



Policy Brief

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Building Resilience to Global Shocks and Safeguarding the Future in Africa¹

Summary: This policy brief outlines strategies for African countries to build resilience to global disruptions by aligning national priorities with the principles of the *Pact for the Future*. Adopted at the 2024 UN Summit of the Future, the Pact offers a comprehensive framework to address interrelated challenges such as climate change, inequality, economic instability, and governance. It is built upon six key areas with 56 concrete actions, touching on sustainable development, peace and security, climate action, science and technology, youth, future generations and gender empowerment.

The Pact encourages countries to integrate adaptive governance, sustainable financial practices, and innovative solutions, promoting multilateral collaboration through platforms such as the *High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)* and *Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)*. For African countries, alignment with regional frameworks such as Agenda 2063 strengthens governance, reforms financial systems, and accelerates progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This strategic alignment prepares countries to tackle present and future risks while fostering socio-economic stability.

1. Introduction

The *Pact for the Future*, adopted at the UN Summit of the Future on September 22, 2024, represents a strategic shift toward addressing the interconnected nature of global challenges through inclusive multilateralism. Building on insights from the *Our Common Agenda Report (2021)*, it integrates national, regional, and global priorities to advance the SDGs beyond 2030, promoting cooperation, sustainability, and resilience. At its core, the Pact is organized into six thematic pillars and operationalized through fifty-six concrete actions to ensure a just, peaceful, and sustainable global system. The six key pillars are:

- i. **Sustainable Development:** The Pact reaffirms global commitments to the SDGs, placing renewed emphasis on poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. It pushes for a step-change in financing SDG initiatives, integrating public-private partnerships, domestic resource mobilization, and innovative financial instruments such as green bonds and blended finance. Furthermore, it highlights the transition to a circular economy, with an aim to shift beyond GDP-centric models toward metrics that assess human and planetary well-being.

¹ This policy brief, drafted by the UNDP South Africa Country Office, provides a strategic roadmap for aligning African countries' priorities with the *Pact for the Future* to address climate, economic, and governance challenges, fostering resilience, socio-economic stability, and SDG progress. The views expressed in this policy note are those of the authors and do not represent the views of UNDP, the United Nations or any of its affiliate organizations. For more information, please contact the author at the following email: rogers.dhliwayo@undp.org.

- ii. Peace and Security: The Pact emphasizes peacebuilding and conflict prevention as essential strategies to address the rising threats of geopolitical tensions, terrorism, organized crime, and armed conflict. It supports international cooperation on peace operations, conflict resolution, disarmament, and the regulation of emerging technologies in warfare. Special focus is placed on demilitarization, nuclear disarmament, and preventing the weaponization of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and space-based systems.
- iii. Climate Action: Climate change mitigation and adaptation form a key component of the Pact, with commitments to limit global warming to 1.5°C and phase out fossil fuels. It advocates for biodiversity conservation, support for vulnerable communities, and the development of just energy transitions. The Pact aligns with frameworks like the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), advancing climate financing tools that prioritise the needs of developing nations.
- iv. Science and technology: The *Global Digital Compact (GDC)* is central to the Pact's vision for science and technology, promoting inclusive governance of AI and digital technologies to foster equity, trust, and accountability. It emphasizes that technological advancements must benefit all of humanity, avoiding inequalities and human rights violations. The Pact calls for international cooperation through governance frameworks focused on data equity, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion, ensuring marginalized populations are empowered. It prioritises bridging the digital divide by expanding access to infrastructure, connectivity, and skills. Aligning with SDG 9 and SDG 17, the Compact promotes multi-stakeholder collaboration, open science, and responsible innovation to drive sustainable development and social progress.
- v. Global governance and multilateralism: The Pact calls for reforms to international institutions to create a more inclusive and networked multilateralism, reflecting the realities of both developed and developing nations. It urges reform of the UN Security Council, strengthens the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission, and aims to revitalize international financial architectures to support sustainable development. Furthermore, the Pact advocates for integrating regional cooperation frameworks, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, with global governance structures, enhancing coherence and collective action across different levels.
- vi. Youth, future generations and gender empowerment: Recognizing that young people and future generations will bear the consequences of today's decisions, the Pact calls for intergenerational equity and youth participation in governance and policymaking. It promotes gender equality by placing women and girls at the center of development and governance processes. The *Declaration on Future Generations* strengthens these commitments by advocating for foresight capacity development, establishing youth advisory bodies, and appointing a *UN Envoy for Future Generations*.

