



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Concept Note

Strengthening National Institutional Capacities for the UN Decade of Action for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063

Third regional capacity-building workshop on implementation of the UN principles of effective governance for sustainable development in Africa

The 2022 African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) regional workshop on strengthening national capacities for the UN Decade of Action for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063 is the third in a series jointly organized in support of building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in Africa at all levels. It builds on efforts to implement the recommendations reached in previous joint events, in which there has been a clear call to build on the productive synergies forged between the APRM and UN DESA to support countries in implementing the [UN principles of effective governance for sustainable development](#).

The third regional workshop takes place against the backdrop of preparations for both the midpoint review of the 2030 Agenda and the second ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. It follows up on the recommendations of the 2022 high-level political forum (HLPF),¹ including the “... call upon countries and institutions to take measures to make progress in the 10 cross-cutting accelerated action areas identified in the political declaration of the 2019 Summit between now and September 2023.”²

It also provides a forum for countries that presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the 2022 HLPF and others to share experiences, including lessons learned and good practices in institutional strengthening. Maximum interaction and the sharing of experiences and good practices among peers in areas of mutual concern will be encouraged. The workshop will be forward-looking and examine how African countries can effectively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in 2023.

¹ [E/2022/L.14-E/HLPF/2022/L.1](#), para. 142

² The ten action areas agreed at the 2019 SDG Summit were: (a) leaving no one behind; (b) mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing; (c) enhancing national implementation, strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions; (d) bolstering local action to accelerate implementation; (e) reducing disaster risk and building resilience; (f) solving challenges through international cooperation and enhancing the global partnership; (h) harnessing science, technology and innovation with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development; (i) investing in data and statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals; and (j) strengthening the high-level political forum including by encouraging the peer-learning character of the voluntary national reviews.

Background

Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels remains a major stumbling block in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063 in Africa. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) at its 21st session noted the importance of strong institutions – in particular those that foster greater inclusion, effective governance, trust in the public sector and social cohesion for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, given that governance issues remain at the forefront seven years after its adoption.³ In its Ministerial Declaration, the 2022 HLPF also recognized that “... good governance at all levels and democratic and transparent institutions responsive to the needs of the people are necessary to achieve our goals” and “... the important role that institutions play in shaping the conditions that affect financial flows and the mobilization of capital for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Transparent, effective, accountable resilient and adequately resourced institutions are the bedrock of implementation of the two Agendas. Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and African Union Agenda 2063 is contingent upon strengthening institutions and the capacity of policy makers to design and implement inclusive sustainable development policies and strategies. The principles of effective governance for sustainable development, which were developed by CEPA and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2018, are designed to achieve this purpose: they provide guidance to transform the role of institutions and policymaking, promote new governance norms and shift from past practices to transformative pathways that strengthen resilience and accelerate action to achieve the SDGs.

The multiple and interlinked global crises the world is facing are putting achievement of the SDGs and the AU Agenda 2063 at great risk. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising prices of food, energy and fertilizer, conflicts, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution as well as other systemic obstacles for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs are being felt disproportionately in African countries. These crises also spread beyond national borders, creating significant social, economic and environmental knock-on effects. Research by APRM and others has shown that governments with strong institutions and high levels of public trust were more resilient during the pandemic. They were able to continue providing basic services with limited interruption, engage multiple institutions in a coordinated way, deploy resources more effectively, procure and roll out vaccinations in a transparent manner, and deal with citizen concerns, while avoiding waste and corruption.

Building on previous workshops

Since 2019, UN DESA and the APRM have been engaged in implementing the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of the AU-Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda,⁴ including the organisation of two continental workshops that targeted senior

³ <https://undocs.org/E/2022/44>

⁴ Available at: <https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/24248/b1188311x.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

policymakers and SDG focal points.^{5, 6} The main purpose of first workshop held in 2019 was to consider how the CEPA principles should be used to advance the governance and institution-building objectives of African countries. Participants agreed that the principles provided a useful framework for analysis of governance strengths and weaknesses and called for preparation of a baseline study on their implementation together with the development of an SDG 16 monitoring and evaluation tool for Africa. Subsequently, African countries took steps towards operationalising the principles with the support of the African governance architecture, including through participation in the *African Baseline Study: Implementation of the UN CEPA Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development in Africa*,⁷ which was presented at the second workshop held in 2021. The main purpose of the second workshop was to strengthen the capacity of senior policy makers and public officials to assess gaps and challenges in building institutional capabilities to accelerate the implementation of both Agendas as well as respond to the COVID-19 crisis and other shocks. Participants reiterated the value of the principles as a general framework for action and called for more focused assistance with operationalizing the principles, inter alia through development of a multifaceted toolkit and targeted reviews to be undertaken by APRM at the request of national Governments. The use of the principles as a framework would be reinforced by “mainstreaming” them in VNR processes as well as in regional integration activities.

