arrangements at all levels to implement the Global Compact;

(g) Member States need to address the issue of the centrality of population dynamics in reducing inequality by implementing continental instruments such as the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development beyond 2014;

(h) Monitoring the comprehensive attainment of Goal 10 in Africa is limited by the lack of data availability. Special efforts need to be made to strengthen regular reporting and tracking of progress of the tier III indicators for informing inclusive policies.

E. Scaling-up climate action

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

36. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to this sub-theme may be summarized as set out below.

37. Climate change is a cross-cutting issue affecting all of the Sustainable Development Goals as a “threat multiplier” that aggravates existing vulnerabilities and structural inequalities. Accordingly, urgent and ambitious global action on climate change, well beyond current pledges under the Paris Agreement on climate change, is needed. Otherwise, there is a serious risk that the development agenda for Africa will not be implemented. The continent contributes less than 6 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions., Despite this, Africa is already being severely affected by the adverse impacts of climate change; a very recent example of this is the severe damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. A compelling case is made for urgent and concerted global action on climate change in a special report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways.

38. All African countries have signed the Paris Agreement, and 48 of them have already ratified it and set ambitious nationally determined contributions to climate action, requiring approximately \$3 trillion of conditional and unconditional financing. By submitting ambitious nationally determined contributions, African countries are sending a strong signal that although the continent has contributed the smallest amount to climate change, it is ready to stand with the rest of the world in addressing its impacts.

39. The African Group of Negotiators on climate change have worked diligently to ensure that Africa speaks with one voice in the global negotiations on climate change.

2. Key messages

40. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) African countries have ratified the Paris Agreement with ambitious nationally determined contributions to climate action, requiring financing of close to \$3 trillion. Developed countries should support African countries with the means of implementation (finance, technology and capacity) essential for the nationally determined contributions, including mobilization of the required finance in line with existing pre-2020 commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the principle of common but differentiated

responsibilities under the Convention to ensure climate justice, and the post-2020 minimum climate finance goal of \$100 billion annually. African countries are encouraged to develop innovative mechanisms, including innovations in fiscal instruments, for the mobilization of domestic resource resources to finance their nationally determined contributions;

(b) The adoption of the rulebook for the Paris Agreement on climate change during the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties requires a demonstrable shift from commitments of intent to fulfilments in spurring tangible actions on climate change for a just transition and building the resilience of people, communities and economies in African countries. The reinstatement is sought in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement by the Conference of Parties at its twenty-sixth session of the special needs and circumstances of Africa, with due consideration for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities;

(c) In the spirit of “one Africa, one voice, one position”, African key stakeholder platforms have consolidated approaches towards climate negotiations. African countries are encouraged to set aside dedicated resources to institutionalize and support the African group of negotiators on climate change to ensure its sustainability and independence in African aspirations and expectations in the global climate discourse processes;

(d) Noting that adaptation and resilience are of utmost importance to Africa, countries are urged to review their nationally determined contributions ensuring synergy and coherence with national development plans and policies, national adaptation plans and disaster risk reduction policies, together with alignment with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(e) The investment needed for implementation of the nationally determined contributions by African countries is well beyond that which can be provided from limited public resources. Countries are encouraged to review, reformulate and package their contributions as investment portfolios to provide a mechanism through which private sector financing can be mobilized;

(f) The cross-cutting, transboundary and multidimensional nature of climate change provides an exceptional opportunity for integrated approaches, coherence and institutional coordination for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including risk-informed and climate-resilient development planning and investment in climate-sensitive sectors. Governments are encouraged to promote public-private partnerships, and South-South and triangular cooperation and to strengthen the capacity of an appropriate existing institution to lead comprehensive responses to climate change challenges across the economy and in liaison with the regional efforts and support systems. Furthermore, countries are encouraged to take urgent measures at the local, national and regional levels to address climate-induced human insecurities affecting the continent, including internal displacements, pastoral conflicts and food insecurity;

