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Statutory issues

Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme

I. Introduction

1. The present report contains a summary of the support extended during the period April 2024–March 2025 by entities of the United Nations development system working in Africa to the African Union, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development and other African Union organs, including the African Peer Review Mechanism. It covers the implementation of priorities at the regional and subregional levels, including those set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The report comprises six sections. Following the introduction in section I, section II is focused on high-level strategic engagement between the African Union and the United Nations, and the main achievements in strengthening the partnership between the two organizations. Section III contains an overview of the support provided for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, in the context of the “two agendas, one framework” approach, including the support for the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development. In section IV, an overview is provided of the assistance delivered through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, in the context of the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Section V sets out the major activities conducted under programme 9 of the proposed programme budget for 2024 (A/78/6 (Sect. 11)) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications. Section VI contains a conclusion.

II. High-level strategic engagement between the United Nations and the African Union and main outcomes

2. The eighth United Nations-African Union annual conference was held in Addis Ababa on 21 October 2024 under the leadership of the Chairperson of the African

* E/ECA/COE/43/1.



Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Participants at the conference, which was focused on global peace, security and development, reaffirmed their commitment to collaborative solutions. Participants also discussed a number of important issues, including progress achieved in the context of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. A central theme of the conference was the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the fiscal challenges undermining efforts by African States to finance sustainable development. Both organizations reaffirmed that they would continue to advocate reforms to international financial systems with a view to securing necessary resources. Gender equality and youth participation in peace processes were also emphasized as vital for peacebuilding, with both organizations pledging to incorporate gender considerations into strategic coordination mechanisms.

4. The impact of climate change, in particular on water resources in Africa, was another important topic of discussion. Participants welcomed the development of a common African position on climate, peace and security, stressing the need for joint efforts to tackle climate-related challenges. Noting that the African Union had become a permanent member of the Group of 20, participants reaffirmed their commitment to highlighting the priorities of Africa in global discussions.

5. The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union has advanced significantly as a result of the convening of biannual high-level strategic dialogues between the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission. In 2024, dialogues were held in May and October. The participants took stock of critical issues in sustainable development and reviewed progress achieved in the operationalization of five “college-to-college” mechanisms pertaining to economic development, education, agriculture, health and social development. The aim of those mechanisms, which bring together heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and Commissioners of the African Union, is to strengthen collaboration between the two organizations, align strategic priorities and promote the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063.

6. Participants at the high-level strategic dialogue adopted four matrices, developed by the “college-to-college” mechanisms, to accelerate implementation, monitor progress and address gaps in cooperation between the two organizations. Financing for development emerged as a critical priority, in particular the need to strengthen domestic revenue generation, promote debt management and reform global financial systems. Education, digital transformation, and science, technology and innovation were also highlighted as major drivers of structural transformation in Africa, while access to energy was identified as a vital area requiring further attention.

III. Support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including for the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the African Peer Review Mechanism

7. ECA played a pivotal role in supporting the finalization of the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063, which was endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in February 2024. ECA is a core member of a technical working group on Agenda 2063, the other members of which are the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the African Capacity-Building Foundation, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). ECA has been instrumental in refining the theory of change, the implementation enablers and pathways and the frameworks for domestic resource mobilization that are associated with the plan. ECA has also contributed to the development of tools and guidelines to facilitate implementation of the plan, its adaptation to local contexts and reporting on progress achieved.

8. ECA continues to support members of the African Union in integrating the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their national development plans using the integrated planning and reporting toolkit. In 2024, discussions were held to align the toolkit with the second 10-year implementation plan indicators provided in the core indicator handbook, with the aim of seamlessly integrating the two agendas.

