

Sunday, 7 March 2021

Seventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: 1-4 March 2021

The Seventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD 7) convened from 1-4 March 2021 under the theme “Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.” In accordance with the continued health and safety measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ARFSD 7 convened in a hybrid format involving in-person attendance in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo and virtual attendance.

ARFSD 7 reviewed regional progress towards both the 2030 and 2063 Agendas, and also facilitated sharing approaches, experiences and lessons learned with respect to conducting voluntary national and local reviews.

The outcomes of ARFSD 7 will form the region’s collective input to the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), scheduled for 6-15 July 2021 at UN Headquarters in New York. ARFSD 7 participants discussed all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in conjunction with corresponding goals of Agenda 2063. The sub-themes of the meeting addressed the nine SDGs to be discussed by the 2021 HLPF in conjunction with the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063:

- No poverty (SDG 1);
- Zero hunger (SDG 2);
- Good health and well-being (SDG 3);
- Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8);
- Reduced inequalities (SDG 10);
- Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12);
- Climate action (SDG 13);
- Peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16); and
- Partnerships (SDG 17).

At the conclusion of ARFSD 7, delegates adopted the “Brazzaville Declaration,” as well as an outcome document that identifies and articulates African priorities, policy options and recommendations to inform and accelerate implementation at various levels.

The Brazzaville Declaration:

- invites development partners to mobilize finance for operationalizing the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin;
- urges international collaboration to support the conservation of peatland in the Congo Basin, noting its contribution to carbon sequestration;

- calls upon African governments to redefine and develop economic models that protect natural resources, promote renewable energy, and foster green and resilient infrastructure and inclusive digitalization; and
- calls upon African governments to make better use of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain to support the sustainability transformation.

ARFSD 7’s discussions were complemented by preparatory meetings and side events held on its margins. These events included the third session of the Africa Regional Science, Technology and Innovation Forum; a regional preparatory workshop for African voluntary national reviews (VNRs) and voluntary local reviews (VLRs); a regional preparatory and capacity development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the African region; and a session on the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa.

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A dialogue session, “Africa Food Systems,” also convened to prepare Africa’s position for the UN Secretary-General’s Food Systems Summit, which will be held in September 2021. The dialogue examined drivers that shape future pathways of African food systems, highlighting complexity, challenges, and opportunities, pinpointing the importance of regionally coordinated actions, and formulating actionable measures towards accelerating transformation of food systems.

Co-organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of the Republic of Congo in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations system, ARFSD 7 brought together close to 2000 participants, comprising ministers and high-level representatives of the governments of all 54 ECA member States, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders.

A Brief History of ARFSD

The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) was created as part of the United Nations process that established the HLPF. Following resolutions by the UN General Assembly on a process to advance sustainable development (67/290, 70/1 and 70/299), ARFSD has met annually since 2015. Its main goals are to review implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Africa, as well as Agenda 2063 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Along with Forums for the four other UN regions, ARFSD links national, regional and global discourses on the SDGs and serves as a multi-stakeholder platform to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Forum also provides a platform for engaging and mobilizing stakeholders to strengthen their commitment to action and garner international support for efforts to translate the SDGs and Agenda 2063 into measurable and shared gains for the continent. The outcomes of ARFSD’s meetings inform policy reform at national, sub-regional, and regional level, and serve as Africa’s input to the HLPF.

ARFSD 1: This meeting convened from 16-18 June 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and focused on preparation of key messages for the HLPF on: integration, implementation and review including shaping the HLPF beyond 2015; new and emerging issues and the science-policy interface; sustainable consumption and production; and small island developing States (SIDS) and other countries in special situations.

ARFSD 2: This meeting was held from 7-19 May 2016 in Cairo, Egypt, under the theme “Ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.” This regional forum was the first following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015, and consequently focused on integration of this roadmap and Agenda 2063 to ensure their seamless implementation.

