



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 May 2024

Original: English

Economic Commission for Africa
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Tenth session

Regional preparatory workshop for African voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews
Addis Ababa (hybrid), 22 April 2024

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

I. Background

1. As part of the mechanisms to review and advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 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 evidence, accurate 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. States present their voluntary national reviews during the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, held in July of each year. Fifteen African States are engaged in the national review process in 2024 and, following the cycle for 2024, all 54 African States will have conducted at least one review.

2. To support the review process, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with United Nations partners (the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) and African Union organs (the African Union Commission and the African Peer Review Mechanism), holds an annual workshop during the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which provides a platform to share best practices, success stories and challenges that are specific to the region and to spur the further involvement of stakeholders in order to enrich the national reviews.

3. Members of ECA have noted the particular benefits of conducting sustainable development reviews at the district, governorate and municipality levels. Through the engagement of multiple 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. To that end, the regional workshop also features sessions that are focused on the localization of the sustainable development agenda and the linkages between localization and the national review process. The workshop for 2024 also served to identify African priorities and inputs for the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024.



4. The one-day workshop was hosted in Addis Ababa and attended by 80 in-person participants and 30 online participants. It included an opening session, a session to provide an overview of the objectives of the preparatory workshop, two sessions concerning voluntary national reviews, two sessions concerning voluntary local reviews, a closing session and a town hall meeting for stakeholders.

II. Session summaries

A. Session 1: Welcome and opening remarks

5. The opening session was moderated by the Acting Director of the Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division at ECA, Nassim Oulmane. Opening remarks were given by the Director of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa of ECA, Mama Keita; the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, Cristina Duarte; the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Li Junhua; the Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, Dima Al Khatib; and the Permanent Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, Dunstan Balaba.

6. The Director of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa of ECA congratulated the 15 African countries that were carrying out national reviews and the growing number of localities that were undertaking local reviews in the region, which revealed the dedication of the region to its sustainable development commitments, despite multiple crises and challenges. She welcomed the sharing of experiences and lessons from the workshop and called upon participants to focus on strategies and interventions that could help to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals, which would also be showcased at the Summit of the Future.

7. The Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa underscored that Africa was off track to achieve the Goals, with only 12 per cent of targets met at the midpoint to 2030. She called for security, stability and development to be placed at the nexus of the policies and frameworks pursued by countries in the region. Africa faced paradoxes in financing its development and energy and food security. Goal 16 was vital and cross-cutting; placing it at the centre of African leadership on the 2030 Agenda would have ripple effects across the other Goals.

8. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs recognized the role of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development as integral to bringing the voices of the African region to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. It served as a catalyst for the implementation of sustainable development policy in the region, as countries contextualized and advanced the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9. The Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation commented on the role that South-South cooperation could play in assisting countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as exemplified by the peer learning that had taken place during the workshop. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation stood ready to support countries in integrating that cooperation into the preparation of voluntary national reviews.

10. Mr. Balaba shared the experiences of Uganda – currently undertaking its third voluntary national review – in harmonizing its preparation of voluntary national reviews, along with a large number of local reviews, beginning with one of the first local reviews to be undertaken in Africa and now spreading across the country. Countries needed to integrate the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their national development plans and focus on

localization. The workshop and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development should yield concrete plans and pathways to strengthen collaboration.

B. Session 2: Overview of the objectives of the preparatory workshop

11. Economic Affairs Officer at ECA, John Sloan, encouraged the participants to engage in a frank and open discussion on the challenges encountered in pursuing the goals of the two agendas and to share key interventions or approaches that had assisted their countries in overcoming those challenges, as revealed through the voluntary national and local review processes.

12. The Acting Head of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Office of Strategic Planning and Delivery at the African Union Commission, Charles Wangadya, presented an assessment and the findings of the first 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063. Relevance had been rated as high, with good awareness and ownership among Governments, but less so among the general public. Alignment with national development plans was strong, but targeting and responsiveness to specific contexts were relatively weak. Financial resources were inadequate to achieve the expected results, and efficiency had been rated as weak. Political structures were instrumental in implementing Agenda 2063. Those successes and limitations would help to inform the second 10-year implementation plan.