(g) There is a severe lack of data for tracking Sustainable Development Goal 13 indicators, development of early warning systems and provision of climate response measures. Countries and development partners are urged to make urgent efforts to invest in, first, coordinated efforts aimed at strengthening the capacity of the national statistics offices in data collection, analyses and reporting and disaggregating by age, gender, income and geographical location to better tailor support to groups at risk of being left behind because of climate change impacts; second, research and development,

innovation, digitization and national technology development and adaptation for climate response and monitoring; and, third, production and uptake of climate information services;

(h) Countries and development partners are urged to invest in human and institutional capacity strengthening and involve local stakeholders for, first, policy coherence and integrated implementation, follow-up and review of nationally determined contributions aligned with national development plans, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; second, integration of climate resilience in investments in climate-sensitive sectors; third, disaster preparedness and management; fourth, inclusion of climate change in curricula at all levels; and, fifth, creation of a research-policy interface to ensure research-enhanced policymaking.

F. Ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

41. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to this sub-theme may be summarized as set out below.

42. The presence of peace at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, Sustainable Development Goal 16, is inextricably linked to the attainment of the other Sustainable Development Goals. Overall, governance in Africa remains on an upward trajectory. Improvements are being made regarding the rule of law, participation, rights, and transparency and accountability.

43. Notwithstanding, challenges and gaps remain in ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions. Insecurity, social strife, political tension and riots continue to plague the continent. All types of crime, including organized crime, is a challenge, in particular in the large African economies. While participation has improved, driven by democratic elections, it is happening alongside a shrinking civil society space, worsening trends related to freedom of association and assembly, civil rights and liberties, and freedom of expression. Corruption continues to weaken good governance and the compounding principles of inclusion, participation, ownership, fairness, efficiency and effectiveness. Illicit financial flows continue to be a challenge; significant amounts of financial resources are being lost annually from the continent through such flows and other forms of corrupt activities.

2. Key messages

44. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Political leadership and stakeholder participation remains paramount. Good political leadership and effective multi-stakeholder engagement are crucial for ownership, commitment, galvanizing support, mobilizing resources and ensuring accountability pertaining to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Mobilization of adequate and context-specific means of implementation is essential. Although external financial resources are required to implement the 2030 Agenda, Africa must also take active responsibility for its own development. Measures must be vigorously taken to enhance domestic resource mobilization and curb illicit financial flows, attract foreign direct investment and create effective financing structures, including through natural resources management and climate governance.

Development partners should complement domestic efforts aimed at capacity and technology development through effective international cooperation programmes;

(c) Stronger efforts are needed to encourage good governance, transparent and accountable leadership, effective institutions and responsive and effective global partnerships. In this regard, appropriate and results-oriented human and institutional capacity-development strategies and programmes are needed to cover vulnerable and marginalized populations, including young people, women, older persons and people living with HIV, who are agents of, and active contributors to, peace, security and development. Civil society organizations also need to be involved, including through the application of human rights-based approaches that address poverty and unemployment, among other social challenges;

(d) Deeper and stronger dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders, including global, regional, and national institutions, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, national human rights institutions and religious organizations, is required to promote development and apply appropriate monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the targets and indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 16. Such a framework should entail the development of databases that include non-traditional entities in data collection, such as the judiciary and the police, to facilitate analysis, performance tracking and the provision of technical support to countries, and the integration of Goal 16 into national development plans;

(e) Stronger efforts are needed to establish or strengthen national human rights institutions in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles), in order to ensure accountability, rule of law and access to justice in the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(f) A dignified environment must be created for the return and reintegration of refugees, internally displaced persons and, in particular, vulnerable and marginalized populations, who are often the victims of crises;

(g) The solidarity of African States in the field of security should be strengthened, with a view to limiting the consequences of transboundary crises, including through advocacy at the international level for security finance in Africa.

G. Strengthening the means of implementation and partnerships for sustainable development

1. Introduction, main issues and trends

45. As presented during the session and discussed by participants, the main issues and trends pertaining to this sub-theme may be summarized as set out below.

