



**Economic Commission for Africa
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

Twelfth session

**Regional preparatory workshop for African voluntary
national reviews and voluntary local reviews**
Addis Ababa, 27 April 2026

**Report on the preparatory regional workshop on
voluntary national and voluntary local reviews:
strengthening integration and reporting on the 2030
Agenda and Agenda 2063**

I. Background

1. With less than five years remaining until the deadline for completion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, clear, concerted actions are needed to get the world back on track. In Africa, less than 6 per cent of the measurable targets under the Sustainable Development Goals are on track to be achieved, while negative trends need to be reversed in relation to several other targets.¹ As such, African States need to take bold, ambitious and accelerated transformative measures to improve development outcomes. At the same time, the continent entered the second year of the Second Ten Year Implementation Plan of African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, which captures the region's context-specific aspirations.

2. As part of the mechanisms to follow up on and review implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, African States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress that are country-led and country-driven. The process of undertaking a review is expected to be rigorous and based on regular, high-quality, and disaggregated data and the close involvement and input of national and local stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, young people, children and other relevant groups. The final reviews are then presented during the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Nineteen African states are engaged in the national review process in 2026, with many for the second and third time. All 54 African States conducted at least one review.

3. To support the review process, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with UN partners (UN Habitat and DESA) and African Union organs (AUC and APRM Continental Secretariat) organizes an annual workshop during the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, providing a platform to share region-specific best practices, success stories and common challenges and to spur the further involvement of stakeholders in order to enrich the national reviews.

¹ African Union, African Development Bank, ECA and United Nations Development Programme, *Africa Sustainable Development Report, 2024* (Addis Ababa; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; New York; 2024).

4. African communities have noted the benefits of conducting sustainable development reviews at the subnational, provincial, district and municipal levels, which complement the national review process. Through engagement with numerous stakeholders on the ground, voluntary local reviews reach a grass-roots audience, which can, in turn, inform the sustainable development process and move it forward in a more inclusive manner.

5. The one-day preparatory regional workshop for voluntary national and local reviews was hosted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the attendance of 64 in-person participants. The deliberations and conclusions of the workshop are presented in this report.

II. Session summaries

A. Welcoming and opening remarks

1. The opening session was moderated by Social Affairs Officer at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Lusungu Kayani. Opening remarks were delivered by the Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Delivery of the African Union Commission, Botho Kebabonye Bayendi; the Director of the Regional Office for Africa of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Oumar Sylla; and the Director of the Macroeconomics, Finance, Governance and Planning Division of ECA, Stephen Karingi.

2. Ms. Bayendi underscored the importance of complementarity between global and continental development agendas, calling for stronger policy coherence and accelerated implementation through enhanced reporting and coordination mechanisms. She emphasized the need to strengthen alignment between continental and national review processes.

3. Mr. Sylla highlighted voluntary national and local reviews as practical instruments for localization, dialogue, and the translation of sustainability priorities into actionable and bankable pathways. He stressed the centrality of localization and implementation within review processes.

4. Mr. Karingi emphasized the urgency of coherent and action-oriented responses to compounded global and regional crises. He framed the review processes as key vehicles for accelerating progress and fostering enhanced regional cooperation.

B. Session 1: Utilizing 2026 voluntary national reviews to “rescue” the Sustainable Development Goals

5. Social Affairs Officer, ECA, Lusungu Kayani moderated the session. Presentations were made by: Deputy Director, Sustainable Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Community Abroad and African Affairs, Algeria, Mohammed Hiba; Sustainability Expert, Directorate for Regional Integration, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Land Use Planning, Cameroon, Anne Marie Nyemb; Director of Scoping Studies, Directorate General for Forecasting, Ministry of Planning and Forecasting, Gabon, Augustin Bouassa-Bu Nzigou; Specialist, Directorate General for Planning, Guinea-Bissau, Fabrisio Aguinardo Monteiro Dias; and Lead, Sustainable Development Unit, Directorate General for European and International Affairs and Sustainable Finance, Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, Italy, Mara Cossu (virtual). Presentations and discussions focused on the following issues and yielded the following recommendations:

6. Algeria emphasized inclusive development, digital transformation, infrastructure investment, and international cooperation as key pillars for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Cameroon, Gabon and Guinea-Bissau highlighted progress across selected priority SDGs, while underscoring persistent challenges related to inequality, weak data systems, institutional coordination constraints, and implementation gaps.