9. On 28 November 2024, ECA and the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development signed a revised memorandum of understanding, reinforcing their commitment to shared goals and outlining joint work plans across six priority areas, namely strengthening national statistics and data and systems in support of the second 10-year implementation plan; the development of the African Union Agenda 2063 Development Fund; advancing regional integration including in the context of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa; climate action, with a particular focus on adaptation, mitigation and resilience; industrialization and economic diversification; and the development and implementation of the strategic plan of the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development for the period 2024–2028. Future actions will include the creation of a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess progress, and to promote accountability in line with the agreed priorities of the two organizations.

10. To energize Governments and reorient them towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063, ECA, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Office to the African Union commissioned two studies relevant to the continent, on governance, institutions and economic development, and on promoting effective and meaningful youth participation in post-conflict reconstruction and development. The two studies were conducted with the aim of guiding discussions and facilitating the development of strategies to enhance governance and institutional resilience, both of which are essential for ensuring peace, stability and economic development in Africa. An expert group meeting was held in Nairobi from 2 to 4 October 2024 to review and revise the two studies, which will be presented at the thirty-eighth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, to be held in February 2025, with a view to identifying priority areas in which the African Union Commission, the continent’s regional economic communities and the United Nations can provide effective support to African States.

11. ECA continued to support the African Peer Review Mechanism in developing an African credit rating agency. Pursuant to a decision adopted at the forty-fifth ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union, the African Peer Review Mechanism, ECA and the African Union Commission, in collaboration with pan-African financial institutions, have striven to accelerate the operationalization of an African private sector rating agency, reflecting the principles of self-financing and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, ECA and the African Peer Review Mechanism continued their joint publication of the biannual Africa Sovereign Credit Rating Review. In addition, the Mechanism conducted a technical mission to Ghana in March 2024 to address credit rating challenges and, in July 2024, held a workshop, supported by two leading international credit rating agencies, on the transparency of sovereign credit rating methodologies, which was attended by 30 participants from Ghana and Zambia.

IV. Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

12. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and its opportunity and issue-based coalitions continue to be the technical arm at the regional level in the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The coalitions work closely with the African Union and its agencies in several areas and provide support and carry out interventions at the country level through resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. The engine room of the Platform is the joint secretariat, comprising ECA, the Development Coordination Office and UNDP.

13. Several major meetings were organized by the Platform in the period under review. The annual meeting of the Platform took place on the margins of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Addis Ababa from 23 to 25 April 2024, providing an opportunity for participants to take stock of the progress that the Platform had helped to achieve, including in the context of the partnership and joint delivery efforts of the African Union and the United Nations. At the meeting, an emphasis was placed on the importance of monitoring and reporting on the joint implementation of current frameworks, impact and the implementation of the six transitions identified as having catalytic and multiplier effects across the Sustainable Development Goals.¹ Other outcomes of the meeting included the identification of a number of priority areas, namely energy and climate change, digitalization, education, food systems, economic diversification and promoting trade in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area; and recommendations to ensure that those priority areas aligned with the six transitions. Participants in the meeting also emphasized the importance of the issues to be discussed at the Summit of the Future, which was held in New York in September 2024, and reiterated their support for reforms to the global financial architecture, which could accelerate implementation of the two agendas. In addition, participants stressed the importance of education, which was reflected in the African Union theme of the year for 2024, namely “Educate and Skill Africa for the 21st Century”.

14. In the annual meeting of regional directors and resident coordinators, which was also held on the margins of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on 25 April 2024, the participants discussed their needs and expectations, including the need for the United Nations system to become more agile in its work and to provide comprehensive solutions that uphold human dignity. The participants emphasized that stakeholders must have a thorough understanding of situations on the ground before designing interventions and stressed the need for resident coordinators and regional directors to hold regular meetings through the Platform. The participants also emphasized that development efforts should be sustained even when particular attention was given to States experiencing insecurity and unconstitutional changes, and proposed the adoption of an innovative approach for engaging with States that enjoyed relative stability but still needed development partnerships.

15. Support was provided through the Regional Collaborative Platform opportunity and issues-based coalitions and peer support groups to six resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to facilitate the formulation of cooperation frameworks. Countries that received support in 2024 included the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

¹ For more information, see United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Six transitions: Investment pathways to deliver the SDGs” (2023).

