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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Plenary round-table panels on national and subnational actions and reviews to speed up and scale up implementation in Africa

Information and guidelines for the plenary round table on voluntary national reviews

I. Date, time and venue

1. The plenary round-table panel will be held on Tuesday, 28 February 2023, from 4.30 to 6 p.m. in the Plenary Hall.

II. Introduction

2. Voluntary national reviews on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are country-led and country-driven. The reviews are recognized as key tools for assessing the progress in implementation, identifying challenges and good practices, and promoting effective policies, programmes and other interventions to enhance implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. To date, all ECA member States except one have conducted at least one voluntary national review and presented it to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Seven African countries have offered to conduct their second voluntary national reviews in 2023.

3. The reviews conducted to date show that, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the less than eight years remaining, the speed and scale of implementation will need to be increased dramatically. The year 2023 also marks the end of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the start of the second one. The round table therefore offers an opportunity to identify ways in which voluntary national reviews can be strengthened to improve national implementation. It also offers an opportunity to reflect on possible recommendations to be presented at both the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development and 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit to strengthen the review of and follow-up to the voluntary national reviews and support for them.

* ECA/RFSD/2023/1.



III. Objective

4. The objectives of the round-table panel are threefold:
 - (i) To facilitate learning and strengthen practice in conducting and following up on voluntary national reviews carried out as part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
 - (ii) To identify and recommend the following to the 2023 high-level political forum and the 2023 Summit:
 - Ways to strengthen the voluntary national review process, including ensuring that it is results-oriented and that it takes into account and addresses ongoing crises and emerging issues
 - Concrete actions to strengthen the follow-up to and implementation of the recommendations that emerge from the voluntary national reviews
 - Support needed, and the role of various parties, to translate the outcomes of voluntary national reviews into actionable policies and programmes to achieve tangible action towards achieving the goals
 - Best practices from across Africa that exemplify tools and accelerators to support progress in implementing the two agendas, and promoting the adoption of those practices by others
 - (iii) To highlight the outcomes of the regional workshop on voluntary national reviews and voluntary subnational reviews held in the lead-up to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

IV. Guidelines

5. The following guidelines will apply to the plenary round-table panel discussion:
 - (a) The Chair will outline the aforementioned objectives of the discussion and introduce the moderator and panel members listed in section V. The Chair will then yield to the moderator, who will guide the discussion among the panellists and other participants;
 - (b) The moderator will invite each panellist to speak for no longer than five minutes in response to one or more of the following questions:
 - (i) What were some of the good practices and lessons learned from the voluntary national review and follow-up processes, in particular in relation to recent overlapping crises (i.e. the coronavirus disease, climate change, the economic fallout from the war in Ukraine and the looming debt distress and financing crises among African countries)?
 - (ii) What are some of the policies and programmes that have been designed or reformulated in your country following the voluntary national reviews that have promoted recovery from the overlapping crises and accelerated the implementation of the two agendas?
 - (iii) What were the challenges faced in the review of and follow-up to the first round of voluntary national reviews? How has the second round of reviews, which are scheduled for 2023, spurred meaningful and frank reflection on the progress made and challenges encountered since the first round?

(iv) What recommendations would you like to make at the 2023 high-level political forum and the 2023 Summit to address the challenges encountered during the follow-up and review processes?

(v) What support should partners at the national, regional and global levels provide to strengthen voluntary national reviews and the follow-up to the reviews?

(vi) How can stakeholders, in particular young people, become more directly involved in policymaking and policy implementation for sustainable development?

(vii) What were some salient outcomes of the regional workshop on voluntary national reviews and voluntary subnational reviews held the previous day?

(c) The moderator will guide an interactive discussion among the panellists and will give representatives of the countries conducting voluntary national reviews in 2023 the opportunity to pose questions to representatives of countries that have previously participated in the review process;

(d) The moderator will invite questions and comments from the floor;

(e) At the end of the discussion, the moderator will summarize the key policy messages, including the recommendations made, before yielding to the Chair, who will conclude the round-table panel discussion.

V. Chair, moderator and panellists

6. The chair, moderator and panellists for the round-table panel discussion will be as follows:

Chair: Chair of the Bureau of the ninth session of the Forum

Moderator: Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist, ECA, Hanan Morsy

Panellists:

- Minister of a current voluntary national review country
- Minister of a current voluntary national review country
- Minister of a current voluntary national review country
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid
- Youth representative