The 2022 workshop provides an opportunity to report back on progress since October 2021. With critical governance gaps and needs identified through these prior activities, this workshop is intended to help countries move forward on recommendations emanating from the HLPF, including in relation to specific SDGs, and to strengthen engagement of local governments in SDG implementation efforts. The workshop takes place against the backdrop of multiple, interlinked global crises with serious implications for African countries and in the midst of preparations for the midpoint review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the second ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. Moreover, it shall provide recommendations to be considered by AU organs, RECs and member states in enhancing progress towards Aspiration Three of Agenda 2063. since the evaluation of the first ten-year implementation plan.⁸

The workshop will also examine how African countries can most optimally participate in the September 2023 SDG Summit, and measures that may be taken between now and September 2023 to make progress in the ten cross-cutting accelerated action areas identified in the Political Declaration of the 2019 SDG Summit. The workshop, accordingly, builds on past efforts and

5 2019, Pretoria: https://publicadministration.un.org/africa_regional_workshop/; 2021, Cape Town: <https://sdgs.un.org/events/workshop-accelerating-implementation-2030-agenda-and-au-agenda-2063-africa-building>; 2022. Further joint work was done in Abuja: <https://www.aprm-au.org/au-capacity-building-workshop-on-africas-voluntary-national-reviews-for-the-hlpf-2022-and-domestication-of-agenda-2063/>; and in Kigali: <https://www.aprm-au.org/publications/aprm-engagement-in-africas-regional-forum-for-sustainable-development-for-building-forward-better-a-green-inclusive-and-resilient-Africa-rwanda/>.

6 At the workshop in Abuja held in 2022, a set of key messages were delivered to the President of ECOSOC, Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, with participants reinforcing the importance of cooperation between the AU and the UN to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The participants further called for more capacity building activities to enhance awareness of the CEPA principles and called on efforts to increase collaborative capacity building activities between UN-DESA and the AU APRM: https://www.aprm-au.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/key-messages_APRM-UNDESA-VNRs-workshop_Abuja.pdf

⁷ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/updated-version-of-the-CEPA-REPORT_English%20%281%29.pdf

⁸ https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-11_an_overview_of_agenda.pdf

helps countries accelerate action in advance of the mid-point review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Workshop objectives

The workshop is specifically designed to support countries, including through a peer learning process and exchange of experiences, to enhance institutional governance to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063 by:

1. Increasing understanding of how to strengthen institutional and governance gaps, including in the context of the recovery from COVID-19, through peer learning and exchange of experiences;
2. Improving capacity to strengthen principles of effective governance for sustainable development and its application in institutional arrangements;
3. Assisting countries in advancing coherent, integrated, evidence-based policy and planning frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
4. Supporting African countries in sub-national implementation of both Agendas, including in VLR preparations.

Specifically, participants will:

- Examine the progress and gaps in achieving both Agendas, including moving beyond the recovery phase and towards the 2023 Summit;
- Examine the relevance of the CEPA principles to support implementation of the goals reviewed in depth at the 2022 HLPF (Goal 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land));
- Analyse recommendations, lessons learned and good practices from selected VNR presentations by African countries in 2022;
- Examine the regional dimensions of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
- Examine subnational implementation of both Agendas, including linkages between VNRs and VLRs;
- Validate the toolkit on the CEPA principles for effective governance for sustainable development;
- Initiate operational partnerships and practical toolkits on the application of the CEPA principles in Africa.

Target participants

- Senior African policymakers and Government officials
- National SDG/VNR focal points and advisers
- Representatives of African Union organs and United Nations agencies
- Representatives of African municipalities
- Representatives of civil society organisations, including youth, academia and women's groups

Dates and venue

The workshop will be held from 27 to 29 October 2022 in Cape Town, South Africa at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. A logistics note with further details on accommodations and visa requirements will be circulated.

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