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

Eleventh session

Kampala (hybrid), 9–11 April 2025

Agenda item 11**

**Consideration and adoption of key messages
and the Kampala declaration on sustainable, inclusive,
science-based and evidence-based solutions for driving
job creation and economic growth and for implementing
the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063****Kampala Declaration on Sustainable, Inclusive,
Science-based and Evidence-based Solutions for
Driving Job Creation and Economic Growth and for
Implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

We, African ministers and senior officials responsible for the environment and sustainable development, finance, planning, economic and social development, health, agriculture, water and marine resources, land management, education, statistics, the digital economy, science and technology, together with heads and members of delegations of parliaments and experts representing Governments and intergovernmental organizations, entities of the United Nations, the private sector, the academic community, civil society, cultural institutions and faith communities,

Gathered online and in person in Kampala from 9 to 11 April 2025 at the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held under the theme “Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science-based and evidence-based solutions for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union”,

Expressing appreciation for the attendance at the Forum of the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni,

Expressing appreciation also for the attendance at the Forum of the President of Zimbabwe and Chair of the Southern African Development Community, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea, Gaudencio Mohaba Mesu, representing the President of Equatorial Guinea and Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States, and the Cabinet Secretary for the National Treasury and Economic Planning of Kenya, John Mbadi, representing the President of Kenya and Chairperson of the East African Community,

Expressing appreciation further for the participation of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mahamoud Ali Youssef, the Deputy-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed, the President of

* Reissued for technical reasons on 25 June 2025.

** ECA/RFSD/2025/1.



the Economic and Social Council, Robert Rae, the Prime Minister of Uganda, Robinah Nabbanja, the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete, and the former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegn,

Commending the Economic Commission for Africa and the Government of Uganda, together with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and various entities of the United Nations system, for having organized the Forum, which was marked by such estimable outcomes as:

(a) Fruitful and high-quality discussions on the monitoring and evaluation of the progress achieved towards the attainment in Africa of Sustainable Development Goals 3, on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, 8, on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, 14, on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and 17, on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063, with a special focus on the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063,¹

(b) Peer-to-peer learning on practical, workable and successful solutions and models for financing and accelerating job creation and economic growth and implementing the two agendas,

(c) The formulation and adoption of key messages and the Kampala Declaration, aimed at spurring action at the subnational, national, regional and global levels to accelerate the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and at serving as the collective African input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in New York from 14 to 24 July 2025, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Seville, Spain, from 30 June to 3 July 2025, and the Second World Summit on Social Development, to be held in Doha from 4 to 6 November 2025,

Expressing serious concern that, with only five years to go until 2030, progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is mostly off track in the region, owing to a number of factors, all of which severely undermine investment in and the delivery of multiple development goals, including:

(a) Economic growth that is far below the level needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goals,

(b) The huge gap, measuring approximately 200 billion United States dollars annually,² in the financing needed to achieve the Goals, among which Goal 14 is the least funded, with a shortfall in 2020 of 149.02 billion dollars,³ compounded by the loss of a significant portion of government revenue estimated at 27 per cent in 2024,⁴ due to debt interest payments and the double-digit inflation with which African countries are grappling,

¹ African Union, *Decade of Accelerated Implementation: Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan, 2024–2033* (Addis Ababa, 2024).

² See ECA/RFSD/2025/9.

³ See ECA/RFSD/2025/8.

⁴ *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025* (United Nations publication, 2025).