The *Pact for the Future* offers practical pathways for sustainable development, emphasizing innovative and equitable financial frameworks tailored to the needs of developing countries. It ensures that digital transformation and AI serve humanity without exacerbating inequalities. By integrating regional and global frameworks, such as Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, the Pact fosters coherence and collective action. Platforms like the HLPF and VNRs play a key role in tracking progress, empowering African countries to enhance governance, financial resilience, and inclusive growth while building sustainable pathways for future generations.

This policy brief highlights how African countries can integrate the principles of the *Pact for the Future* by aligning national priorities with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. Such alignment will enhance financial resilience, foster inclusive governance, and accelerate SDG progress. By harmonizing regional

and global frameworks, countries can more effectively address complex challenges such as climate change, inequality, and economic instability, ensuring sustainable socio-economic development. This integrated approach lays the foundation for resilient, inclusive pathways that meet the needs of both current and future generations.

2. Implementing the Pact for the Future to Build Resilience in Africa

African countries must adopt coordinated national and regional strategies to effectively address climate change, economic disruptions, pandemics, and other emerging risks. Regional cooperation, through the African Union (AU) and sub-regional bodies like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is vital for integrating early warning systems and fostering cross-border collaboration. This coordination enhances disaster preparedness and enables joint responses to crises such as droughts, floods, and health emergencies, exemplified by collaborative efforts in the Sahel to combat climate-induced socio-economic challenges.

A notable example is SADC's Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Strategy, which emphasizes preparedness and regional cooperation to mitigate natural disasters. In Southern Africa, countries coordinate their responses to drought through resource-sharing arrangements and harmonized early warning systems. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, African countries cooperated regionally to implement public health responses and manage the economic fallout, demonstrating the importance of cross-border collaboration.

The GDC, a key component of the Pact, plays a critical role in building resilience to climate change and closing the digital divide. It ensures that digital transformation and technologies like AI serve humanity and empower vulnerable communities. Through the GDC, African countries can strengthen early warning systems, leverage big data to enhance disaster management, and foster digital inclusion, enabling marginalized populations to benefit from digital economies. The Compact also emphasizes data equity, cybersecurity, and infrastructure development to bridge the digital divide, supporting adaptive responses to climate-related risks and fostering economic resilience.

The *Pact for the Future* stresses the critical role of innovative, inclusive financial frameworks tailored to developing countries to promote resilience. It encourages African countries to align national priorities with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, ensuring that financing strategies are both equitable and sustainable.

a. Social Protection as a Pillar of Resilience

Integrating social protection systems into national policies is essential for mitigating vulnerabilities and building resilience, particularly among marginalized and low-income groups. Social safety nets, including cash transfers and public assistance programmes, provide critical support during times of economic, social, or environmental crises, preventing individuals and households from slipping into poverty. For instance, South Africa's Child Support Grant has become a cornerstone of the country's social protection system, reducing poverty, promoting well-being, and fostering resilience by providing consistent financial support to low-income families. As highlighted in South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, such targeted interventions not only cushion the most vulnerable populations from economic shocks but also contribute to long-term socio-economic stability.