ARFSD 3: This meeting took place from 18-19 May 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Participants addressed six SDGs as sub-themes, namely: SDG 1 (eradicating all forms of poverty); SDG 2 (ending hunger and achieving food security); SDG 3 (healthy lives and promoting well-being for all); SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment of women and girls); SDG 9 (building

resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation); and SDG 14 (conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). The meeting provided an opportunity to examine early results of implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

ARFSD 4: This meeting convened from 2-4 May 2018 in Dakar, Senegal, and examined progress on the following SDGs: SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation); SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy); SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production); SDG 15 (life on land); and SDG 17 (strengthening means of implementation, and partnerships for sustainable development).

ARFSD 5: This meeting convened from 16-18 April 2019 in Marrakech, Morocco, and addressed the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” The session carried out an in-depth review of the following SDGs: SDG 4 (quality education); SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth); SDG 10 (reduced inequalities); SDG 13 (climate action); SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions); and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals).

ARFSD 6: This meeting convened from 24-27 February 2020, in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, under the theme “2020-2030: A Decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.” The session tackled for the first time the topic of voluntary local reviews (VLRs), and examined performance across all 17 SDGs, clustered into the “five Ps” of the 2030 Agenda: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships.

Report of the Meeting

Official Opening of ARFSD 7

The official opening of the Forum took place on Wednesday, 3 March. Speakers highlighted the need for green recovery strategies from the COVID-19 pandemic, including strategies put in place to roll out COVID vaccines to Africans.

In his introductory remarks, outgoing ARFSD 6 Chair, Paul Mavima, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe, emphasized that a new development trajectory is required to transform lives. He stated that Africa must take the



Outgoing ARFSD 6 Chair, **Paul Mavima**, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe

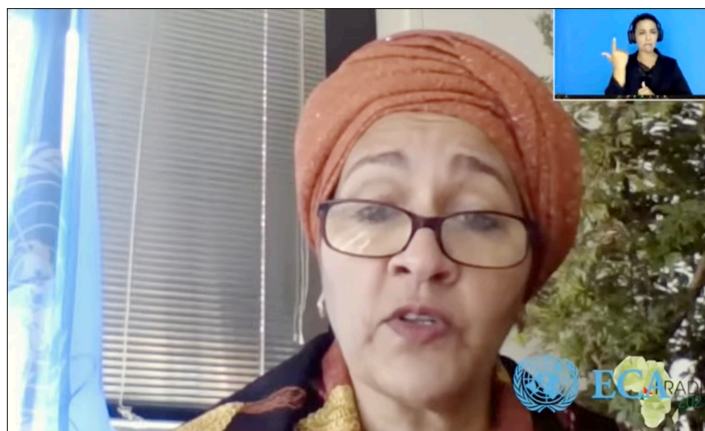
future in its own hands and that achieving the 2030 and 2063 Agendas should be the responsibility of Africa and its citizens.

Munir Akram, President, UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), highlighted challenges such as the lack of equitable access to vaccines and the COVID-19 financing recovery gap, which currently stands at US\$4.3 trillion. Akram outlined three priorities to recover from COVID-19 and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including mobilizing financial resources for the SDGs, investing in sustainable infrastructure, and promoting science and technology.

Arlette Soudan-Nonault, Minister of Tourism and Environment, Republic of Congo, emphasized that the deadline for achieving the SDGs is less than ten years away, while the first ten-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 is in three years. She called for technical and financial assistance to enable Africa's transition to sustainable and inclusive growth. Soudan-Nonault reiterated the crucial importance of the Congo Basin, the second-largest carbon sink globally, and called upon the international community to contribute to its preservation.

Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), highlighted estimates by the International Monetary Fund that the COVID-19 pandemic has widened the continent's financing gap to US\$345 billion and derailed progress in achieving the SDGs. She said that while the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) was important to increase countries' liquidity, only low-income countries have benefited from it, not middle-income countries. She further noted that ECA, along with African ministers, was calling for a new issue of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) of about \$25 billion that would benefit all African countries and be distributed equitably by quota. She advocated for a reallocation of these SDRs to developed countries, as this new injection of liquidity could assist in addressing the worsening poverty.

Albert Muchanga, African Union Commissioner for Trade and Industry, reported that the African Union secured a provisional 270 million COVID-19 vaccine doses from Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca for the continent through its COVID-19 African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team in January 2021. He stressed that no one is safe from COVID-19 until everyone is vaccinated.