(c) Low government spending on healthcare, which remains below the level of 15 per cent agreed upon by the participants in the 2001 African Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases,⁵

(d) Discriminatory laws and regressive gender and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, including the disproportionate shouldering by women of the burden of unpaid care work, which limit their access to social, economic and digital resources and hinder their opportunities to take on political and managerial roles,

(e) Existential threats posed by the severe impacts of climate change, which are widespread in the region and which disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including children,

(f) The digital divide, which undermines efforts in the region to benefit fully from the unfolding digital transition,

(g) Continuing conflict and political instability in some African countries, which are diverting attention and the limited available resources from efforts that are essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063,

Reaffirming our commitment to attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the aspirations of Agenda 2063, along with the strategic objectives of the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the integrated and full implementation of the two agendas, including through tangible action at scale and at speed,

Recognizing that sustainable development is deeply rooted in all our religious traditions and moral teachings,

Reaffirming the ministerial statement adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and other outcomes of the fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa, held in Addis Ababa from 12 to 18 March 2025,⁶ the negotiated outcomes and other decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-ninth session, held in Baku from 11 to 22 November 2024,⁷ the Pact for the Future and its annexes, namely, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, adopted at the Summit of the Future, held in New York on 22 and 23 September 2024,⁸ the Abidjan Declaration on raising Africa's ambition to reduce desertification, land degradation, and drought⁹ and decision AMCEN/SS.X/3 on climate change,¹⁰ adopted by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its tenth special session, held in Abidjan from 3 to 6 September 2024, the ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, held in New York from 8 to 18 July 2024,¹¹ and the Nouakchott Declaration of the Continental Education Conference, held in Nouakchott from 9 to 11 December 2024,¹²

Welcoming the discussions held and decisions adopted at the thirty-eighth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of

⁵ See ECA/RFSD/2025/5.

⁶ See E/ECA/CM/57/6.

⁷ FCCC/CP/2024/11, FCCC/CP/2024/11/Add.1 and FCCC/CP/2024/11/Add.2.

⁸ General Assembly resolution 79/1.

⁹ AMCEN/SS.X/4.

¹⁰ AMCEN/SS.X/5.

¹¹ E/HLS/2024/1.

¹² See the proceedings of the Continental Education Conference, 9–11 December 2024, Nouakchott, annex 2. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44478-doc-CEC_Report_v3.pdf.

the African Union, held in Addis Ababa on 15 and 16 February 2025, on the theme “Justice for Africans and people of African descent through reparations”,

Mindful that the assumption of the presidency of the Group of 20 by South Africa and the forthcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development represent defining moments for Africa, as they present opportunities to address systemic barriers in the international financial architecture and to advocate solutions that are aligned with African development priorities, such as sustainable finance and sustainable debt,

Mindful also that the Second World Summit on Social Development presents a timely opportunity to advocate solutions that are aligned with African social development priorities, including poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all, inclusivity and social integration, and leaving no one behind in the context of accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Recognizing the opportunity to accelerate implementation of the two agendas through effective implementation of the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, the Declaration on Future Generations, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and through advancement of the Sustainable Debt Coalition,

Concerned about the low levels of investment in data and statistical systems, despite the evidence that investment in strengthening data systems can deliver an average return of 32 dollars in economic benefit for every dollar invested,¹³

Underscoring the opportunity that the vast natural resources of Africa, including critical minerals, oil and natural gas, land, forests, biodiversity, fresh water and marine and coastal resources, represent for driving economic growth, the creation of jobs and wealth, and climate resilience, along with the need to increase dramatically investment in the sustainable use of these resources in value added manufacturing,

Welcoming the strong engagement leading up to and during the Forum by the representatives of former Heads of State of African countries, children and young people, the private sector, parliamentarians, faith-based organizations, major groups and other stakeholders and their substantive contributions concerning inclusive and evidence-based solutions for creating jobs, increasing economic growth and accelerating the implementation of the two agendas,

Do hereby:

1. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to intensify efforts, with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank and other regional banks, United Nations country teams, other United Nations entities and development partners:

(a) To mobilize and render sustained political and technical leadership in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 at the national and continental levels;

(b) To foster self-reliance in sustainable finance and to develop and strengthen appropriate financing systems that are developed, led and owned at the national, subregional and continental levels, including innovative and sustainable public debt management strategies that are directed at job creation,