Several African countries are leading with innovative social protection schemes that integrate climate adaptation measures. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and Rwanda's Vision 2020

Umurenge Programme (VUP) exemplify this dual approach by providing employment opportunities in climate-resilient sectors like reforestation, soil conservation, and public works projects. These initiatives help restore degraded ecosystems while enhancing the livelihoods of vulnerable populations, aligning with broader sustainable development priorities. Such programs also demonstrate how social protection can mitigate both economic inequality and environmental degradation, enhancing resilience to future shocks and aligning with the Pact for the Future's principles of sustainable development.

Furthermore, through the GDC, digital platforms can improve the delivery of social services by enhancing transparency and expanding access to marginalized groups. Digitizing cash transfers, for example, reduces barriers to access while ensuring accountability, empowering vulnerable communities to better cope with crises and build sustainable livelihoods.

b. Youth Participation and Future Generations

Youth engagement in governance, innovation, and economic development is essential for sustainable development, as emphasized in the *Declaration on Future Generations*. Governments must prioritize skills development and employment opportunities for youth, especially in emerging sectors such as the green economy and digital technologies. Expanding access to these high-growth sectors not only tackles unemployment but also ensures that young people actively contribute to policy development, innovation, and sustainable economic transition.

Morocco and Kenya are at the forefront of integrating youth participation into their national SDG strategies, fostering entrepreneurship and supporting innovation hubs. Similarly, South Africa's Youth Employment Service (YES) initiative provides young people with practical work experience and entrepreneurial training, aligning with the Pact's emphasis on intergenerational equity. This approach ensures that young people are empowered to shape the future while benefiting from a more inclusive economy.

A sustainable future also demands that Africa's young workforce be prepared to lead the continent's transition to renewable energy. Investments in green jobs within sectors like solar, wind, and sustainable agriculture can ensure that Africa's youth drive the continent's shift towards cleaner energy systems. Technical and vocational education (TVET) programmes focused on green skills and technology will further prepare young people for the demands of a changing labor market, fostering both economic development and environmental sustainability.

Moreover, the GDC offers new avenues for youth engagement by promoting digital inclusion, access to technology, and innovation ecosystems. Governments can leverage digital platforms to expand entrepreneurial opportunities and encourage youth participation in policymaking processes. Involving young people in co-creating solutions for digital transformation ensures that they are not only beneficiaries but also drivers of Africa's digital economy. These efforts align with the Pact's focus on intergenerational equity, ensuring that future generations inherit a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous society.

Through integrated strategies in social protection, climate adaptation, and youth engagement, African countries can effectively implement the principles of the Pact for the Future. Social protection programs mitigate vulnerabilities, ensuring that marginalized groups are protected from economic and environmental shocks. Climate-integrated social safety nets and employment schemes provide both immediate relief and long-term sustainability by addressing environmental degradation while improving

livelihoods. At the same time, empowering youth through education, employment, and digital inclusion enables them to actively participate in governance, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development.

3. Reforming Financial Architecture for Stability

The *Pact for the Future* highlights the importance of inclusive financial reforms to ensure that global systems effectively meet the needs of developing countries. For African countries, regional financial integration is critical for fostering stability, promoting sustainable growth, and mitigating the impact of global economic shocks. Harmonizing financial regulations across regional markets will reduce risks, encourage cross-border investments, and deepen economic cooperation. Strengthening institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) is essential to ensuring that regional initiatives are adequately financed and aligned with the continent's sustainable development priorities.

A key example is the ongoing effort to establish the African Monetary Fund (AMF), aimed at providing short-term financial assistance, stabilizing economies, and enhancing resilience to external crises.² The AMF reflects a growing recognition of the need for African countries to develop independent financial solutions that reduce their reliance on external financing while reinforcing economic sovereignty.

Domestic resource mobilization is a vital component of financial reform, helping to reduce reliance on external financing. African governments must focus on improving tax collection, curbing illicit financial flows, and minimizing capital flight. Kenya's success in financial governance reforms has increased tax revenue, while Rwanda's digital tax platforms have improved compliance and transparency, resulting in higher public investments in education and healthcare (OECD, 2024). These examples demonstrate the potential of fiscal policy reforms to enhance financial independence and public sector investments.

