

Workshop on Strengthening Institutional Capacities in Africa for Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: Follow-up to the 2023 SDG Summit

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**Opening remarks by Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi
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Global and regional context

According to UN DESA forecasts, if current trends continue, globally, approximately 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030, with most in sub-Saharan Africa. We hence commend APRM for starting partnership with Oxford Human Development Initiative to enhance the multidimensional poverty assessment in African countries and hence provide better guidance for governments on improving interventionist policies to alleviate poverty.

African countries are disproportionately impacted by a myriad of global challenges, including climate change, the debt crisis, conflicts, rising inflation and inequality and corruption. The continent is equally affected by the global context, proxy wars and the transformational international order. Accordingly, Africa's positions and policies are affected by all these factors.

Many countries in the region continue to face challenges in combating tax evasion and eliminating illicit financial flows which, according to UN ECA results in more than \$84 billion lost annually.

Africa also remains the region with the lowest median tax-to-GDP ratios, impacting domestic resource mobilization efforts.

Halfway towards 2030, it has been estimated that most African countries are struggling to meet most SDG targets.

The growing trend of coups d'état in West Africa and social unrests are quite alarming to implement SDG 16 and the peace building efforts exerted by the African Union. The APRM 2023 Continental Governance Report has addressed challenges associated with unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. Failure of civil service delivery and state-society relations were identified amongst other obstacles to sustain democratic rules and citizens' trust in their governments. This calls us to see how we can strengthen public institutions through the CEPA principles at the national and grassroot levels.

The First -Ten Year Implementation plan of Agenda 2063 is coming to an end this year. the initial overall assessment of the FTYIP concluded that the continent and AU member states have made

some positive strides as far as governance and public policies are concerned. Policies pertinent to women's empowerment, fighting corruption, broadening public participation and strengthening access to information have improved. Having said that, Africa's reliance on foreign assistance and debts threatens the future of the continent and imposes a serious burden on the youth and future generations. We must also take into account the pernicious effects of mis- and disinformation.

Transformation is possible

The United Nations 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report produced by UN DESA argues that transformation is both possible and inevitable.

As the 2023 GSDR suggests, governance and capacity building are two critical levers. The GSDR is among the background reading material for this workshop. It contains a wealth of analysis and examples that are directly relevant to all sessions. We may hear more about the GSDR in the next session.

The experts behind the report suggest that science driven transformations are urgently needed to enable progress toward the SDGs. This means identifying key interventions that have systemic effects across the SDGs, scaling up investment, mobilising the knowledge of scientists, practitioners and communities at all levels, and building the capacity needed in all countries and institutions, all while enhancing policy learning and accountability and closely monitoring the impacts of interventions.

The Political Declaration adopted at the recent United Nations SDG Summit underscores the action that is needed to address financing for development. Many countries are constrained by high levels of debt which undermine their monetary sovereignty and limit the flexibility of government in its spending choices.

As we heard at last year's workshop, African countries may be able to regain some measure of control by optimizing the potential of the continent's one trillion dollar 'sleeping' capital and insurance funds to finance sustainable development.

Curbing illicit financial flows, strengthening budgetary and fiscal transparency, and expanding registers of beneficial ownership are some of actions countries can take to prevent funds from being lost in a string of transactions.

We must ensure that the text of the 2023 Political Declaration becomes a reality. Over 100 countries have already presented national commitments to SDG transformation that include national benchmarks for reducing poverty and inequalities by 2027 and strengthening institutional frameworks to support SDG progress.

I encourage us to support those commitments and build on them here. At this workshop, we should focus on the priority actions that need to be taken to equip governance systems and institutions for transformation at national and sub-national levels. We should examine how we could develop and contribute to National Commitments to SDG transformation, even in incremental ways.

Related observations of CEPA

At the 22nd session of CEPA earlier this year, we stressed that a cascade of simultaneous crises is undermining the resilience of governments at all levels as well as their capacity to address the root causes of complex challenges in a holistic and context-sensitive manner. Governments are urged to address the complex problems underlying crises in a holistic manner, ensuring that crisis management does not hinder the continuous implementation of the SDGs.

It bears repeating that achieving sustainable development and strengthening resilience require a long-term perspective in public policymaking, together with institution-building at all levels, based on effective governance for sustainable development, as well as a steadfast commitment to promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

CEPA recognizes that accelerating the delivery of the 2030 Agenda at all levels calls for more integrated solutions to achieve the vision and Goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. It also calls for a capable State at all levels and we encourage countries to design and implement integrated national institution-building strategies that address important capability gaps across the whole of government.

We remain concerned at the limited capacity to foresee and build resilience against the diverse challenges originating from multiple shocks in many countries and call for a rapid upgrade of the risk management function in government and its integration into SDG-related coordination mechanisms at the highest level.

On indicators, we find that multidimensional coverage of each of the 11 principles of effective governance (“CEPA principles”) could provide a useful way to enhance policy analysis related to SDG 16. Indicators should be detailed enough to capture the quality of a government’s response to the SDGs while addressing important analytical gaps in VNR and VLR processes.

Thank you.