¹³ See ECA/RFS/2025/9.

economic growth and sustainability, with the aim of attaining the goals of the two agendas;

(c) To adopt a coordinated and integrated approach to mobilizing and using sustainable finance for coherent and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063;

(d) To undertake an urgent further review of national and local institutions, plans, programmes and financial systems, in view of the slow pace of job creation, economic growth and implementation of the two agendas and the need to meet the expectations of existing and emerging continental and global frameworks, such as the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063, the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, the Declaration on Future Generations, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other treaties on such planetary crises as biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution, and to strengthen those institutions, plans, programmes and financial systems to enable them to step up the pace and widen the scope of implementation;

(e) To foster inclusive development by adopting a human rights-based approach to guide the implementation of the Pact for the Future and by guaranteeing global access to high-quality education, decent jobs, basic services and civil and political rights for all;

(f) To mobilize and channel financial support for national, regional and continental conflict-prevention and peacebuilding strategies and humanitarian programmes;

(g) To develop mechanisms to incentivize private sector investments that are aligned with the goals of the two agendas, including by:

(i) Providing policy stability, raising awareness of investments by the private sector and de-risking such investments;

(ii) Facilitating, with the strong involvement and support of the United Nations Global Compact, the roll-out to scale in Africa of the Forward Faster initiative¹⁴ and accelerating private sector action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063;

2. *Call upon* the participants at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Summit on Social Development, the Economic and Social Council youth forum in 2025, the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and other global, regional and subregional forums to consider and undertake, as part of their respective outcomes, the following commitments aligned with the priorities of Africa:

(a) In respect of poverty eradication:

(i) To develop and promote holistic and innovative approaches to and investments in poverty reduction and social protection that take into account income, gender and geographical disparities, social inequality and exclusion, with a view to empowering vulnerable groups, reducing vulnerability to poverty and strengthening resilience to future shocks;

(ii) To strengthen women's land rights and tenure security, with the aim of underpinning gender-responsive job creation, economic growth and poverty reduction;

¹⁴ See United Nations Global Compact, Forward Faster. Available at: <https://forwardfaster.unglobalcompact.org/home>.

(b) In relation to inclusivity, social integration and leaving no one behind:

(i) To ensure the inclusive and responsible use of such technologies as artificial intelligence, with the aim of promoting job creation, poverty reduction, food security, climate resilience, justice for all, and birth and identity registration and improving the delivery of inclusive, high-quality education and healthcare services;

(ii) To increase investment that benefits all children and young people, including those with disabilities, and to empower them with affordable, accessible, inclusive and gender-responsive, equitable and good-quality health, nutrition and education programmes and services;

(iii) To strengthen mechanisms for intergenerational interaction, including the exchange of views on sustainability, and the planning and promotion of social and intergenerational equity and just sustainability transitions;

(c) In relation to good health and well-being:

(i) To increase government financing for the health sector and to allocate at least 15 per cent of national budgets to health, including by employing innovative financing mechanisms that can mobilize additional resources for health interventions and improve efficiency in the use of funds allocated to health;

(ii) To strengthen health systems and make them fit for purpose and resilient to current and future shocks;

(iii) To adopt a rights-based approach to the fight against HIV/AIDS, so that all people, and in particular the most vulnerable, have access to the services that they need;

(iv) To adopt integrated and multisectoral approaches and investments, with a view to fostering good physical and mental health and well-being, including by addressing disparities in access to healthcare;

(d) In relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women:

(i) To implement gender-responsive policy design, planning and budgeting and financing systems, with a view to allocating more resources to gender-responsive initiatives and to promoting sustainable, inclusive, science-based and evidence-based approaches to driving job creation and fostering economic well-being for women and adolescent girls, including those with disabilities;

(ii) To prioritize the enforcement of gender equality statutes and the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices that hinder access by women and girls to gainful employment;