16. The joint secretariat of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa held a retreat from 28 September to 1 October 2024 to address operational and strategic challenges and finalize the work plan for the upcoming year. The retreat allowed participants to deepen their understanding of the Regional Collaborative Platform theory of change inception report and data collection tools, the joint secretariat pooled fund and the draft joint secretariat standard operating procedure, the aim of which is to create a framework for enhanced collaboration and institutional coherence among ECA, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, and to streamline and optimize country-level support, ensuring development initiatives are aligned with national priorities and broader United Nations objectives.

17. New initiatives, including the Africa Development Dialogue and regional field visits focused on energy, were also introduced to support the six transitions as enablers for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

A. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 1: strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development and the Africa we want²

18. Significant progress was made by coalition 1 in enhancing accessibility to the Africa United Nations Data for Development Platform, which was updated with 2023 data and new indicators. Efforts by coalition 1 in that regard have improved access by United Nations country teams, States Members of the United Nations and other users to vital data on the Sustainable Development Goals and the corresponding goals and targets of Agenda 2063. The Platform now plays a vital role in tracking progress in implementation of the two agendas. Future enhancements will incorporate geospatial components and subnational data to facilitate the identification of at-risk populations and support more inclusive development.

19. Through an initiative on the power of data, the coalition helped to improve the coordination of national statistical systems in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, helping those countries to integrate data-driven approaches into their national development plans and, accordingly, improve the quality and use of data to achieve sustainable outcomes.

20. Through an initiative on strengthened data disaggregation and capacity-building, members of coalition 1 helped Angola, Djibouti, Namibia and Uganda to complete censuses in 2024. Best practices and recommendations for the 2025 census round were discussed at an expert group meeting that was convened in Pretoria.

21. Coalition 1 promoted data use in humanitarian and development contexts by developing toolkits to support gender-disaggregated data generation. A toolkit linking administrative, survey and census data was piloted in Kenya, with further capacity-building sessions planned for South Africa and Zimbabwe in order to expand data disaggregation in the region.

22. Coalition 1 organized a meeting in Rwanda to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems, which led to the establishment of a community of practice on the subject. Meeting participants highlighted the need to improve guidelines and knowledge management to sustain those systems across Africa.

23. Despite progress in data collection, management and use, challenges remain, particularly in conflict-affected countries, including the Sudan, where limited statistical infrastructure continues to hamper data collection. Efforts to enhance data environments across Africa are, however, expected to improve policymaking and contribute to more inclusive development. Efforts will be needed to align national

² Co-conveners: ECA, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

development plans with global and regional agendas, leveraging the increasing political will to invest in data systems.

B. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 2: ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive economic transformation and diversification³

24. Coalition 2 supported the adoption and implementation of important domestic policies to benefit from the opportunities stemming from the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. A conference on implementation strategies for the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, held in Nairobi from 15 to 17 January 2024, was organized by coalition 2, the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Kenya Resident Coordinator Office and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The conference provided a platform for peer learning, enabling participants to discuss challenges, lessons learned and best practices, and identify strategic actions that could facilitate implementation of the Agreement. By early 2024, 30 countries had adopted national plans on the Agreement, with 25 countries⁴ incorporating their plans into new cooperation frameworks.

25. Coalition 2 supported implementation of the Agreement in several members of ECA, including Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal and Seychelles, and provided capacity-building programmes for the Economic Community of Central African States and for Burundi, Rwanda and Togo. In addition, coalition 2 is finalizing 19 documents on the green economy and national strategies on the Agreement, focusing on green value chains, climate change adaptation and regional integration.

26. Coalition 2 finalized the eleventh edition of the Report on Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA XI), entitled “Beyond the AfCFTA: Bringing the Continental Customs Union and Common Market About”, and a report entitled “Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT), Ten-years After: Progress, Implementation Challenges, and Implications for the AfCFTA”.