In parallel, African countries should advocate for global financial reforms that prioritise the needs of developing countries. This includes expanding access to Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and ensuring that debt relief frameworks are responsive and sustainable. Many African countries have faced increasing debt burdens exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for global frameworks that promote debt sustainability while fostering growth.

To complement these efforts, innovative financing tools—such as green bonds, blended finance, and sovereign wealth funds—offer additional avenues for mobilizing resources. South Africa's Green Finance Taxonomy is a pioneering example of how policy instruments can incentivize sustainable investments by setting clear guidelines for environmentally friendly financial products.

By adopting these financial reforms, African countries will enhance their economic resilience, mitigate the impact of external shocks, and promote long-term stability. Strengthened institutions, robust resource mobilization, and innovative financing are essential components of a financial architecture that aligns with the *Pact for the Future* and supports sustainable development across the continent.

² The African Monetary Fund (AMF) aims to enhance Africa's economic resilience by providing financial support during crises and stabilizing the continent's economies. The AMF is part of the African Union's broader strategy under Agenda 2063 to promote regional economic integration. It will focus on maintaining macroeconomic stability, offering short-term financial assistance to member states, and reducing dependency on external financial institutions like the IMF. Strengthening regional financial institutions such as the AMF reflects Africa's commitment to a more independent and resilient economic future.

4. Strengthening Governance for Sustainable Development

Governance reform is central to building resilience and advancing sustainable development, aligning with the Pact for the Future's focus on inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance. African countries must enhance accountability in managing public resources, especially within extractive industries, which are major revenue sources across the continent. Botswana's governance model exemplifies how effective management of natural resources can translate mineral wealth into long-term public investments in infrastructure, health, and education, fostering sustainable growth and reinforcing the Pact's principles by ensuring that resource wealth benefits future generations.

To prepare for future challenges, African governments need adaptive governance frameworks capable of responding proactively to climate risks, technological disruptions, and economic shocks. The Pact emphasizes the importance of dynamic governance systems that adjust policies to evolving realities. A critical aspect of this is decentralization, which empowers local governments to manage essential services, such as healthcare, education, and water. Ghana and Kenya provide successful examples of decentralized governance, enabling local governments to address community-specific needs and improve service delivery. This approach aligns with the Pact's focus on participatory governance and inclusive development.

Capacity-building within public institutions is essential to enhance leadership, data-driven decision-making, and public administration reforms. Strengthening these governance systems ensures more effective management of the complex interdependencies among climate change, digital transformation, and social equity, promoting sustainable development. By equipping institutions with the skills and resources to adapt to emerging challenges, countries can better align their policies with the Pact's goals.

Social inclusion is another governance priority under the Pact. Inclusive governance ensures that marginalized groups, including women and youth, are represented in decision-making processes. South Africa's Gender Equality Seal initiative exemplifies how public institutions can advance gender equity by increasing the representation of women in leadership roles and policymaking. This initiative reflects the Pact's commitment to intergenerational equity and gender empowerment, creating governance systems that are fair, responsive, and inclusive.

The upcoming 2025 African Governance Report, prepared by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), will provide an important benchmark for assessing governance reforms and offer actionable recommendations for aligning national strategies with the Pact's objectives. This report will help countries evaluate progress, address governance challenges, and enhance institutional frameworks to support sustainable development across the continent. Strong, inclusive governance systems will not only enhance resilience to future disruptions but also ensure that development outcomes are equitable, sustainable, and beneficial for future generation.