(iii) To promote access to science and technology for women, young people and children, expand digital learning, literacy and capacity-building opportunities, address the risks and challenges emerging from the use of technologies, and equip women and girls with skills for green jobs and the productive assets needed to support climate-resilient livelihoods and to drive sustainable economic growth;

(iv) To ensure women's economic empowerment by promoting access for women and girls to credit, capacity-building in the area of entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and financial literacy, and by advancing respect for and the protection and fulfilment of women's right to employment and rights in the workplace;

(v) To review and report annually on the progress made towards achieving Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda and the related goals of Agenda 2063, given the cross-cutting implications of these goals for the attainment of numerous other goals in the two agendas;

(e) In relation to job creation, full employment, decent work for all and inclusive economic growth:

(i) To boost employment for young people, including those with disabilities, by increasing investment in youth-led innovation through sustainable financing and tax incentives for youth enterprises, start-ups and incubation hubs, and adopting an integrated approach that combines training, job matching, financial support and the participation of young people in programme design and implementation;

(ii) To institutionalize the participation of young people in governance and their active engagement in shaping policies and strategies that bridge educational and job market needs;

(iii) To promote and enable the participation of young people in the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, while also strengthening the skills of young people in digital technology, artificial intelligence and entrepreneurship;

(iv) To promote access by young women to education, including vocational training, to strengthen workplace equality and to provide childcare services, with a view to surmounting barriers to the participation of women in the labour market;

(v) To eradicate child labour, including through the adoption of policies that promote rural livelihoods, education, social protection and respect for labour laws;

(vi) To support African countries in their efforts to harness and add value to critical minerals, oil and gas and other natural resources, including through the establishment of nature-positive and climate-resilient special economic zones and green regional value chains, with a view to boosting decent employment and promoting economic growth, energy transitions, climate resilience and environmental sustainability;

(vii) To channel investments towards transformational areas of endeavour, including the development of inclusive, climate-resilient physical and digital infrastructure, the widening of access to energy, the expansion of value added manufacturing, support for technology, innovation and the digital transition, the growth of trade, the promotion of food security, the provision of high-quality education for all, of social protection and of universal health coverage, and the mitigation of climate change;

(f) In relation to life below water and transitions to inclusive and just blue and green economies:

(i) To scale up collaborative regional and international efforts and initiatives, such as that of the Great Blue Wall and those relating to equitable governance, and to allocate more financial and technical resources to efforts in Africa to attain Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda and the related goals of Agenda 2063;

(ii) To deepen the transition to sustainable circular and blue economies, including through strengthening national, subregional and continental policy frameworks, targeted capacity-building and awareness-raising, in particular for industries and businesses, introducing and scaling up funding mechanisms and financial incentives, investing in infrastructure designed to promote circular and blue

economies, such as industrial symbiosis hubs, and strengthening trade in products of the circular economy;

(iii) To prioritize and support initiatives by young people and women in sustainable and equitable circular and blue economies, so as to boost inclusive employment and entrepreneurship;

(iv) To step up efforts to tackle plastics and other types of pollution in aquatic and marine environments;

(v) To scale up cross-sectoral and integrated climate action with a view to addressing the impacts of climate change, building resilience in all sectors affected by climate change and achieving set goals across multiple agendas at the local, subregional, continental and global levels;

(g) In relation to sustainable funding and partnerships for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063:

(i) To foster innovative financing mechanisms, such as carbon finance, green and blue bonds, debt swaps for sustainable development, risk insurance and climate-resilient debt clauses, that are tailored to African contexts, recognizing the devastating effects of climate change in Africa and other regions that are highly vulnerable to such impacts;

(ii) To adopt and ensure attainment of the new collective quantified goal on climate finance, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fifth session, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 November to 13 December 2023, in its decision 8/CMA.5,¹⁵ which reflects the true needs of Africa and exceeds the pledge made by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-ninth session in November 2024 to provide 300 billion dollars annually to developing countries;