UN Deputy Secretary-General **Amina Mohammed**

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed highlighted that COVID-19 threatens decades of development progress and undermines the world's collective response to deliver on the SDGs. She said Africa's coordinated response to COVID-19 had successfully saved many lives. Mohammed called on COVID-19 vaccines to be considered a global public good and underscored that the COVAX Facility is the vehicle for delivering this public good, urging that it be fully funded. She said 600 million doses would be delivered to Africa by the end of 2021.

Firmin Ayessa, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Civil Service, State Reform, Labour, and Social Security, Republic of Congo, said his country is leading the fight against climate change. He drew attention to the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin, which he said was redefining the foundation for collaborative economies.

Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo, then officially opened ARFSD 7, taking note of the wide range of discussions and topics under consideration in different sessions.

Organizational Matters

Election of the Bureau and ARFSD 7 Agenda: On Monday, 1 March, Paul Mavima, Chair of the Outgoing Bureau of ARFSD 6, presided over the election of the Bureau of ARFSD 7. Following sub-regional consultations, the Forum approved the election of the Republic of Congo as Bureau Chair; Kenya, Niger and Algeria as First, Second and Third Vice-Chairs; and Zimbabwe as Rapporteur. Delegates elected Arlette Soudan-Nonault, Minister of Tourism and Environment, Republic of Congo, as ARFSD 7 Chair. They then adopted the agenda and draft programme of work for the session (ECA/RFSD/2021/1.Rev.1 and ECA/RFSD/2021/3.Rev.2).

High-Level Panel on Actions to Build Forward Better from COVID-19

Held on Monday, 1 March, this panel focused on ARFSD 7's theme of providing high-level guidance to generate innovative and transformative actions as well as workable solutions that will contribute to efforts to "build forward better" from the COVID-19 crisis. Discussions were guided by the Concept Note for ARFSD 7 (ECA/RFSD/2021/4) and Guidelines for the High-Level Panel (ECA/RFSD/2021/INF/4).



Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo



Arlette Soudan-Nonault
ARFSD 7 Chair Arlette Soudan-Nonault

ARFSD 7 Chair Arlette Soudan-Nonault introduced the panelists, underscoring that COVID-19 is compromising development gains. She urged panelists to reflect on ways and means of changing this paradigm. Catherine Fiankan-Bokonga, Geneva Press Club, moderated the session.

African Union Commissioner Albert Muchanga provided insights on the key areas for transformation in Africa. He said these include capping illegal logging and deforestation, which he said is the major continental contributor to illicit financial flows. He underscored the need to invest in technology and innovation, including electric motor vehicles. Muchanga also stressed the need to mobilize both public and private investment to achieve green growth in Africa, as well as the need to avoid the under development and middle-income traps, which retard further economic growth. He also drew attention to the need to restructure external debts to provide the required space to invest in COVID-19 recovery, employment creation, and social protection.

Paul Mavima, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe, reflected on progress made towards the goals of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas, noting Africa is not on track to achieve the relevant targets. He cautioned against continued reliance on extractive industries, underscoring the need to move towards green industrialization. Mavima explained that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provides an opportunity for transformation through a focus on regional trade. Regarding information and communication technology (ICT), he said COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of communication, and stressed the need to improve connectivity across the continent.

Responding to Mavima, Chair Soudan-Nonault drew attention to the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin, an initiative designed to reduce forest exploitation in the Congo Basin and thus mitigate the impact of global warming by promoting alternative economic development using the resources of the Congo River and its tributaries. She underscored the need to fund this important initiative.

Collen Vixen Kelapile, Botswana, and Vice-President of ECOSOC, highlighted the importance of solidarity and

cooperation. He said “COVID-19 has laid bare our fragilities” and the 2030 Agenda should be used as a road map to recover and reduce vulnerability to future shocks and disasters. Kelapile underscored that every investment made towards combating COVID-19 must translate into a longer-term investment in recovery. He stressed the need to support Africa in mobilizing additional funding for recovery, stating that both the private sector and multilateral development banks must fully engage. Kelapile also reflected on the accelerated pace of digital transformation spurred by COVID-19. While beneficial, he said this acceleration has highlighted emerging inequalities which must be addressed, and drew attention to the UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. He said nine African countries are expected to present their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) at the 2021 HLPF, and that we must strive to both learn more and do better.