27. In partnership with the Africa Technology and Creative Group, coalition 2 organized a series of dialogues on e-commerce and digitalization in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Following the launch by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development of the *2024 Digital Economy Report*, the coalition convened a conference on shaping an environmentally sustainable and inclusive digital future in Africa, which was attended by 80 participants.

28. Coalition 2 also operationalized national technical working groups on illicit financial flows in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Nigeria and Senegal. The working groups focused on risk assessments, data analysis and measurement methodologies. Furthermore, the coalition partnered with the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning to develop e-learning courses on illicit financial flows.

³ Co-conveners: ECA, International Trade Centre, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and UNDP.

⁴ Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

C. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 3: education, innovation, digitalization and youth⁵

29. Coalition 3 participated actively in the first African Union Pan-African Conference on Girls and Women's Education, in which particular attention was given to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 4, on quality education, and 5, on gender equality. The Conference was hosted by the African Union and its partners and provided a platform on which participants could discuss the education of women and girls in Africa. Coalition 3 supported the participation of young people in the Conference as speakers and Conference side events.

30. Following the endorsement in 2023 by ministers of education and health of countries in West and Central Africa of a commitment to educated, healthy and thriving adolescents and young people,⁶ coalition 3 and other stakeholders have made significant progress in developing a comprehensive monitoring and accountability framework to enhance the monitoring of regional commitments to improve the health, education and well-being of adolescents and young people across the 25 signatories to the commitment.⁷ The framework, expected to be validated by Governments in early 2025, is designed to facilitate positive change, ensuring that initiatives supporting young people are effectively tracked and optimized for maximum impact on their lives.

31. In the area of digital skills and youth empowerment, the Tech4Youth initiative, implemented in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, has reached 2.6 million young people, including 8,000 young people with disabilities. The initiative supports youth entrepreneurs in developing digital tools to improve access to sexual and reproductive health and rights across West and Central Africa. Furthermore, QG Jeune, a digital platform launched in Burkina Faso for adolescents and young adults aged between 15 and 24 years, has facilitated more than 30 million interactions since 2018, offering educational content on sexual and reproductive health and rights and health service referrals.

D. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 4: fostering climate action and resilience⁸

32. Coalition 4 supported the organization of a capacity-building dialogue on carbon markets at the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Following the dialogue, a number of ECA members, including Mozambique, submitted requests for technical support. In response, coalition 4 assisted the Resident Coordinator Office in Mozambique in drafting the country's carbon markets decree and ensuring its alignment with article 6 of the Paris Agreement on climate change. In June 2024, coalition 4 and the Resident Coordinator Office engaged with stakeholders to finalize the decree, ensuring its adherence to international standards. The coalition continues to offer advice on carbon pricing methodologies. In Eswatini, technical support on carbon markets was provided to the United Nations country team, and input on financing for sustainable development was provided at the annual Green Indaba.

⁵ Co-conveners: International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNFPA, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Women and World Health Organization.

⁶ For more information, see www.commit4youngpeople.org/.

⁷ Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

⁸ Co-conveners: ECA, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNDP and United Nations Environment Programme.

33. Six participating agencies in coalition 4 are engaged in the implementation of the Joint Action for Sustainable Green and Blue Economy in Mauritius and Seychelles, the aim of which is to foster the creation of a circular economy. In Seychelles, steps taken as part of the Joint Action have included the formulation of gender-sensitive road map, the establishment of a circular economy challenge fund and training on financing and gender mainstreaming. A market readiness assessment has also been conducted. In Mauritius, coalition 4 supported efforts to develop offshore wind energy projects, conducting a prefeasibility study that revealed strong energy production potential.