C. Session 3: Voluntary national reviews to redouble efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063

1. Presentations

13. The Officer-in-Charge of Continental Governance Programmes at the African Peer Review Mechanism, Sara Tawfik Hamouda, moderated the session. She emphasized the significance of the voluntary national review process for countries taking ownership of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Presentations were made by the National Director of Planning and Rural Economy at the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Planning of Guinea, Hassane Diallo; the Deputy Director for Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 at the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe, Sylocious Chaturuka; the Director General of Planning and Development at the Ministry of the Economy, Planning, Statistics and Regional Integration of the Congo, Franck Mampouya-M'bamba; the Chief of the Development Planning Section at ECA, Bartholomew Armah; the Regional Policy Specialist on Integration at United Nations Volunteers, Jean de Dieu Sibomana; and Senior Economist at the Ministry of Planning of Sierra Leone, Manso Saio Kargbo.

14. Mr. Diallo highlighted the need for continuity in planning for and implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 irrespective of the Government in power. In that regard, Guinea had developed an interim development plan under the current Government. Significant progress had been made towards achieving the Goals, but challenges included inadequate financing, monitoring and evaluation and insufficient coordination of interventions between the Government and development partners.

15. Ms. Chaturuka discussed the third voluntary national review of Zimbabwe, which was adopting a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to ensuring that no one was left behind. The national development strategy had been aligned with the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and other

regional commitments. Ten local authorities were benefiting from capacity-building to conduct voluntary local reviews, building on the two voluntary local reviews that had been undertaken in Harare and Victoria Falls in 2020. Challenges included improving awareness about the Goals and aligning the budget with development priorities.

16. Mr. Mampouya-M'bamba noted that the Congo had prepared five reports on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and one on the implementation of Agenda 2063, with further reports due later in 2024. The year 2024 marked the third voluntary national review of the Congo, with support from ECA. To improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, 14 Goals had been prioritized and 3 (Goals 8, 9 and 11) had been identified as catalysers to achieve the others. The country had also undertaken four voluntary local reviews and had further plans going forward. Challenges included financing, the tight time frame to 2030, exogenous shocks and data availability.

17. The Chief of the Development Planning Section at ECA presented the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, which ECA used to support Governments in aligning their national development plans with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Challenges in the alignment included fragmentation at different levels of planning, better alignment with the 2030 Agenda than with Agenda 2063, the limited tracking of progress made in the implementation of the agendas and limited transparency in budgeting for national development plans. The toolkit helped to measure alignment across various frameworks and plans by digitizing plans for tracking, monitoring and reporting, and generating subsequent recommendations.

18. Mr. Sibomana highlighted the essential contributions of volunteers to voluntary national and local reviews, as they served as a link between planning and implementation processes, and communities. Contributions included responding to crises, strengthening civic engagement, tackling climate change and helping to ensure that no one was left behind. In that regard, United Nations Volunteers had been deployed to support reporting countries. He called upon countries to invest in volunteerism to facilitate the implementation of the two agendas.

19. Mr. Kargbo noted that Sierra Leone continued to align its national development plan with the two agendas, and that voluntary national reviews supported that alignment. The review process had revealed successes in such initiatives as the school feeding programme, leading to expanded implementation of the programme. Development coordination had been strengthened at the district level, but challenges included inadequate data and financial resources.

2. Messages

20. Following their discussion, the participants agreed on the following messages:

(a) Concerted and organized plans by Governments are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including coordination across the national and local governments, transcendence beyond temporary political shifts and engagement with stakeholders to push the agendas forward;

(b) Numerous African countries encounter similar challenges in conducting voluntary national and local reviews, including financial constraints, data scarcity, coordination at the national level, the digital divide, the urgency to meet the imminent targets of the 2030 Agenda, and the harmonization of national development plans with the targets of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(c) The voluntary national review process does provide an opportunity to assess what has been working in national and local policy and

scale-up and serves as a useful tool to mobilize stakeholders and reboot progress towards the two agendas;

(d) Fostering peer learning and providing direct support for the review process for both agendas are vital services provided by the United Nations system and regional organs, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, and those services should be continued and expanded in order to improve the effectiveness and impact of future reviews.