Diene Keita, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on health services targeting women, particularly in Africa. She also discussed escalating teenage pregnancies, the high risk of female genital mutilation and early marriage due to the pandemic.

Addressing climate change, Keita pointed to impacts on maternal, newborn and reproductive health. She also elaborated on poverty and food insecurity induced by climate change, and resulting effects on maternal health. She underscored climate resilient health systems and the requisite need for investments in the health sector, calling for integrating digital innovations such as e-health and e-pharma services. She noted inequality and suffering caused by the pandemic and the need to focus on ways to build a better post-COVID-19 future. Keita emphasized the need for multisectoral coordination to ensure that health related targets across the SDGs are monitored and reported, stressing the need for domestic, innovative financing, and an African Union domestic investment score card to track progress.

Keita expressed hope that the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) scheduled for November 2021 would provide a platform for innovative financing. She stressed UNFPA’s commitment to assisting in the development of the best programmes for innovative financing, discussing the role of global remittances and debt reduction for building resilience.



Diene Keita
Diene Keita, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA

Germain Roch Mpassi-Moumpassi, Director General for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Tourism and the Environment, Republic of Congo, elaborated on his country's efforts to preserve the Congo Basin and activities relating to the sustainable management of forest resources. He called for balancing preservation and economic development, emphasizing that conservation should not be a bottleneck to, but rather a leverage for, development.

ARFSD Chair Soudan-Nonault emphasized the role of indigenous peoples in the protection of the Congo Basin and the Basin's contribution to carbon sequestration. She stressed the need to move towards implementation and for the requisite financial resources and political will to be harnessed. She called on the UN to play a greater role in the conservation of the Congo Basin.

Paul Mavima lauded efforts by African countries to improve their tax collection capacity and mobilize domestic finances. He welcomed strategies to enhance access to innovative funding such as blue and green funds, calling on the African Union and the ECA to intensify efforts to ensure that countries are aware of opportunities, and are able to design programmes to access these financial resources. He emphasized the need to muster political will to fight corruption and stem the illicit flow of financial resources from Africa.

Albert Muchanga noted that a specialized technical committee of ministers of finance, monetary affairs, economic planning and integration will meet to develop an African COVID-19 recovery strategy. He emphasized the need for African countries to harness internal financial resources, galvanize political will, stem illicit financial flows, and check the activities of unscrupulous multilateral enterprises relating to tax issues.

Collen Vixen Kelapile called for translating the convening power of the UN into tangible action. He highlighted the work of the UN High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity, noting a recommendation for a UN tax convention and the need for more work to stem illicit financial flows. Kelapile discussed the need for regular resource allocation audits. He also reflected on the impact of the high level of indebtedness, which he said would worsen in Africa, with three simultaneously unfolding



Collen Vixen Kelapile, Botswana, and Vice-President of ECOSOC

emergencies: health, development and humanitarian. He pointed out that borrowing would increase but funds would be channeled towards short-term priorities because of the pandemic, thereby neglecting investment in longer-term needs.

During the ensuing discussion, delegates highlighted the need to tap into domestic funds and ensure that budget allocations include a focus on gender and youth. They noted the importance of partnerships to alleviate the continent's debt and highlighted the paucity of funds for implementation of sustainable development projects on the ground. Participants also noted the need to strengthen legislation for environmental taxes and to ensure the social and environmental responsibility of private investors.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed to the following key messages:

- as the continent with the second largest carbon sink in the world, a major source of the resources needed to save the global environment, Africa should not bear alone the cost of preserving these important resources for the global commons;
- UN system entities are urged to campaign for Africa to be rewarded for its contribution to protection of the global commons;
- in addition to general support, targeted support should be provided for protection of the Congo basin;
- the AUC and ECA should explore the sources and accessibility of new financial resources, such as through debt relief; and
- the AUC should continue convening environment ministers and ministers of finance and planning in fulfilment of a sustainable African recovery agenda.