46. To finance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Africa needs between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion. Compared with other regions, Africa has the lowest ratio of government revenue to GDP. The continent has made significant progress in technology development and transfer based on assessments in terms of information and communication technologies and the import of capital goods, but the pace of the development has declined over 2017–2018, as economic growth and fiscal space contracted, owing to the rising debt burden and growing fiscal deficits. Mobilizing sufficient resources to meet the investment requirements of African countries may entail

improving tax and non-tax revenue management and curbing illicit financial flows in order to sustain economic growth and reduce poverty. To implement the 2030 Agenda effectively, adequate capacity is required at all levels.

2. Key messages

47. Following its consideration of the sub-theme, the Regional Forum agreed on the following key messages:

(a) African countries need to implement integrated resource mobilization, budgeting and development planning processes and decentralized public financial management; to intensify efforts to combat corruption and illicit financial flows; and to simplify subsidy and procurement regimes and approval processes for investment;

(b) Strengthening capital markets, promoting effective public–private partnership frameworks, provides an important avenue to catalyse capital from the private sector in Africa and beyond. In order to avoid the threat of marginalization, in the case of investors choosing the more developed markets over Africa, efforts to integrate regional capital markets and facilitate cross-listing are critical;

(c) African countries have the potential to widen the tax base; to reduce revenue collection costs and improve tax administration mechanisms; and to strengthen policies that tackle base erosion and profit shifting, tax avoidance and tax evasion;

(d)

(e) National statistical systems in Africa need to address the challenge of the availability, accessibility, disaggregation and quality of data. Various mechanisms, tools and innovations should be developed to harness all available data. The key challenge in data quality can be attributed to the differences in methodologies, concepts, definitions and standards used within national statistical systems and across member States, which make international harmonization difficult;

(f) Adequate investment to strengthen capacities and systems for data gathering and use is needed to ensure accurate assessments of financing needs towards realizing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in Africa. Well-disaggregated and up-to-date data on population trends, the state of social services and infrastructure, and future demand and requirements are needed in order to make accurate projections. Data systems need to be tailor-made, secure and interlinked across the continent to meet the reporting requirements of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(g) African countries must ratify the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and develop national plans and strategies to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Agreement. National plans and strategies should be designed to integrate the broader trade policy of each State and identify the key trade opportunities, current constraints and steps required to take full advantage of the African market, including revenue mobilization and the empowerment of vulnerable groups;

(h) To unlock the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships for enhancing the means of implementation, the following should be prioritized: a coherent financing and partnership framework; an institutionalized dialogue and engagement mechanism; a robust review and accountability system; enhanced policy coherence for sustainable development; and optimal use of innovation as an incentivizing and scaling tool;

(i) The horizontal nature of multi-stakeholder partnerships should not dilute the special lead and accountability role of Governments in promoting strong political

will and implementing policy and institutional reforms in line with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; a more effective approach for doing this is to focus on the aim of leaving no one behind. Strong government institutions and processes that include all vulnerable groups are essential for enhancing the means of implementation;

(j) Volunteerism should be promoted, as it provides an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to come together to find solutions to local and indigenous challenges, ensuring that, through a participatory, people-centric, socially inclusive approach, no single person is left behind in the search for solutions to development, peace and security and humanitarian challenges;

(k) Member States are encouraged to engage with volunteers and create spaces and conditions that allow everyone – young people, people with disabilities, women – to contribute to shaping their communities, with a view to ensuring greater ownership of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and, at the same time, enhancing access to the benefits of volunteering;

(l) Capacity-building, training courses and tools should be considered for facilitating the integration of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(m) It is an urgent imperative for African countries to invest in research and development infrastructure to harness science, technology and innovation in order to empower people and promote inclusivity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(n) Successful deployment of science, technology and innovation as a means of implementation depends on adequate financing. African countries must scale up their investments to meet the African Union goal of investing at least 1 per cent of their GDP in research and development;