D. Session 4: Data to unlock the relevance and accuracy of voluntary national reviews

1. Presentations

21. The Director of the African Centre for Statistics, Oliver Chinganya, moderated the session. Presentations were made by the Head of the Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat at the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, Albert Byamugisha; the Chairperson of the National Bureau of Statistics of South Sudan, Augustino Mayai; the Director of International Cooperation and Focal Point for the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of Chad, Adoumtogue Rubain; Advisor to the Presidency on Planning and Economic Diversification of Equatorial Guinea, Bindang Ndong Okiri; and the Head of Vital Statistics at the National Agency for Civil Registration of Senegal, Khadidjatou Thiam.

22. Mr. Byamugisha emphasized the need to strengthen the capabilities of national statistical systems in order to collect and analyse data for the voluntary national review process and to assess the progress made towards the implementation of the two agendas. Investing in modernizing administrative data sources could increase the use of up-to-date data in policy formulation processes. Based on the experiences of Uganda, a joint cooperation framework on data and statistics with the United Nations could assist in improving the data available for voluntary national reviews.

23. Mr. Mayai revealed that South Sudan faced data availability, quality and statistical literacy issues. Strategies to address those issues included building databases and central repositories, which had been done for data on petroleum, gender-based violence and inequality. Peer learning could help to strengthen national statistical systems, as could the recruitment and training of staff. The digitalization of data collection was being adopted, and external data sources were being harnessed.

24. Mr. Rubain highlighted various data sources for the voluntary national review of Chad, including household surveys, statistical yearbooks, administrative data and international sources. Monitoring the Goals and Agenda 2063 was difficult owing to weak coordination, insufficient financing and a lack of statistical services. Reforms to strengthen the national statistical system in Chad included the development of a legal framework for statistics and a national fund for statistics and the opening of a national school of applied statistics.

25. Ms. Okiri revealed the efforts that Equatorial Guinea had made to align its national strategy with the Goals and Agenda 2063 through its second voluntary national review. The country had developed its technical capabilities to prepare the review report, including through the digitization of survey data, the collection and use of administrative data and the coverage of more Goals in that process.

26. Ms. Thiam shared that Senegal had modernized its civil registration and vital statistics by digitizing the registers of census data. Mapping software was being used to geolocate civil status centres spatial information, as well as mobile telephone outreach and automated data collection processes. Areas that

were lacking included data collection structures and statisticians in the health sector, but expanding computerization at the civil status centre level could assist in dealing with that issue.

2. Messages

27. Following their discussion, the participants agreed on the following messages:

(a) Fully aligning national development plans and strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 will help to increase government commitment to voluntary national review reporting;

(b) Countries should continually invest in strengthening the capabilities of their national statistical systems, including through the modernization of administrative data sources, which would increase the use of up-to-date data in policy formulation and voluntary national review processes;

(c) Emerging innovations and methods, including the use of big data and other non-traditional data sources for filling data gaps and updating data for policy formulation and voluntary national review reporting, should be leveraged;

(d) Countries and development partners should commit to domestic financing for data and statistics to support national statistical systems.

E. Session 5: Setting the scene for voluntary local reviews

Presentations

28. Economic Affairs Officer at ECA, John Sloan, moderated the session. Opening statements for the session were delivered by the Chief of the Urbanization and Development Section at ECA, Atkeyelsh Persson, and the Chief of the National Strategies and Capacity-Building Branch at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Amson Sibanda.

29. The Chief of the Urbanization and Development Section at ECA highlighted the vital role that local communities played in shaping the sustainable development agenda. Findings from voluntary local reviews provided a foundation for voluntary national reviews and served as a tool to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She highlighted the critical role of the African voluntary local review guidelines in fostering local ownership and increasing transparency, inclusiveness and accountability.¹ She highlighted the commitment of ECA to continue scaling up voluntary local review production in the region and building resilient communities in Africa.

