



Economic Commission for Africa

Ninth session of the Committee on Sustainable Development and
the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Addis Ababa, 16–18 June 2015

**Statement of major groups and other stakeholders to the Africa
Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

Addis Ababa

Thursday, 18 June 2015

We, representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, including older people, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, fisher folks, pastoralists, faith-based organizations, research and academia, met in Addis Ababa on Monday, 15 June 2015 for a capacity-building workshop under the framework of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to reflect on and discuss Africa's contribution to the 2015 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The aim of the workshop was to equip the African representatives with the capacity and information they need to engage in the post-2015 development processes and to coordinate inputs into the High-level Political Forum.

We are encouraged by the commitment of the United Nations and the African Union to engage with major groups and other stakeholders, and their recognition of the role of civil society in realizing the sustainable development agenda in Africa.

On strengthening integration between different dimensions of sustainable development and transformation of Africa, we recommend the following:

- (i) The review, monitoring and implementation of the sustainable development agenda must be linked with Africa's Agenda 2063, as well as national development and poverty reduction strategies. We recommend using existing monitoring and reporting frameworks, including the African Peer Review Mechanism.

- (ii) Effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda requires strong capacities; there is therefore a need to invest in capacity-building of all key players and institutions at the national, regional and global levels.
- (iii) Members States should strengthen the coordination mechanism for sustainable development at the national level by establishing national sustainable development commissions, as proposed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. This is crucial to facilitate the coordination of the three pillars of sustainable development and the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda at the national level.
- (iv) Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders have called upon the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa to institutionalize the major groups structure at the regional level so as to ensure effective collaboration in agenda setting, decision-making, reviewing and implementing the sustainable development agenda, and to recognize civil society's critical role in the preparation of national reports.
- (v) High-quality, reliable data are crucial in enabling Member States to develop effective programmes for implementation. We therefore call upon Member States to adopt the initiative of the African data revolution and to expand the data ecosystem, with an emphasis on data disaggregation to include age, gender, indigenous peoples and their communities, and persons with disabilities.
- (vi) In an effort to ensure that no one is left behind, the implementation, follow up and review of the post-2015 development agenda should be inclusive and involve citizens at the grassroots level, especially the poorest, the most vulnerable, and marginalized people, and their local government authorities.

On the High-level Political Forum, we recognize the efforts made by the United Nations to restructure its institutions so as to respond to emerging issues more effectively. In this regard, we recommend the following:

- (i) The High-level Political Forum should lead in monitoring performance and evaluating results, and should promote reporting at all levels; reviews should focus on efforts as well as impacts.
- (ii) The United Nations system should strengthen coordination among different bodies and support Member States more effectively.
- (iii) Incentives should be introduced with a view to ensuring transparency and strengthening the capacities of all stakeholders.

On the High-level Political Forum and the follow-up and review mechanism for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, we recommend the following:

- (i) We propose that the High-level Political Forum should focus on sustainable development issues, in accordance with resolution 66/288, adopted by the General Assembly in 2012, and should not tackle financing for development issues.
- (ii) Another reason for separating the High-level Political Forum and the follow-up and review mechanism is that most of the actions and remedies taken under the Forum are regional, national and local, whereas most of the actions taken under the follow-up and review mechanism are more systemic and of a global nature.
- (iii) In addition, including financing for development issues under the High-level Political Forum will overload the agenda. According to resolution 66/288, the Forum should focus on sustainable development and its means of implementation, and have a thematic format. The resolution also states that relevant United Nations bodies and developed and developing countries are to be reviewed. It further notes that the Forum will “follow up and review progress in the implementation of all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields.” All of this will not be possible within the given eight day period. The third International Conference on Financing for Development will bring together even more players, including financial institutions, the European Union, small island developing States, least developed countries and so forth. These additional dimensions require a separate platform to reduce agenda overload.

On the means of implementation for the sustainable development goals and the third International Conference on Financing for Development, we recommend the following:

- (i) The means of implementation for the sustainable development goals should not be conflated with the third International Conference on Financing for Development, but should remain separate because conflating them would reduce the means of implementation for the goals and would reverse the gains and dilute the commitments made at the first and second International Conferences on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey and Doha respectively. Resolution 68/204, which called for a third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in 2015 or 2016, states that the Conference should methodically review progress made in all areas; this means following the initial structure of what is to be reviewed with a view to raising the level of ambition and not lowering it. If any new considerations need to be taken on board, therefore, they should be additional and distinguishable, in order to preserve the reference baseline.
- (ii) In addition, while the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals are concerned with periodic planning of global development, financing for development is more about a viable, constant and durable system, resilient to time. Thus, the post-2015 framework is an epoch in the financing for development process and at best provides context against which the review and the ambition of the financing for development process can be seen.
- (iii) Lastly, some of the means of implementation for the sustainable development goals are non-financial and hence taking the whole of goal 17, on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development, to the third International Conference on Financing for Development is inappropriate. Instead, there

is a need to ensure that the decisions taken at the Conference in the area of finance are compatible with the sustainable development goals, and not the other way around.