34. Progress has been made in several African countries with regard to the Early Warnings for All initiative, launched by the Secretary-General in 2022. Liberia has continued its efforts to formulate a road map in that area, and early warnings and climate resilience initiatives have advanced in a number of countries, including Mozambique, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

E. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 5: towards peace, security, the respect of human rights and forced displacement⁹

35. In collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, coalition 5 has engaged with the African Union Commission and members of ECA to enhance capacity in tackling transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking and migrant smuggling, which threaten security and stability across Africa. Among its achievements during the reporting period, the coalition facilitated progress towards the harmonization of data on drugs and crime and the convening in October 2024 of the second African Union global coalition consultation on synthetic drug supply reduction.

36. Coalition 5 has supported States in using United Nations-mandated data collection tools to generate drug-related data, resulting in the drafting of a comprehensive report on drug trafficking in the Sahel, which was validated by ECA members in April 2024. The report highlights a significant rise in cocaine trafficking, with annual seizures increasing from approximately 13 kg in the period 2015–2020 to 1,466 kg in 2022. The report also provides an overview of efforts to dismantle cocaine laboratories in Côte d’Ivoire, the Niger and Senegal and the role of cannabis resin trafficking in supporting armed groups. The report reveals a surge in pharmaceutical opioid seizures, with West Africa accounting for 97 per cent of global tramadol seizures in 2021, owing to growing local demand.

37. In May 2024, coalition 5 co-organized a side event during the thirty-third session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, focusing on organized crime and instability in the Sahel. The coalition also provided input to a resident coordinator subregional webinar, which resulted in the drafting of a joint concept note on addressing the use of kush, a psychoactive drug that has been found to include synthetic cannabinoids and nitazenes, in Sierra Leone.

38. Coalition 5 has made significant progress in combating illicit firearms trafficking through a cross-border initiative in Guinea and Mali that is aligned with the Silencing the Guns by 2030 initiative of the African Union. The coalition supported a training programme in Mali that was attended by 25 participants, including 5 women, who formulated a series of recommendations on ways to raise awareness of illicit firearms trafficking and improving security at the local level.

39. Coalition 5 has, moreover, facilitated the integration of women, peace and security principles into the new comprehensive regional prevention and integration strategy for the Horn of Africa, assisting Horn of Africa States in implementing

⁹ Co-conveners: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNDP and UN-Women.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) through their national action plans, and continued to support efforts to strengthen regional peace and security.

F. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 6: subregional initiatives and strategies¹⁰

40. In 2024, coalition 6 focused on building capacity to conduct joint trend analyses and convening consultative meetings. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, in partnership with the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, convened a consultative meeting in Nairobi that was attended by women leaders in Africa, representatives of civil society, women’s rights activists and relevant experts to explore ways to enhance women’s participation in and contribution to ongoing peace initiatives in Africa, including, in particular, the Nairobi and Luanda peace initiatives. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to discuss ways to address the root causes of ongoing conflicts in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region from a gender perspective, formulate recommendations to facilitate implementation of the Luanda road map and the outcomes of previous Nairobi peace process rounds, and identify the potential contributions of women leaders to ongoing efforts to promote peace in the subregion. Proposals for the effective participation of women in future sessions of the Nairobi and Luanda peace processes were developed on the basis of those discussions. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) contributed to the debate by leading a session entitled “Enhancing women’s peacebuilding capacities: from recommendations to practice – building women’s capacities in peacebuilding efforts”. Recommendations proposed by UN-Women included ensuring that track 1 peace efforts were complemented by tracks 2 and 3, strengthening the capacities of women drivers of peace at the national level, and facilitating opportunities for networking and peer learning among women engaged in peacebuilding. UN-Women also emphasized the importance of organizing regional dialogues to advocate a common agenda among women, documenting women’s contributions to peace processes and ensuring the gender-sensitive provision of humanitarian assistance.

G. Task force 2: regional knowledge management hub¹¹

41. The Africa United Nations Knowledge Management Hub, launched in September 2023, underwent substantive upgrades in 2024 involving the integration of features driven by artificial intelligence that have enhanced access to knowledge resources of the United Nations development system. With more than 6,000 users globally, the Hub supports the implementation of measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the fulfilment of Agenda 2063 and other development agendas.