30. The Chief of the National Strategies and Capacity-Building Branch at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs underscored the importance of voluntary local and national reviews in policymaking, multilevel governance, mutual accountability and transparency. Local actions must be put in a global context, including by embedding the 2030 Agenda in local and national development planning. He highlighted how the implementation of the post-2015 agenda would depend on local action and leadership, and he urged the speakers to determine which tools would be needed to achieve the Goals and how to best amplify the voices of local stakeholders in the process of implementation. Going forward, both the voluntary national reviews and the voluntary local reviews must be informed by the 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, which had been developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration and endorsed by the Economic

¹ See ECA, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa and UN-Habitat, *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines*.

and Social Council in July 2018.² Those principles, which had been chosen with a view to effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness, provided an overarching analytical framework for assessing institutional capacity for achieving the Goals.

F. Session 6: From reporting to action – how action-oriented voluntary local reviews inform policies that further the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

1. Presentations

31. The Coordinator of the Sustainable Development Goal Localization Team at UN-Habitat, Martino Miraglia, moderated the session. Presentations were given by the Voluntary Local Review Development Expert of Nakuru City, Kenya, George Wasonga; the Head of UN-Habitat in Tunisia, Aida Robbana; the Project Coordinator of the Mwanza-Tampere Strengthening Cooperation Project of the Mwanza City Council, United Republic of Tanzania, Amin Abdallah; the Deputy/Acting Governor of Beheira Governorate, Egypt, Nehal Balbaa; and the Executive Director of Youth Advocates Ghana, Emmanuel Ametepey.

32. Mr. Miraglia urged the participants to think about the voluntary local reviews as a process, stressing the importance of Governments taking their outcomes into consideration. Just and inclusive institutions at all levels were the basis of sustainable development. They needed to be built from the bottom up, including local communities and local governments. For their potential to be harnessed, voluntary local reviews needed to be embedded in the wider localization framework at the country level – only by working across spheres of Government and with all stakeholders and sectors involved, would the 2030 Agenda be implemented.

33. Mr. Wasonga discussed the development of guidelines and methodologies, integrating data into decision-making processes with the assistance of a publicly available and interactive dashboard that collected data for the realization of the long-term ambitions of Nakuru. That drove stakeholder interest, and utilizing multi-stakeholder platforms and upcoming forums like the one in Egypt underscored the commitment to advancing local actions through voluntary reviews. The work of Nakuru had not only gathered relevant data through continuous engagement with stakeholders but had shown alignment between existing policies and crucial long-term plans.

34. Ms. Robbana highlighted that the voluntary local review conducted in Ennour Municipality, the first such review undertaken in Tunisia, showcased the progress made on Sustainable Development Goal follow-up in the national development plan and vision 2035 of Tunisia and played a role in informing the ongoing census. She underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement in preparing the review and outlined the indicators mobilized and developed for the review.

35. Mr. Abdallah emphasized the role of local government authorities in educating communities about the Goals and in mobilizing local resources. Local authorities were proactive in showcasing local achievements, including local governments in national processes and providing a space for advocacy of local needs and interests. Recommendations from the review conducted in Mwanza included improving the quality and accessibility of data and addressing policy and financing gaps. The example of Mwanza demonstrated the potential of scaling up voluntary local reviews across the country.

² See United Nations, “Principles of effective governance for sustainable development”.

36. Ms. Balbaa explained that the voluntary local review conducted in Beheira had been focused on the Goals related to humanitarian, economic and infrastructure development. It was important to disclose the strengths and weaknesses in addressing development gaps, especially around poverty and illiteracy. Standardizing data across the local, ministerial and international levels was a major challenge. The findings from the review would be translated into local action plans to be funded by the presidency. A second report for Beheira was scheduled to be completed by September 2024.

37. Mr. Ametepey discussed the work of young people at both the national and the regional levels, highlighting the establishment of the national youth platform in Ghana to coordinate youth activities and achieve a strong youth presence in national Sustainable Development Goal initiatives. The fifth African Youth Sustainable Development Goals Summit, held in Lusaka in August 2023, had empowered young people to actively contribute to the achievement and monitoring of the Goals and accountability across the continent. The youth workshop for voluntary national reviews, which had taken place before the Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, had emphasized the need for youth ownership of Agenda 2063 and the Goals, increased the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes and prioritized funding for their engagement in sustainable development efforts.