On the role of regional and subregional entities, we recommend the following:

- (i) The coordination of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development should be led by the existing tripartite secretariat, composed of the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, and in collaboration with other pan-African institutions. The secretariat should also coordinate the review and reporting mechanism.
- (ii) The review should be based on the goals, targets and indicators, and should be conducted on an annual basis at the subregional level and on a biennial basis at the regional level to allow for effective contributions to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.
- (iii) The tripartite secretariat should coordinate annual or biennial regional meetings with the active consultation and participation of major groups and other stakeholders in order to reflect on and develop regional priorities and key messages prior to the global negotiations in New York.

On the issue of a global partnership for development, we recommend:

- (i) Enhancing the commitment to mobilizing finance for the implementation of the sustainable development goals in Africa without jeopardizing the lives, livelihoods and interests of future generations.

On sustainable consumption and production, we recommend the following:

- (i) Prioritizing the shift towards sustainable consumption and production through finalizing and adopting the second African 10-Year Framework Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production as a vehicle to promote sustainable economic development.
- (ii) Formulating national sustainable consumption and production policies and strategies.
- (iii) Establishing and supporting national cleaner production centres.
- (iv) Promoting sustainable lifestyles.
- (v) Promoting and protecting indigenous technologies, innovations and traditional knowledge, while taking into consideration the gender perspectives.
- (vi) Tapping into potential existing African experts in the diaspora to facilitate technological transfer and innovation.

On the science-policy interface, we recommend the following:

- (i) Developing policies and implementation strategies for science, technology and innovation that will ensure that scientific evidence and facts are used in decision-making and meeting the sustainable development goals.
- (ii) Acquiring greener, affordable and appropriate technologies to achieve the imperatives of sustainable development, notably poverty alleviation, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and sustainable access to energy.
- (iii) In implementing the above actions, we recommend putting in place key instruments such as key stakeholder inclusivity plans with a special focus on the girl child, local government, elderly people and people with disabilities; cutting-edge technology banks; national asset technologies; advanced, accessible and affordable ICT connectivity; and national skills development plans, with innovative, sustainable sources of funding.
- (iv) Enhancing regional integration in Africa through South-South cooperation involving science-based institutions and policy-making entities.

On climate change, with a special emphasis on adaptation, we recommend the following:

- (i) Ensuring that adaptation and mitigation measures are incorporated into national development and all-inclusive poverty reduction strategies and sectoral plans, and ensuring that adaptation actions taken are in synergy with mitigation actions in order to promote cost-effective and sustainable solutions and to limit increases in the production and release of greenhouse gases. The resilience of vulnerable communities should be central in all of these efforts.
- (ii) Ensuring that science and research institutional structures facilitate and support appropriate adaptation and mitigation initiatives at the country level.
- (iii) Recognize local traditional knowledge and innovation practised and owned by local communities for adaptation and mitigation in Africa
- (iv) Elevating and supporting indigenous knowledge systems and approaches in support of climate response actions.
- (v) Recognizing and valuing ecosystems and natural capital at all scales for their local and global contribution to climate stability and resilience.
- (vi) Providing technical assistance and the necessary resources to enable Africa to determine and adopt its own intended nationally determined contributions in order to benefit from the Green Climate Fund and other climate finance mechanisms.

On energy, we recommend the following:

- (i) Committing to the inclusion of country-wide programmes in the clean development mechanism and the simplification of this mechanism to promote access to and participation at the subnational and local government levels.

- (ii) Incentivizing the use of renewable energy and energy-efficient equipment.
- (iii) Penalizing unclean fuel sources and directing fossil fuel subsidies towards renewable energy.
- (iv) Supporting Africa's enormous potential for low-carbon and green economic growth, especially in relation to job creation opportunities.

On innovative financing for sustainable development, we recommend:

- (i) Generating funds internally to support sustainable development across the continent and developing innovative finance mechanisms that enable access to regional, international and multilateral funding avenues through capitalizing on taxation and the expansion of the tax base, as well as curbing illicit financial flows originating from Africa and fighting corruption in the region.

On small island developing States, we recommend:

- (i) Recognizing the special circumstances of African small island developing States, with efforts directed at assisting them in addressing climate change challenges and in achieving sustainable development. This should be done through promoting adaptation and mitigation mechanisms and use of appropriate technologies and innovation. This may involve harnessing their renewable power generation potential through solar, wind, geothermal and wave power, and capitalizing on the potential of key sectors such as tourism and fishing. Climate financing and official development assistance for small island developing States should be distinguished.

On land-locked developing countries, we recommend:

- (i) Prioritization of regional integration and development of mega inter-regional transport infrastructure such as roads, railway networks and air transport to connect the region, spur inter-regional trade and sustainable development, and facilitate easy access to ports by land-locked African countries. This should go hand in hand with the establishment of inland ports in land-locked developing countries.

On least developed countries, we recommend:

- (i) That special attention and support be given to least developed countries in Africa in terms of official development assistance, capacity-building support and transfer of appropriate technologies to enable them to implement and realize the post-2015 development agenda.
- (ii) Innovative taxation systems in least developed countries (including expansion of tax bases), debt servicing, debt relief and debt cancellation. This should go hand in hand with curbing corruption and illicit financial flows.

Lastly, we, the representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, commit ourselves to continuing to work with our national Governments and to engage in meaningful discussions. However, we are concerned about the shrinking space and autonomy of civil society in many African countries. We therefore call upon Member States to recommit to working with us in transforming Africa.

We thank the people and the Government of Ethiopia for their generous hospitality. We would also like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Economic Commission for Africa and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for organizing and funding this capacity-building workshop for major groups and other stakeholders.