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Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



VNR LABS
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

APRM-UN DESA VNR Lab

Strategic Planning and Foresight for Fulfilling the Financial Gaps of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals

18 July 2025 | 1:00-2:00 pm (EST/ NY time) | UNHQ – Room S1522/23

KEY MESSAGES

- Drawing on insights from the Sevilla Conference on Financing for Development, speakers emphasized that robust domestic resource mobilization is essential to closing the financing gaps required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- In the context of a shifting international geopolitical landscape, African countries have a unique opportunity to adopt innovative approaches to domestic resource mobilization. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) Lab provides a platform for sharing experiences from countries that are integrating strategic planning and foresight to address financing challenges in alignment with both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.
- The session aimed at bridging the gap between sustainable development planning and the capacity to mobilize resources in a predictable manner. This connection is crucial for deploying resources effectively, stimulating domestic economic growth, and leveraging regional mechanisms that enhance economies of scale. The African Continental Free Trade Area presents a major opportunity to accelerate growth despite global uncertainties.
- Achieving these goals requires a foundation of clear visioning, sound planning, and foresight. These tools enable countries to anticipate internal and external shocks while positioning themselves to capitalize on emerging opportunities. For

instance, periods of economic growth should be accompanied by deliberate strategies to reinvest resources productively, fostering a virtuous cycle of development. Conversely, a lack of preparedness for shocks can lead to a vicious cycle that exacerbates existing financing challenges.

Systems Thinking and Strategic Foresight

- The global landscape is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). Africa has long operated in such conditions, making resilience, foresight, and adaptation essential.
- Strategic foresight and systems thinking should be embedded in institutional planning and decision-making to create responsive, future-ready governments.
- **Systems thinking** helps see the bigger picture, reveal interconnections, and anticipate unintended consequences (e.g., illicit financial flows, remittances, youth unemployment). It enables smarter policy questions and better-designed responses.
- **Strategic foresight** does not predict the future but prepares for multiple scenarios through tools like horizon scanning, scenario building, and backcasting. It challenges assumptions, uncovers blind spots, and aligns planning, budgeting, and policymaking.
- In public finance, foresight supports long-term, resilient investments (e.g., green jobs, digital infrastructure) and avoids short-term fixes that become long-term burdens.
- Foresight complements, not replaces, financing, making plans more coherent and investments more resilient. The goal is to move from reactive to proactive governance, anticipating uncertainty rather than being caught off guard.

Integrated National Financing Frameworks

- The Sevilla Commitment emphasizes country leadership in shaping and owning financial strategies.
- INFF aligns all financing, public/private, domestic/international, within national development frameworks, building on existing systems and streamlining donor engagement.
- Currently, 86 countries are at various stages of implementing INFFs, using them to:
 - Identify financing gaps,
 - Prioritize reforms,
 - Mobilize domestic resources,
 - Engage capital markets and donors, and
 - Align budgets with long-term development plans.

- Key principles:
 - Country-owned and led
 - Strengthens coherence across financing policies
 - Bridges planning, financing, and implementation
- Example: The FINS Initiative for Small Island Developing States (e.g., Fiji, Seychelles, Dominican Republic, Vanuatu) demonstrates how INFFs help define priorities, coordinate with partners, and align plans with financing strategies.
- **INFFs, strategic foresight, and systems thinking are interconnected tools that shift countries from short-term fixes to long-term**, resilient development pathways grounded in national leadership.
- This reflects the Sevilla Commitment's call for integrated support and renewed hope in how countries plan, finance, and deliver on development priorities.