42. A central feature of the Hub is an expertise repository, in which details about experts in the Sustainable Development Goals and relevant thematic areas can be found. Upgrades in 2024 included enhanced security, new user profile functions and an expertise clustering function that maps United Nations experts by Goal taxonomies with a view to promoting expert mobilization and collaboration. The repository is continuously updated with data from various United Nations entities.

43. The Regional Collaborative Platform community of practice platform, which was redesigned in the third quarter of 2024, supports peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing and collaboration among regional United Nations development system experts. The platform facilitates discussions on issues related to the Sustainable Development

¹⁰ Co-conveners: Special envoys and special representatives of the Secretary-General.

¹¹ Co-conveners: ECA and ILO.

Goals and has been expanded to enable the digital co-production of documentation. Coalition 4 is already using the platform for knowledge and document sharing. Other issue-based coalitions are expected to start making use of the platform in the near future.

H. Task force 3: enhancing transparency and results-based management at the regional level¹²

44. During the reporting period, task force 3 initiated the development of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa theory of change, the aim of which is to provide a clear strategic framework to foster the alignment of Regional Collaborative Platform interventions with those related to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, thereby ensuring that efforts are targeted and prioritized to address the most pressing regional and global challenges. Applying the theory of change will help to identify potential pathways and partnerships, which will enhance cross-pillar coherence and collaboration among Platform stakeholders and optimize the use of regional assets. In addition, it will help to ensure that United Nations country teams receive the support necessary to implement impactful and coordinated actions that advance sustainable development across Africa, and will facilitate knowledge-sharing and accountability by establishing a foundation for monitoring progress on an ongoing basis, risk management and strategy adaptation. As a result, the Platform will remain responsive to emerging challenges and contribute to upholding the principle of accountability in the provision of assistance to African States for the implementation of the two agendas.

45. Consultations on the theory of change and the collection of relevant data have begun and will be followed by analysis, the identification of pathways, outcomes and assumptions and the drafting of the theory of change document. It is anticipated that the theory of change will be validated by the members of the Platform in the second quarter of 2025.

I. Task force 5: regional efficiency agenda¹³

46. The Africa Regional Operations Management Team has made significant progress in advancing efficiency reforms pursuant to recommendation No. 5 of the Secretary-General, and has focused, in particular, on the development and roll-out of the business operations strategy, the establishment and strengthening of common back offices, the use of common premises and mutual recognition modalities. Significant achievements include the ongoing implementation of the regional business operations strategy, which facilitates the identification of regional initiatives in which efficiency gains can be realized. Advocacy efforts have, moreover, raised awareness of the efficiency reforms launched by the Secretary-General.

47. Common back offices have been successfully established in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, benefiting over 4,000 staff members across 25 United Nations entities. Common back office projects are to be launched in Senegal and Zimbabwe in 2025. As for common premises, 36 per cent of United Nations offices in Africa are now shared, providing workspace to 58 per cent of staff. It is estimated that the sharing of premises saved the Organization nearly \$774,000 in 2023. Capacity-building efforts have included training for the members of the Regional Operations Management Team on the business operations strategy and on modalities for the establishment and operation of common back offices and common premises.

48. A review of the country-level business operations strategy 2.0 revealed that efficiency gains had resulted in cost savings of \$55 million in 2023, contributing 44

¹² Co-conveners: ECA and UNFPA.

¹³ Co-conveners: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and World Food Programme.

per cent of global cost savings. Further achievements include the conclusion of regional long-term agreements on digital accessibility and the sustainable disposal of information and communications technology. Common knowledge management platforms and virtual meeting tools are also being reassessed.

V. Working together to deliver for Africa: highlights of major joint activities with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa involving United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development programme

A. Delivering the Africa Dialogue Series

49. In May 2024, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa organized its annual Africa Dialogue Series in partnership with ECA, the African Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Bank, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Dialogue Series was convened under the theme "Education through science, technology and innovation towards the Africa we want", which aligned with the African Union theme of the year.