(iii) To ensure that climate finance modalities are just, equitable and based on public grants;

(iv) To strengthen governance and regulatory frameworks, with a view to securing climate finance and ensuring inclusive, climate-resilient development through regional cooperation and private sector engagement;

(v) To strengthen local financing systems and provide low-cost financing to decentralized or local governments, local communities, women, young people and vulnerable or marginalized groups, to enable them to invest in projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, to unlock business development, to drive economic growth and to create employment and wealth;

(vi) To support investment in the development of digital technologies and digital public infrastructure, with the aim of achieving universal connectivity, closing the digital divide, advancing e-commerce and deepening financial inclusion for women and young people;

(vii) To accelerate the reform of the global financial architecture, with the aim of ensuring the urgently needed support for developing countries, including for the promotion of a human rights-based approach to development;

(viii) To improve access to gender-responsive concessional finance for developing countries;

¹⁵ See FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/16/Add.2.

- (ix) To promote inclusive international tax cooperation that addresses the specific challenges of developing countries and ensures equitable benefits;
- (x) To provide support for the formulation and application of clear road maps for voluntary national reviews of the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063, to update such reviews with data and inputs from voluntary subnational reviews and to translate lessons learned into bold and targeted policies, plans and programmes aimed at accelerating the implementation of the two agendas;
- (xi) To strengthen national, subregional and continental review systems to ensure joint monitoring and assessment of and joint reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of Agenda 2063, in particular its second 10-year implementation plan;
- (xii) To support effective implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area as a powerful lever for strengthening cooperation and networks, with a view to forestalling conflict, building regional peace and security, ensuring economic stability, adapting to climate change, boosting industrialization, creating jobs and reducing poverty;
- (xiii) To support and deliver productive and transformative capacity-development programmes, such as peer-to-peer learning from successful approaches and evidence-based models, in particular by leveraging South-South and North-South cooperation;
- (xiv) To adopt and implement a comprehensive approach to statistical systems, including the use of data science, and to scale up significantly investment in them, taking into account the unique context of countries in conflict or emerging from conflict, with a view to strengthening and upgrading the systems, including through data acceleration programmes, the innovative use of non-traditional data sources and the enhanced collection and use of disaggregated data for evidence-based, science-driven and inclusive approaches and action on all the Sustainable Development Goals and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063;
- (xv) To scale up innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as the Generation Equality Forum, bringing together national Governments, civil society organizations, young people, the private sector and philanthropic institutions to leverage their wide range of expertise, resources and networks in coherent, collective action designed to drive inclusive economic growth and job creation;
- (xvi) To engage cultural institutions and faith communities as partners in shaping policies and programmes to create jobs, foster inclusive economic growth and accelerate implementation of the two agendas;
- (xvii) To tackle corruption in all its forms, indebtedness and inequitable resource distribution, and to strengthen public procurement systems;

3. *Reiterate our call* to United Nations resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, working together with entities throughout the United Nations system at both the global and regional levels, including the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and its opportunity and issue-based coalitions, the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, the African Union Technical Working Group on Agenda 2063, the African Development Bank and other African multilateral banks, and other partners:

(a) To formally include Agenda 2063 and its second 10-year implementation plan in the forthcoming revision of the internal guidance for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework¹⁶ and to ensure that both global and continental priorities are systematically reflected in United Nations programming processes, with the aim of realizing the vision of the African Union of “two agendas, one plan” and ensuring the harmonized monitoring of that vision at the country level;

(b) To provide the required expertise to members of the Economic Commission for Africa for the alignment and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the two agendas;

(c) To develop and deliver strong, coordinated and targeted support, including support for peer-to-peer learning from successful evidence-based and impactful approaches to members of the Economic Commission for Africa, with a view to accelerating integrated national planning and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063;

4. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa, with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank and other regional banks, United Nations country teams, other United Nations entities and development partners, to implement and follow up on the outcomes of the present session and other sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and to prepare reports on that implementation;