APRM Continental Secretariat, findings of the APRM Toolkit on Strategic Planning and Foresight in Africa

- Partnership & Context
 - APRM has worked with UNDESA over the past five years to implement the Principles of Effective Governance for the SDGs.
 - APRM promotes good governance through country reviews and supports states in improving SDG reporting with a 360-degree measurement approach.
- Toolkit Origin & Purpose
 - Developed as a response to COVID-19, based on research and member state consultations on post-pandemic priorities.
 - Highlights the need to integrate science and foresight into planning, aligned with CEPA principles of effective governance.
 - Addresses vulnerabilities exposed by COVID-19 that threaten progress toward Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.
- Toolkit Features
 - Assessment Tool: Self-assessment framework for integrating strategic planning into national policies.
 - Step-by-Step Guidance: Actions to establish strong national planning systems.
 - Clear Responsibilities: Defines institutional roles for ownership of reforms.
 - Future-Ready Governance: Helps anticipate scenarios and allocate resources proactively.

- Core Components
 - *Institutional Elements*: Regular reviews, inclusive planning, empowered agencies with legal authority, and comprehensive national development plans.
 - *Policy Elements*: Evidence-based planning, policy coherence, scenario planning, risk anticipation.
 - *Communication & Legal Framework*: Coordination mechanisms, clear roles, multi-stakeholder forums, constitutional mandates, harmonized legislation, and sustainability beyond political cycles.
- Findings from 14 African Countries
 - Most countries have national development planning frameworks, but the independence and capacity of planning authorities remain limited.
 - Foresight integration is weak; only a few (e.g., Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya) have significantly advanced.
 - Maturity and functionality of foresight vary widely and are not consistently cascaded to sub-national levels.
 - These findings are a wake-up call for deeper collaboration between APRM, governments, and partners to strengthen foresight and planning capacity.

Countries experiences

Key questions:

- How has your country used strategic foresight in the planning process and national budgeting?
- Can you share examples where strategic planning and foresight have helped to address financial gaps in national development plans to achieve Agenda 2063 and the SDGs?
- How do you find the APRM Toolkit on Strategic Planning and Foresight useful for your country's strategic preparedness?

Ethiopia:

- **Planning & Alignment**: Ethiopia's Ten-Year Development Plan aligns all 17 SDGs with Agenda 2063, operationalized through rolling three-year MDIPs and supported by the Homegrown Economic Reform program.
- **Financing Gaps**: Over 60% of the federal budget goes to pro-poor sectors. The Integrated National Financing Framework mobilizes domestic resources, climate funds, concessional finance, and private capital.
- **Tax & Revenue Reforms**: Modernized tax systems, digital payments (80%), and service fee rationalization have doubled tax collection since 2015/16. A growing

SDG Acceleration Fund and initiatives like *Ethiopia Aid* sustain progress despite donor gaps.

- Innovative Financing: Alumni-funded education, community health insurance, PSNP programs, disaster funds, and new market instruments (Ethiopian Securities Exchange, bonds) diversify resources.
- APRM Toolkit: Welcomed as a self-assessment framework to deepen foresight in planning, strengthen disaster preparedness, and seize new opportunities.
- Ethiopia remains committed to leveraging foresight and innovative financing to accelerate Agenda 2063 and SDG implementation.

Uganda:

How Uganda uses strategic foresight in planning and budgeting

- Guided by Vision 2040 and implemented through five-year National Development Plans (NDP).
- Currently implementing NDP IV (2025/26–2029/30), built on strategic foresight, systems thinking, macroeconomic modeling, and scenario analysis.
- Led by the National Planning Authority (NPA) in coordination with ministries, departments, local governments, and development partners.
- Programme-Based Budgeting ensures national priorities are directly linked to resource allocation and tracked through implementation.

Examples where foresight helped address financial gaps

- Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF): being developed to mobilize domestic resources, engage capital markets, and align financing with long-term plans.
- National SDG Financing Strategy: operationalized to coordinate funding streams for priority programs.
- Public investment management: using the Integrated Bank of Projects to improve efficiency and prioritize investments.
- Climate finance and private sector partnerships: scaling up initiatives to close funding gaps in critical areas such as infrastructure and green development.