8. Speakers emphasized the importance of strong political ownership, robust statistical systems and structural transformation to enhance the strategic value and impact of voluntary national and local review processes.

9. Significant data gaps and limited implementation capacity remain major constraints. Participants stressed the need to strengthen inclusive participation in review processes, including the meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities.

10. Voluntary national and local reviews should serve as platforms for continuous policy learning and course correction, rather than stand-alone reporting exercises.

11. Participants called on ECA and its partners to support the strengthening of data and monitoring systems, promote inclusive and standardized methodologies for voluntary national and local review preparation, and facilitate exchanges on translating review findings into concrete policy actions.

C. Session 2: Leveraging both voluntary national and voluntary local reviews to support and scale up fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union

12. The session was moderated by Senior Continental Governance Officer, APRM Continental Secretariat, Africa Peer Review Mechanism, Sara Hamouda, moderated the session. Presentations were made by Economist, Department of Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Decentralization, Malawi, Chifuniro Chitsonga; Assistant Director for Censuses and Demographic Surveys, Directorate for Demographic and Social Statistics, National Institute of Statistics, Guinea, Lamine Sidibé; Deputy Director, Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service, Ministry of Finance, Cabo Verde, Adilson Semedo; Head, Division of Environment and Green Spaces, Directorate of Technical Services, Government of Pikine, Senegal, and Programme Coordinator, Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ndiaga Fall; and Senior Manager, International and Stakeholder Relations, South African Local Government Association, Tebogo Matlou. Presentations and discussions focused on the following issues and yielded the following recommendations:

20. Speakers highlighted SDG localization through bottom-up planning, strengthened institutional coordination and enhanced municipal engagement as critical to effective implementation and accountability. Inclusive participation, including youth, children and persons with disabilities, was identified as essential to credible and impactful localization.

21. Presentations emphasized local capacity, urban data systems, climate action and partnerships as key enablers for scaling up SDG delivery. Better data and inclusive participation are central to stronger voluntary national and local review linkages.

22. Malawi shared its bottom-up planning approach, whereby village action plans feed into district and national development plans, informing the voluntary local review process. Ongoing efforts to build capacity for future voluntary local reviews were also highlighted.

23. Guinea emphasized the importance of institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement, noting progress in areas such as water, energy and infrastructure, alongside persistent challenges related to data gaps, inequality and implementation.
24. Cabo Verde showcased strong SDG localization aligned with national development plans, highlighting achievements in renewable energy, water access and digital transformation despite structural vulnerabilities.
25. Senegal presented the Covenant of Mayors initiative, demonstrating how local climate action and SDG localization are driven by political commitment, partnerships and integrated planning frameworks.
26. The South African Local Government Association underscored the institutionalization of voluntary local reviews, highlighting the role of local governments in implementation, data generation and multi-stakeholder engagement, with SDG 11 serving as a central framework.
27. Participants emphasized that effective SDG implementation requires strong alignment between national frameworks and local planning systems, with communities actively shaping development priorities.
28. Data gaps remain a major constraint, underscoring the need for timely, disaggregated and inclusive data systems supported by national statistical offices and local actors.
29. Capacity and financing at the local level remain insufficient. Strengthening the institutional, technical and financial capacities of municipalities was identified as critical to bridging implementation gaps.
30. Community participation enhances trust, accountability and ownership. Inclusive engagement in planning and validation processes contributes to transparency and improved service delivery outcomes.
31. Participants recommended that ECA support the institutionalization of voluntary national and local reviews and local capacity-building by facilitating peer learning platforms, sharing best practices on SDG localization, advancing integrated national–local review linkages, developing technical guidance and training, and strengthening urban data systems and disaggregation.

D. Session 3: Enhancing national and local action

25. The session was moderated by the Coordinator of the Sustainable Development Goal Localization and Local Governments Team at UN-Habitat, Martino Miraglia. A keynote presentation was delivered by the Chief of the National Strategies and Capacity-Building Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Amson Sibanda. Further presentations were made by Aminata Bousso (Senegal), Abdul Razak Adamo Mozambique (virtual), Michael Kissi-Boateng (Ghana), and Pedro Laice (Mozambique). Discussions focused on the following issues and resulted in the recommendations below.
32. Speakers emphasized opportunities to strengthen linkages between United Nations-wide platforms to advance SDG localization collectively and enhance structured knowledge-sharing on voluntary national and local reviews.
33. Positive examples from the region demonstrated human-rights-based, people-centered and gender-responsive approaches in voluntary national reviews, as well as

effective linkages between budgeting, planning and the SDGs. Participants emphasized that these good practices should be more widely documented and shared.