(o) The continent's fast-growing youth population represents rich potential gains in the areas of technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, but is a largely untapped resource. With a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, African countries and their partners need to invest in building appropriate technical competencies and creating the necessary environment to encourage youth innovation;

(p) Many African countries lack science, technology and innovation policies, plans and strategies. Where they exist, the frameworks are poorly funded, implemented and monitored. African countries should therefore develop, strengthen, implement, monitor and evaluate their science, technology and innovation frameworks;

(q) African countries should promote intra-Africa science, technology and innovation collaboration and partnerships. Such collaboration is key to promoting peer learning, mobilizing resources, minimizing risks and developing regional value chains, and can be supported by continental portals for skills, infrastructures and policies.

H. Submission of the key messages to the high-level political forum and their presentation by the Chair

48. The Regional Forum requested the secretariat to submit its key messages to the high-level political forum through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, by 30 April 2019. The Regional Forum further requested the Chair to make a presentation of its key messages to the high-level political forum under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council at its meeting in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019, during the session on the reports of the regional forums for

sustainable development.

I. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial declaration

49. Following the adoption of the key messages, the Forum adopted the ministerial declaration, entitled “Marrakech Declaration on Sustainable Development in Africa”, the text of which is set out in the annex to the present document.

Annex

Marrakech Declaration on Sustainable Development in Africa

[Original: French]

We, African ministers and officials in charge of environment and sustainable development, finance and economic development, social development, statistics, and science and technology and representatives of intergovernmental organizations, parliaments, the private sector and civil society of the member States, meeting at the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, co-hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco and the Economic Commission for Africa, under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in Marrakech from 16 to 18 April 2019,

Expressing our gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty King Mohammed VI for the high patronage that he has bestowed upon the Forum, thereby ensuring the necessary conditions for the success of its work, which was characterized by fruitful and rich discussions regarding the monitoring and assessment of the progress accomplished, the exchange of experience in the area of sustainable development in Africa and the formulation of recommendations with the aim of accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional level, in preparation for the meeting of the high-level political forum and the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in New York in July and September 2019, respectively,

Do hereby state that:

We reaffirm our commitment to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and our adherence to the guidelines set out for implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the regional meetings, of a general or sectoral nature, and also the key messages adopted at the current fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum in 2019;

We call upon all African countries to strengthen South-South cooperation and the sharing of experience among African countries with a view to tackling the multiple and complex challenges and building the multi-stakeholder partnerships, plans and programmes of action at the regional and subregional levels that are needed to ensure the desired development that leaves no one behind;

We welcome, in this regard, the initiatives launched at the first Action Summit convened by His Majesty King Mohammed VI on the sidelines of the twenty-second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the establishment of the Congo Basin Climate Commission chaired by the Congo, the Sahel Climate Commission chaired by the Niger, and the Island States Climate Commission chaired by Seychelles, validated by the African Union;

We also welcome the efforts made by the African States to ensure the implementation of these initiatives;

We reaffirm the urgent need to take appropriate measures swiftly to bring the consequences of global warming under control, limiting it to a level not exceeding 1.5°C, in accordance with the recommendations of the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

We emphasize the interdependence of peace, security and sustainable development, and recognize the progress that has been made by African countries in that regard,

We reiterate the strategic importance of mobilizing adequate, predictable and additional financial resources to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, urge member States to establish effective financing strategies and call upon our development partners to meet their respective commitments in support of Africa;

We highlight the difficulty faced by a number of African countries in reporting on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators and call for the establishment of a solidarity fund for statistical development, designed to support African countries in the collection of the necessary statistical data;

We call for efforts to foster and promote innovation and technology to fill the gaps in data needed for the preparation of national and regional development policies;

We also call for the strengthening of the role of stakeholders, in particular parliamentarians, in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals;

We call, lastly, on all countries to implement the key messages of the Forum and we request the Kingdom of Morocco to present these messages on behalf of Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019 and the United Nations summit on the Sustainable Development Goals, to be held in New York on 24 and 25 September 2019.