

High level conference to celebrate the 60th anniversary of IDEP

***Renewal of Development Planning: learning from 60 years of practice in
Africa and Shaping the Future***

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (hybrid)

Wednesday 15 November 2023

Concept Note

Background and rationale of the conference

The history of development planning in Africa can be traced back as far as the early 1940s in countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, and Nigeria¹. Later in the 1950s and 1960s, many African countries gained independence, and the immediate post-colonial period saw a focus on nation-building and economic development to achieve economic growth, reduce poverty, improve living standards, and reduce dependency on colonial powers.

Since then, development planning has been serving various interests, ideologies, and theoretical orientations of economic policy management. It included both political and technical aspects. These approaches evolved according to the dominant ideologies of the period and were adapted to the theoretical models that served as a basis for the various development planning approaches.

The past 60 years of development planning in Africa were characterized by the following key periods and trends:

1. Post-Colonial Era (1950s-1960s);
2. Import Substitution Industrialization (1960s-1970s);
3. Structural Adjustment Programs (1980s-1990s);
4. Poverty Reduction and Millennium Development Goals (2000s);
5. The United Nations sustainable development 2030 Agenda (2015-2030);
6. The African Union's Agenda 2063 (2013-2063).

Over these periods, Africa has experienced mixed outcomes in its pursuit of development planning objectives. Positive strides are evident in economic growth and

¹ ECA, Planning for Africa's development: Lessons, insights, and messages from past and present experiences, 2016

infrastructure development, showcasing successful initiatives in certain countries. Improvements in education and healthcare have contributed to enhanced human capital development in specific regions, fostering an environment for sustainable progress. Political stability has been achieved in some areas, laying the groundwork for further development. However, challenges persist, with disparities in economic development and persistent poverty in various nations. Issues related to economic governance, healthcare, education, and political stability vary widely, reflecting the diverse developmental trajectories of individual countries. The influence of external factors, including global economic dynamics and geopolitical considerations, has played a significant role in shaping the outcomes of development planning across the continent. The most recent ones, the COVID-19 outbreak and the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, are impeding the continent to reach its development potential.

Africa's rich cultural diversity and abundant human and natural resources present both opportunities and challenges, underscoring the complex and ongoing nature of its developmental journey.

Institutional background

The United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) is a pan-African institution created in 1962 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, with the mandate to accompany and support the newly independent African countries in their quest to build their human resources capacities. Significant capacity gaps and weaknesses were evident in the newly independent countries due to colonial legacies,

IDEP began its operations on 23rd November 1963. The Institute has been guided by this mandate over the years since its establishment.

The year 2023 coincides with the 60th anniversary of the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), which corresponds roughly with the period since the attainment of independence by most African countries.

On its 60th anniversary celebrations, it is appropriate for IDEP to convene a continental reflection on the lessons from 60 years of development planning and explore solutions for effective design, funding, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the development agendas in Africa taking into account the mega trends that have shaped its past. This is supported by the UN Secretary General's claim that this current age is one of "acceleration and volatility, where boom-bust markets, shifting political dynamics and technologically driven innovations demand rapid responses and quick results but at the same time, we have the capacity to think for the longer term more than ever before".²

Conference Objective

² Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General. United Nations, 2021.

The Conference will provide a dual exploration for participants: a retrospective on Africa's development planning history and experiences and a forward-looking perspective into future opportunities and challenges that must be tackled.

Specifically, the conference will provide a framework for senior government officials, senior development policy and planning officials, development thinkers and researchers, representatives from international organizations, and diplomats from across Africa to explore alternative thinking of the development trajectory of the continent.

Specific objectives

The conference will be organised in three main panels that capture the specific objectives of the event as follows:

- ***First panel: Six decades of development planning in Africa: Tacking stock of experiences and capacities of African countries***

This panel will take stock of 60 years of development planning in Africa. It will show case the experiences of selected countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It will also discuss lessons learned and skills gap for effective economic management and development planning of the continent.

- ***Second panel: Rethinking development planning in Africa: adapting approaches to the requirements of long-term visions and sustainable development***

This panel will discuss approaches adopted by Member States to re-integrate long-term visions and sustainable development in the planning processes, after the periods of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs) and the dawn of the global development goals. Speakers and participants will share experiences on how their countries have undergone the paradigm shift in terms of ideologies and approaches during the period when governments had to switch from short to longer term development planning. This panel will also discuss challenges related to capacities and competencies, and how capacities have been used to respond to needs for adopting new planning approaches.

- ***Third panel: Leveraging on strategic foresight for an agile, robust, and forward-looking development planning in Africa***

This panel will discuss the disruptive effects of technology and climate and mega trends that are reshuffling the world order. These trends also encompass a wide range of geopolitical, social, economic, health, and security factors that have a significant impact on the African continent's development trajectory. The panel will explore the unmissable necessity of discovering, developing, and adopting new planning approaches in the current global context. It will also discuss the needs for reskilling and upskilling on forward-thinking culture and cutting-edge skills for



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better development planning. The panel will constitute a preliminary discussion towards the preparation of the Summit of the Future in 2024.

Conference Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the conclusions of the conference will give African countries key arguments and policy directions for improving strategic foresight and cutting-edge skills for an effective development planning at national, regional, and continental levels.

The outcomes will further inform IDEP capacity building and research priorities for its next strategic framework 2024-2029.

Conference dates and venue

The conference will be held on 15th November 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (hybrid).