5. *Request* the Government of Uganda to present the key messages and the present declaration on behalf of Africa to the Economic and Social Council youth forum at its 2025 session, to be held in New York from 15 to 17 April 2025, to the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to be held in Nice, France, from 9 to 13 June 2025, to the high-level political forum on sustainable development at its meeting to be convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in New York from 14 to 24 July 2025, to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, to the Second World Summit on Social Development, to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its thirtieth session, to be held in Belém, Brazil, from 10 to 21 November 2025, to the Fifteenth Global Forum on Migration and Development, to be held in Barranquilla, Colombia, from 11 to 13 June 2025, and at other relevant global, regional and subregional forums, in order to advocate follow-up on the outcomes of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, in particular its second 10-year implementation plan.

¹⁶ United Nations, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance* (n.p., 2019).

Annex

Outcome declaration

Children and youth forum

convened on the margins of the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Theme: Youth, job creation and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

8 April 2025, Kampala

Preamble

1. We, the youth delegates, stakeholders and participants in the children and youth forum, convened on 8 April 2025 in Kampala ahead of the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, under the theme “Youth, job creation and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa”, guided by the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union and the outcomes of the Summit of the Future, held in New York on 22 and 23 September 2024, namely the Pact for the Future and its annexes, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations,¹ reaffirm our commitment to driving transformative, inclusive and sustainable development on the continent.
2. We recognize that young people in Africa are not only the largest demographic group but also the most strategic asset for achieving structural transformation, economic diversification, and resilient and peaceful societies.
3. We also recognize that youth unemployment, underemployment, poverty, violent conflict, the digital divide and exclusion from policymaking and public spheres remain formidable barriers to the full participation of young people in development processes at the local, national, subregional and regional levels.
4. We welcome the support of the Government of Uganda, the Pan African Youth Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa and the United Nations Development Programme in jointly organizing this critical platform for the voices of young people to influence policy dialogue at the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and beyond.

Call to action

5. We note the urgent need to address the challenges of youth unemployment and underemployment, which are hindering the continent’s progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹ General Assembly resolution 79/1.

6. We recognize that:

(a) Science, technology and innovation, including artificial intelligence and digitalization, can accelerate inclusive job creation, and that artificial intelligence and frontier technologies must be harnessed for inclusive growth, digital skills training and entrepreneurship;

(b) The future of work must be youth-led, inclusive, rights-based and responsive to climate realities, gender disparities and urban-rural divides;

(c) Youth engagement in national and local policies must move beyond consultation to co-creation in order to enable young people to shape the decisions that affect their lives and futures;

(d) A youth mindset change is required, and young people should adopt a growth mindset, embracing creativity, self-determination and a readiness to take their present and future into their own hands;

(e) The informal economy, in which the majority of African young people are active, must be formalized, protected and equipped to thrive in a green, digital and care economy;

(f) Partnerships are fundamental, and more strategic engagement with the private sector, academia, local and national governments and civil society is needed to create an enabling environment for decent employment for young people.

7. We call upon the African Union, entities of the United Nations system, local and national governments, the private sector and civil society to adopt and implement initiatives in the following areas:

(a) Transformative agenda for financing youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship:

(i) *Scale up investment in youth innovation and start-ups.* Prioritize financing for youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship through sustainable financial instruments, targeted tax incentives and expanded access to incubation and acceleration hubs;

(ii) *Mobilize multi-stakeholder support for youth entrepreneurship.* Foster partnerships between local and national governments, the private sector, financial institutions and philanthropic foundations to expand access for young people to capital, networks and markets, especially in green, digital and care economies across Africa;

(iii) *Establish a youth fund under the African Continental Free Trade Area.* Create a continent-wide youth fund with a view to providing targeted grants, low-interest loans and technical support to young entrepreneurs in priority sectors, such as agro-industry, digital innovation, the creative sector and renewable energy;