50. Three sub-themes were featured during the Series. Sub-theme 2, "Transforming education in Africa by leveraging innovative finance and the digital revolution", was led by ECA, the International Telecommunication Union and the World Bank, from 13 to 17 May, and included a webinar, on 15 May, during which youth leaders and experts discussed strategies for leveraging digital technologies and innovative financial mechanisms to enhance educational outcomes. In an ECA policy brief, a number of important actions were set out to support progress in that area, including the establishment of public-private partnerships, the development and use of digital platforms to enable remote learning, and investments in digital infrastructure.

51. The main outcomes of the Series included proposals for expanding digital education and enhancing tax systems with a view to supporting educational reforms. In its policy brief, ECA emphasized the need for African countries to invest in education, technology, science and research as central components of the continent's digital transformation, which aligned with the vision enshrined in Agenda 2063, namely "The Africa We Want".

B. Interdepartmental task force on African affairs

52. The meetings of the interdepartmental task force in 2024 were centred on the theme "African digital public infrastructure: the case for education". The participants emphasized that achieving digital inclusion through the acquisition of digital skills was crucial in ensuring equal access to digital opportunities, which was a prerequisite for sustainable development. The task force identified five key areas for investment and focus to ensure that everyone in Africa was able to contribute to and benefit from the digital revolution and the increasing use of digital services. In that regard, relevant stakeholders should seek to promote digital education and skills acquisition in order to harness the continent's demographic dividend; bridge the digital divide to unlock economic potential through online learning; develop the skills needed in the emerging job market of the twenty-first century; deepen understanding of the implications of generative artificial intelligence in education and research; and establish an African digital public infrastructure stack.

C. Youth consultative forum and the African youth side event at the Summit of the Future

53. In collaboration with the Pan African Youth Union, the African Union Commission and UNDP, ECA convened an African youth consultative forum on the Summit of the Future in Addis Ababa in April 2024. The consultative forum was held with the aim of amplifying young African voices to ensure that the interests of young people were taken into account in the outcomes of the Summit of the Future. The consultative forum brought together youth representatives of civil society organizations and national and subregional youth councils, in addition to young influencers. Participants adopted a common position, enshrined in the African Youth Declaration on the Summit of the Future, in which they addressed five thematic areas, namely sustainable development and financing for development; international peace and security; science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation; young people and future generations; and transforming global governance.

54. The African Youth Declaration was presented at the African youth side event at the Summit of the Future, held in New York in September 2024. The side event, held on the theme “Our world, our future: African youth and the Summit of the Future”, was co-organized by African Union member States, under the leadership of Malawi, the current Chair of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports, and with the support of Nigeria, ECA, the Pan-African Youth Union, the African Union Commission, UNDP, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the United Nations Department of Global Communications. Participants at the side event adopted an outcome document in which they set out a series of recommendations and a call to action. A task force, chaired by the African Union Commission Specialized Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports, was established to draw up a comprehensive road map for the participation of young people in the implementation of the outcome document in African States.

VI. Conclusion

55. During the reporting period, the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations was further strengthened to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Major milestones included the endorsement of the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the convening of the eighth United Nations-African Union annual conference and other high-level events. Priorities, such as financing for sustainable development, climate change, education and digital transformation were addressed. Through its opportunity and issue-based coalitions, the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa has supported economic transformation, trade integration, youth empowerment and efforts to address critical challenges, including transnational crime, forced displacement and human rights violations. Collaboration between ECA, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications has driven progress in education, digital transformation and youth empowerment, and such initiatives as the Africa Dialogue Series and the African youth consultative forum on the Summit of the Future have underscored the critical role of young people, science and technology in shaping the continent’s sustainable future. Continued collaboration between the African Union and the United Nations is essential for achieving the long-term development goals of African countries and fostering inclusive growth.