2. Messages

38. Following their discussion, the participants agreed on the following messages:

(a) Voluntary local reviews are a pillar of the localization of the Goals and should be considered a central element of country-wide frameworks on localization;

(b) Action-oriented voluntary local reviews have the potential to inspire tailored policies and more inclusive development planning and initiatives and, as such, the reviews should go beyond monitoring progress by providing a more nuanced picture of those left behind and practical recommendations on how to transform monitoring into action;

(c) Partnerships are essential to further the localization of the Goals, and the United Nations should continue to support subnational government participation in national review processes in order to strengthen the linkages between local and national spheres of government;

(d) Voluntary local review processes benefit from both qualitative and quantitative data and the involvement of local communities and diverse stakeholders, and findings from the reviews must be made public and available to citizens to enhance accountability, transparency and inclusive decision-making;

(e) Youth ownership of the Goals and Agenda 2063 should be encouraged by providing young people with resources to drive sustainable development initiatives, by including them in sustainable development dialogues and by advocating 50 per cent youth representation in decision-making structures that are focused on the achievement of the Goals.

G. Session 7: Local-level reporting to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – how voluntary local reviews contribute to voluntary national reviews

1. Presentations

39. The Chief of the National Strategies and Capacity-Building Branch at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Amson Sibanda, moderated the

session. Presentations were given by the Manager of the Projects, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa, Nevana Srikiissoon; the Unit Manager of Waste Management of Rustenburg Municipality, South Africa, Julian Nkoana; the Senior Planning Analyst at the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana, Patience Ampomah; the Representative for East Africa and Representative to the African Union of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Marcel Akpovo; and Economics Adviser at the South Africa Country Office of the United Nations Development Programme, Rogers Dhliwayo.

40. Ms. Srikiissoon described the experience of preparing the first voluntary local review conducted in eThekweni, which had been supported by the National Planning Commission of South Africa, the South African Local Government Association, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the South Africa Country Office of the United Nations Development Programme. While that institutional coordination had helped to ensure that important messages from the voluntary local review had been fed into the voluntary national review, there were still challenges in elevating local actions to the national level. The importance of collaboration and partnerships was clear, especially regarding young people, as were the challenges of obtaining quality data, the need for increased advocacy of the Goals and enhanced financing for the achievement of the Goals.

41. Mr. Nkoana noted that Rustenburg Municipality had been able to produce a voluntary local review in a short period of time, and awareness of the Goals had been raised through social media, engagement with stakeholders and community participation. During the review, priority goals had been identified, but the review had been focused on Goal 11. Data collection had been undertaken through meetings, focus group discussions, consultations, telecommunications and social media. However, there had been data challenges in terms of aligning activities with the Goals owing to language barriers, data-sourcing issues, financial limitations and knowledge gaps. The next steps involved strengthening existing committees, providing feedback to stakeholders and sharing findings with relevant national bodies.

42. The Chief of the National Strategies and Capacity-Building Branch at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs noted that the two reports on the respective voluntary local reviews in South Africa had been prepared as a result of the capacity-building support that the Department had provided to African countries with the support of the Government of Italy.

43. Ms. Ampomah highlighted how voluntary local reviews had fostered ownership, strengthened reporting, promoted inclusivity, bridged local-national reporting gaps, improved data disaggregation, promoted collaboration and identified marginalized groups and gaps in meeting the Sustainable Development Goal targets in Ghana. Nine districts were currently preparing voluntary local reviews in Ghana, supported by three national-level committees. Future voluntary national reviews would benefit from a whole-of-society approach, enhanced by improved data from local reviews. She equally highlighted the support provided by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the African Peer Review Mechanism for preparations for a voluntary local review to be conducted in Kumasi, the second-largest city in Ghana.

44. The Representative for East Africa and Representative to the African Union of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized that human rights were at the centre of the achievement of the Goals. In advancing the human rights and sustainability agenda, localization was pivotal for realizing the transformative ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. To accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Goals and to help to

advance human rights at the local and regional levels, qualitative data were essential.