(iv) *Create regional innovation hubs and platforms.* Develop regional physical and digital hubs to connect young entrepreneurs with mentors, technical resources and cross-border market opportunities, driving scalable impact across the continent;

(b) Reshaping of education and learning for the future of work:

(i) *Align education and employment policies with the realities of young people.* Reform national education, skills development and employment policies to reflect the diverse realities and aspirations of young people, while promoting public-private partnerships and leveraging science, technology and innovation to create inclusive, future-ready career pathways;

(ii) *Modernize curricula for future skills.* Integrate future-focused competencies, such as problem-solving, critical thinking,

digital literacy, climate adaptation and artificial intelligence, into all levels of education in order to equip young people to participate in a rapidly evolving job market;

(iii) *Mainstream technical and vocational education and training and dual education models.* Expand and modernize technical and vocational education and training systems and institutionalize dual education models that foster stronger linkages between academia and industry;

(iv) *Boost access to training in skills that are relevant for the labour market.* Scale up access to vocational and digital skills training that is aligned with labour market demands, in particular in high-growth sectors, such as green and agricultural technologies, creative industries and care services;

(v) *Promote intergenerational mentorship and South-South knowledge exchange.* Establish structured intergenerational mentorship initiatives and South-South cooperation platforms that will enable users to transfer experience, share innovation practices and strengthen the employability of young people through peer learning and solidarity;

(c) Youth inclusion in governance for enhanced coherence and accountability:

(i) *Institutionalize youth engagement in national development processes.* Establish formal mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of young people in national development planning, budgeting, implementation and review, embedding their voices in the decision-making process from policy to practice;

(ii) *Strengthen youth-led accountability and data systems.* Promote the use of youth-driven monitoring and accountability tools, including open data platforms, to track progress on national development goals and ensure transparency and responsiveness;

(iii) *Adopt youth representation quotas in governance and economic bodies.* Introduce binding quotas or targets for youth representation in economic policymaking institutions, employment governance structures and public administration in order to ensure inclusive and equitable leadership;

(d) Strengthening of social protection and economic inclusion:

(i) *Develop youth-sensitive, universal social protection systems.* Create inclusive social protection systems that specifically address the needs of young people, incorporating unemployment benefits, health insurance and parental leave protections in order to provide a safety net for young people in vulnerable situations;

(ii) *Scale up programmes for marginalized youth.* Expand and intensify inclusive programmes for the benefit of marginalized young people, including young women, persons with disabilities and those from indigenous and rural communities, in order to ensure equal access to opportunities and resources;

(iii) *Invest in affordable and accessible childcare.* Prioritize investment in affordable and accessible childcare services in order to increase the participation of young women in the labour market, with a view to promoting gender equity and empowering women to make a greater economic contribution.

8. We urge Governments to ratify and implement the Global Digital Compact to ensure universal access to affordable digital infrastructure, digital

literacy and ethical artificial intelligence systems that serve development goals without exacerbating inequalities.

9. We demand climate financing that supports youth-led green enterprises and community resilience programmes, placing green and blue jobs at the heart of national recovery plans and just transitions.

10. We recognize the African diaspora as a powerful force for investment, innovation and transnational solidarity, and note that cross-border youth innovation systems must be developed in partnership with diaspora communities.

11. We note that the present declaration has been enriched by the voices of African children.

12. We acknowledge the structural challenges faced by African children, including poverty, malnutrition, conflict and climate shocks, and call for the creation of intergenerational platforms through which children's needs and aspirations are used to inform the shared global future.

13. We welcome the creation of a child-youth interface platform to continue dialogue beyond the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, with a view to ensuring that policy decisions reflect the lived experiences of future generations.

Conclusion and path forward

14. We, the youth of Africa, do not ask for permission to lead; we claim our right to shape the present and co-create a dignified, just and sustainable future for all.