Usefulness of the APRM Toolkit

- The APRM Toolkit on Strategic Planning and Foresight complements Uganda's planning approaches.
- Provides a self-assessment framework to identify gaps, strengthen institutional capacity, and integrate foresight into national and sectoral plans.
- Will be applied during NDP IV to build long-term resilience, anticipate risks, and seize new growth opportunities.

Sierra Leone:

How Sierra Leone uses strategic foresight in planning and budgeting:

- National planning is built as an amalgamation of sectoral and regional plans, coordinated by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.
- A macroeconomic framework sets GDP, debt, and inflation targets for 2024 onward, providing parameters for sector priorities and budget envelopes.
- Each sector (education, health, social services, etc.) develops its own forecasts and targets within these macro constraints, feeding into the National Development Plan.
- Disaster and risk planning are integrated through differentiated but coordinated approaches, with the ministry serving as a central platform for alignment.

Examples where foresight helped address financial gaps:

- Implementation of the Public Financial Management Act (2016) created development transformation funds and intergenerational funds, channeling a portion of natural resource revenues into future development financing.
- Sierra Leone is among the first countries to implement an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), aligning domestic resources, diaspora finance, and blended finance to reduce reliance on external flows and curb illicit financial outflows.
- Developed an SDG Investor Map to identify investment opportunity areas and attract private sector participation.
- Regular annual and midterm reviews ensure plans adapt to changing financial and development contexts.

Usefulness of the APRM Toolkit on Strategic Planning and Foresight:

- The toolkit aligns with Sierra Leone's multi-level planning approach, reinforcing the use of foresight at national, sectoral, and district levels.
- Supports integrated planning and financing, helping the country strengthen coordination, prioritize within constraints, and institutionalize foresight in decision-making.
- Seen as a valuable platform for improving resilience and crystallizing ideas into actionable financing and planning tools.

Nigeria:

How Nigeria uses strategic foresight in planning and budgeting

- Integrated foresight into the National Development Plan (2021–2025) and the ongoing Mid-Term National Development Plan (to 2026).
- Budget allocations prioritize health, education, infrastructure, and other key sectors identified through foresight exercises.
- State Development Plans have been developed and aligned with national goals to strengthen resource mobilization and coordination.

- Capacity-building initiatives are underway for ministries, departments, and agencies to embed foresight into planning processes.

Examples where foresight helped address financial gaps

- Strategic prioritization of agriculture and manufacturing to stimulate growth, create jobs, and reduce poverty.
- The National Social Investment Program, designed with foresight, tackles social inequalities and promotes financial inclusion, leveraging partnerships with international organizations and the private sector.
- Use of foresight in identifying sectors for investment has helped target resources where they yield the highest impact.

Usefulness of the APRM Toolkit on Strategic Planning and Foresight

- Nigeria finds the toolkit's peer-reviewed methods valuable for strengthening planning approaches and aligning development strategies with financing.
- Supports evidence-based decision-making and integration of foresight into policy frameworks, including in emerging areas such as mental health planning.
- Helps ensure national and state plans remain adaptable, forward-looking, and aligned with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

Key Concluding Messages

- Strategic foresight and planning are essential, not optional, for addressing financial gaps in achieving Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.
- Country cases showed clearly that foresight equips institutions to anticipate disruptions, mitigate risks, and seize opportunities for transformative, inclusive, and sustainable development.

Volatility and Long-Term Vision:

- In a world of overlapping crises and complex challenges, we must think beyond the immediate and invest in long-term, visionary planning.
- Institutions must build capacity for smarter investments and adaptive governance.

Value of Reviews:

- Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and local reviews, when integrated with foresight and systems thinking, can:
 - Align plans with long-term aspirations,
 - Mobilize resources more effectively,
 - Restore citizen trust in institutions.

Call to Action:

- Continue to work together, learn, innovate, and lead with foresight.
- The Decade of Acceleration is now, and the future Africa and the world want depends on actions taken today.