34. Panelists shared national and subnational experiences, highlighting the importance of multilevel governance, alignment between SDGs, national development frameworks, Agenda 2063, and the role of voluntary national and local reviews in reshaping policy and planning processes.

35. Common challenges were identified, including limited technical capacity at the local level, fragmented institutional arrangements, insufficient and non-disaggregated data, weak data-sharing mechanisms and constrained financing.

36. Effective SDG implementation depends on strong local action supported by inclusive and well-coordinated multilevel governance, citizen engagement, and regular review and follow-up mechanisms.

37. Voluntary national and local reviews are increasingly viewed as catalysts for transformation rather than solely reporting tools, enhancing policy coherence, local ownership, accountability, transparency and alignment between national and subnational priorities.

38. Closing gaps in data, capacity and financing, particularly access to reliable, disaggregated and municipal-level data, is critical for evidence-based decision-making, systematic tracking and measurable impact.

39. Participants recommended that ECA support member States by providing targeted technical assistance to improve national and municipal data ecosystems by strengthening SDG localization frameworks, refining national and local guidelines, and providing action-oriented methodologies for Voluntary national and local reviews.

40. Countries called on ECA to facilitate peer learning and partnerships among countries and cities on innovative financing mechanisms, institutional coordination and scaling up successful local SDG practices aligned with Agenda 2063.

E. Session 4: Statistical tools to support voluntary national and local review processes

41. The session was moderated by Economic Affairs Officer, ECA, Oyebanke Abejirin. A presentation on a framework for measuring South-South cooperation was delivered by Statistician, African Centre for Statistics, ECA, David Boko. Presentations and interventions were made by Deputy National Coordinator, Congolese Sustainable Development Observatory, Ministry of Planning and Development Aid Coordination, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papy Bakamba; Economic Affairs Adviser, Directorate for the Monitoring and Evaluation of International Development Frameworks, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Burkina Faso, Zinessida Ouedraogo; Head, Governance Statistics Section, Somalia National Bureau of Statistics, Zakariye Hashi; Socioeconomic Planner, Lusaka City Council, Zambia, Thebinu Kabanda; and Director General, National Institute of Public Administration, Djibouti, Idriss Charmarké Ali.

42. Mr. Boko presented the framework for measuring South-South cooperation, including its principles, categories of flows, eligibility criteria, data collection tools and relevance for SDG 17 reporting.

43. Panelists shared national and local experiences on the use of statistical systems, digital platforms, geospatial tools, dashboards, open data portals and institutional coordination mechanisms to support voluntary national and local review processes.

44. Participants highlighted persistent challenges, including incomplete indicators, weak data quality, limited system interoperability, reliance on paper-based local data, financing constraints and insufficient statistical capacity.

45. Statistical tools should be leveraged not only for reporting, but also for policy alignment, progress monitoring, gap analysis and strengthening linkages between development plans, voluntary national and local reviews.

46. Countries were encouraged to institutionalize innovative data sources and tools, including GIS, satellite imagery, open-source data, big data, artificial intelligence, digital dashboards, open data portals and real-time quality control systems.

47. Stronger coordination among national statistical systems, sectoral ministries, local authorities, civil society, the private sector and development partners is required to ensure timely, high-quality, disaggregated and locally relevant data.

48. Participants called on ECA to continue providing technical support and capacity-building on statistical tools, including integrated planning and reporting toolkits, South-South cooperation measurement frameworks, data templates and e-learning resources.

49. Countries requested ECA to support interoperable digital data systems, common benchmarks, local data management units and mechanisms linking findings from voluntary local review to voluntary national review reporting, while promoting peer learning for countries facing persistent data constraints.

F. Closing

50. The Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa, ECA, Ngoné Diop, delivered the closing remarks, reaffirming the need for stronger coordination, sustained engagement and timely action among all partners. She underscored the critical role of communities, civil society, parliaments and other agents of change in making review processes more meaningful and action-oriented. She called for continued ECA and United Nations system support in integrated planning, peer learning, capacity-building, resource mobilization and private sector engagement to accelerate progress on the SDGs and Agenda 2063.