5. Accelerating SDG Achievement through the HLPF and VNRs in Alignment with the Pact for the Future

The HLPF and VNRs play pivotal roles in driving the implementation of the SDGs, aligning closely with the principles outlined in the Pact for the Future. The Pact emphasizes collaborative governance, multilateral accountability, and inclusive decision-making, which are integral to the structure and objectives of the HLPF and VNR processes. These frameworks offer opportunities for peer learning,

transparency, and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that SDG progress remains on track despite evolving global challenges such as inequality, economic instability, and climate change.

Peer learning through the HLPF provides a dynamic platform for countries to exchange best practices and co-develop solutions to shared challenges. For instance, South Africa's 2019 VNR showcased how public-private partnerships can effectively address financing gaps in infrastructure and renewable energy, reflecting the Pact's call for innovative financing to promote financial resilience. The Pact also encourages such partnerships as a mechanism to mobilize resources, strengthen financial independence, and build economic resilience.

Aligning national SDG strategies with regional frameworks, such as Agenda 2063, ensures coherence across multiple governance levels. This reflects the Pact's focus on harmonized governance and policy alignment to address complex, cross-cutting challenges. Morocco's 2020 VNR exemplifies how engaging civil society ensures that local perspectives shape national policies, resulting in more inclusive and people-centered development strategies. This approach embodies the Pact's emphasis on participatory governance and intergenerational equity.

The HLPF and VNRs emphasize the importance of setting measurable targets and robust data collection systems to monitor progress, identify gaps, and adjust policies effectively. Transparent reporting through the VNRs fosters accountability, builds trust among stakeholders, and facilitates resource mobilization by attracting investments. These actions align with the Pact's call for enhanced monitoring frameworks to ensure transparency and accountability in achieving sustainable development outcome.

The HLPF promotes multi-stakeholder engagement, ensuring collaboration between governments, civil society, youth, and private sector actors. This resonates with the goals of the GDC and the DFG, both central elements of the Pact. These frameworks advocate for inclusive digital transformation and youth participation, ensuring young people are involved in shaping policies for sustainable development. Regular engagement at the HLPF helps countries remain responsive to emerging global developments while aligning national priorities with evolving sustainable development needs.

By integrating the principles of the *Pact for the Future* into their SDG strategies through the HLPF and VNRs, African countries can foster collaboration, innovation, and transparency. This will accelerate SDG progress, strengthen regional cooperation, and ensure sustainable, inclusive development outcomes that meet the needs of both current and future generations.

6. Conclusion

Building resilience to global shocks and ensuring sustainable development in Africa requires aligning national strategies with the Pact for the Future. Key priorities include financial reform, leveraging platforms like the HLPF and VNRs for SDG progress, and enhancing governance frameworks to promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Examples such as South Africa's 2019 VNR demonstrate the value of private-sector partnerships in bridging financing gaps for SDG initiatives. Similarly, Morocco's 2020 VNR illustrates the importance of engaging civil society to shape inclusive and locally relevant policy strategies. Regional financial integration and improved resource mobilization—such as Kenya's tax reforms and Rwanda's digital tax platforms—help reduce dependence on external financing while promoting sustainable growth. South

Africa's Green Finance Taxonomy serves as a model for incentivizing investments in climate-resilient projects, aligning with global climate goals.

Governance reforms are essential to achieving long-term resilience. Botswana's successful reinvestment of mineral revenues into public services highlights the importance of effective resource management. Furthermore, South Africa's Gender Equality Seal initiative promotes gender equity in leadership and decision-making, advancing the principles of intergenerational equity emphasized in the Pact.

The upcoming 2025 African Governance Report will provide insights into the progress of governance reforms and offer recommendations aligned with the SDGs. This report will serve as a benchmark for assessing challenges and enhancing institutional frameworks across the continent.

By implementing the Pact's principles through integrated strategies in governance, financial reform, and social protection, African countries will be better positioned to address evolving global challenges, promote regional cooperation, and contribute to global peace and prosperity. This coordinated, future-oriented approach ensures Africa's sustainable development pathways remain inclusive and resilient, meeting the needs of both current and future generations.

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