45. Mr. Dhliwayo explained how voluntary local reviews in Africa helped in measuring and reporting on progress, noting examples from Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, where the engagement of local and regional authorities had demonstrated effective strategies and innovation in the localization of the Goals. Emerging lessons highlighted the need for adequate financial resources and legal frameworks for sustained cooperation and coordinated planning, and the need for the increased involvement of stakeholders. Unified reporting processes across all levels of government were required in order to prioritize the Goals and to build the capacity of local authorities. He underscored the importance of capacity-building for local and global actors involved in the localization of the Goals. Universities and scientists played a significant role and could be tasked with identifying context-specific pathways to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Goals and with advancing research and facilitation methods. Furthermore, education programmes were needed to prepare a workforce capable of addressing the interdisciplinary, multilevel, participatory and place-based nature of the localization of the Goals.

2. Messages

46. Following their discussion, the participants agreed on the following messages:

(a) Local government associations play a strategic role in aligning voluntary local and national reviews, infused with local-level data, and decentralized planning systems avoid the duplication of national and local efforts in reporting on the Goals;

(b) Partnerships, data availability, advocacy and financing remain critical areas for improvement and focus in accelerating the achievement of the Goals;

(c) Voluntary local reviews not only help to create awareness of challenges around data availability and language barriers but also present strategies to overcome them, including the use of alternative data sources and interpretation services, the need for continued collaboration, feedback mechanisms, and political and administrative commitment to accelerate the achievement of the Goals;

(d) The *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines* should be disseminated to further increase the number of local and subnational governments that have the capacity to prepare reports;

(e) Local and subnational governments should be encouraged to mainstream human rights in voluntary local reviews, as that would assist in identifying vulnerable groups and ensuring that rights holders received adequate services from local governments.

H. Session 8: Looking ahead to the Summit of the Future and closing

1. Presentations

47. The session was moderated by Economic Affairs Officer at ECA, John Sloan. Closing remarks were provided by the Director of the Regional Office for Africa of UN-Habitat, Oumar Sylla; the Officer-in-Charge of Continental Governance Programmes at the African Peer Review Mechanism, Sara Tawfik Hamouda; and the Director of Policy, Monitoring and Advocacy at the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Jean-Paul Adam.

48. Mr. Sylla commended the rich progress and innovations showcased on the voluntary national and local reviews during the workshop, emphasizing that the voluntary local review movement and growing multilateralism in the region brought significant hope. He highlighted the main entry points for transformative local action, namely: financing; peace and security; science, technology and innovation; young people; global governance; and digital transformation.

49. Ms. Hamouda discussed the need to share a positive narrative for Africa through its voluntary national and local reviews, developing institutional arrangements to further the localization of the Goals, and increased engagement between citizens and governments. Debt management, policy coherence, and data and statistics remained challenges in the region.

50. The Director of Policy, Monitoring and Advocacy at the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa emphasized six areas to consider for the upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Summit of the Future, namely: empowering citizens; measuring impacts beyond the Goals; prioritizing peace and stability; delivering a global digital compact; the reform of the United Nations; and the delivery of finance at scale, including through domestic resource mobilization.

2. Messages

51. Following their discussion, the participants agreed on the following messages:

(a) The region's participation in the Summit of the Future should build on the momentum of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and the best practices from Africa in the voluntary national and local reviews should be shared during the Summit of the Future, with a focus on the national achievements made relating to the Goals and Agenda 2063;

(b) Innovative solutions for persistent development issues on the continent, including illicit financial flows, debt management, women's empowerment and the digital divide, human rights and strengthening public institutions, should be issues of focus during the Summit of the Future;

(c) The Summit of the Future is also a good avenue to display the complementarity and collaboration between United Nations entities and African Union organs in supporting knowledge generation, peer learning and capacity-building for African countries, including the knowledge products and toolkits developed and delivered to countries, such as the integrated planning and reporting toolkit and the publication *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines*.

I. Session 9: Stakeholders' town hall meeting – regional inputs to the Summit of the Future

1. Presentations

52. The Senior Director for Sustainable Development Initiatives at the United Nations Foundation, Julie Kofoed, and the Head of Knowledge Management, ICT and E-learning at the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, Thierry Amoussougbo, moderated the town hall meeting. They emphasized the need to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Goals, noting that current trends indicated that only 15 per cent of the targets would be met by 2030. A more holistic and integrated approach to the Goals would increase the involvement of local communities and actors.

53. Presentations were made by the Director of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane; the Economic Attaché of the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations, Lwaba Innes Jario, on behalf of the co-facilitator of the intergovernmental preparatory process of the Summit of the Future, Neville Melvin Gertze; the Head of the Technical Unit of Mauritius, Ramakrishna Appadoo; the Executive Director of the Sustainable Development Goals Kenya Forum, Florence Syevuo; Sustainable Development Officer at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Tonya Vaturi; the Co-Chair of the Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, Kofi Kankam; and Next Generation Fellow at the United Nations Foundation, Anita Dywaba.

54. Ms. Ben Soltane reflected on the progress made towards the achievement of the Goals, noting a shift from showcasing successes to a more nuanced evaluation of achievements and gaps. A holistic and integrated approach was needed, involving local communities and leveraging available resources efficiently. The need for better planning, data production and reporting had been emphasized, as well as involving young people and addressing digital transformation, climate change and risk management.

55. Ms. Jario shared the ongoing negotiations on “A Pact for the Future”, the outcome document of the Summit of the Future. Participants at the Summit should encourage countries to accelerate the achievement of the Goals, while recognizing and responding to existing gaps, guided by thematic chapters on a host of issues vital for the world and in particular for Africa. While there were areas of consensus, such as the importance of science and technology in the achievement of the Goals, there were also diverging views on such topics as common but differentiated responsibility, fossil fuel subsidies, gender issues and the reform of the Security Council. Further discussions were needed to bridge those differences and to ensure a successful outcome of the Summit.

56. Mr. Appadoo highlighted his team’s mandate, which was to coordinate and monitor the achievement of the Goals with a focus on the social dimension. Emphasis was placed on the cross-cutting nature of the Goals and the means to ensure progress across the entire 2030 Agenda. He underscored upcoming reports that would contain an outline of the expectations of Mauritius for the Summit of the Future.

57. Ms. Syevuo emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration for sustainable development and highlighted the role of civil society in influencing the Summit of the Future and achieving the Goals. Key aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals Kenya Forum included data and research; gender equality; accountability; linking global, regional and national advocacy; localization and ownership; and amplifying local voices in the development agenda.

58. The Sustainable Development Officer at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs highlighted the role of the Department in guiding and supporting countries in preparing and presenting their voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

59. Mr. Kankam emphasized the importance of monitoring by civil society organizations in ensuring government transparency and accountability. Combining shadow reports with government reports might not be effective, as Governments might not always prioritize human rights and sustainable development. Instead, civil societies should maintain their independence and continue holding Governments accountable for their commitments.

60. Ms. Dywaba highlighted the importance of youth engagement and gender equality and of bringing young people more meaningfully into those discussions. She elaborated on the role of the Next Generation Fellowship as a programme that provided young change-makers with a platform to share their

experiences and opinions on how to engage young people effectively. Under the Fellowship, a five-year road map to the year 2100 had been launched, which was aimed at empowering young people to create a better future for coming generations.

2. Messages

61. Following their discussion, the participants agreed on the following messages:

(a) A “new Bretton Woods moment” is needed to reform outdated international financial institutions in order to boost the representation of the global South and to recapitalize and improve the lending terms of multilateral development banks;

(b) A pivot is required to move from a piecemeal, siloed approach to implementing the Goals towards a systems-change approach;

(c) Voluntary local reviews can support and complement voluntary national reviews and can ensure the localization of the Goals through a people-centred approach;

(d) Better utilization and efficient use of available resources is required, especially through domestic resource mobilization;

(e) There is a need to adopt a multidimensional vulnerability index for country assessments and a new measure of progress beyond gross domestic product.