Progress Report on Implementation of Agendas 2030 and 2063, and Tackling the COVID-19 Crisis at the Regional and Subregional Levels

On Tuesday, 2 March, Paul Mavima Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe, opened the session and urged strategic action to meet the targets and goals set out in Agendas 2030 and 2063, including by developing regional and national programmes for implementation.

Bartholomew Armah, ECA, presented highlights from the 2020 Africa Sustainable Development Report (ECA/



Muchanga

Albert Muchanga, African Union Commissioner for Trade and Industry

RFSD/2021/14), noting greater progress in increasing economic growth and slower progress in reducing poverty. Issues highlighted by Armah included that:

- undernourishment increased by 20% between 2013 and 2019;
- the 39-year average of annual GDP growth in Africa is 4.6%, but needs to reach 7% to make a tangible difference;
- African marine resources are comparatively less polluted than other regions, but the sustainable use of fish stocks is yet to be achieved;
- there is an overall perception of high levels of corruption on the continent with regards to the AU's democratic governance target; and
- seven countries are in debt distress and more are expected to join this cohort.

Armah noted growth is not fast enough to achieve the SDGs. He said fiscal deficits and debt are rising, while remittances are expected to fall due to the impacts of COVID-19. He underscored the need to build and strengthen social protection systems and called for investments in key areas such as health and governance. He also advocated for increased investments in “green” sectors as they can create more jobs than “brown” sectors. He concluded by urging rapid steps to tackle debt management.

Tadele Ferede Agaje, ECA, reported that there is a need to ensure coherence between the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and national development plans, as well as ensuring harmonized reporting and leveraging of synergies.

Ferede Agaje provided an overview of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT), developed by ECA as part of efforts to harmonize reporting. He highlighted key functionalities of the IPRT, including the showcasing of the alignment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 at the goal, target, and indicator level. He then demonstrated the online dashboard of the toolkit, showing modules related to: alignment from the perspective of national plans; comparing countries' national alignment with the SDGs and Agenda 2063; and assessing progress at the subregional level. He noted there are different forms of data visualization, including heat maps, and said the dashboard facilitates the exportation of data, thus supporting the preparation of analytical reports as well as preparing VNRs for the HLPF.

In the ensuing discussion, the presenters clarified that the IPRT follows a demand-driven approach. They encouraged countries to reach out to ECA, noting the Secretariat provides technical training to support countries in using the toolkit.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed to the following key messages:

- investments in reproductive health, mental health, primary health care, education and quality of governance must be boosted to engineer growth, address income inequality and reduce rent-seeking impulses;
- state and non-state entities should put in place measures to ensure the sustainable extraction and use of natural resources and to promote investments in digitalization and modern technologies to increase productivity, bridge the digital divide, spur innovation and accelerate growth;

- measures to address governance, peace and security must be applied following a people-centered approach;
- governments should put in place measures to boost domestic resource mobilization through efforts to expand revenue sources, broaden tax bases and stem corruption and illicit financial flows;
- governments and development partners should foster a more conducive climate and broadened partnerships for science, technology and innovation in support of sustainable development; and
- countries are urged to avail themselves of the IPRT, to ensure coherence in tracking progress towards development goals.

Plenary Round-Table Panels

Meeting Data and Statistics Needs for Recovery from COVID-19 Crisis and Realizing the Decade of Action in Africa:

This round-table panel took place on Tuesday, 2 March. Irūngū Houghton, Director, Amnesty International, Kenya, moderated the session, which addressed the importance and availability, access and application of accurate data and statistics for evidence-based implementation of, and reporting on, the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

Ingrid Olga Ebouka-Babackas, Minister of Planning, Statistics and Regional Integration, Republic of Congo, emphasized the urgent need to generate timely and accurate data to support sustainable development.

Oliver Chinganya, Director of the African Center for Statistics, ECA, reported on the continent's current progress in achieving the SDGs, observing that while Africa is mainly on track with achieving the SDGs, there has been regression on some goals, particularly SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) due to lack of data.

Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice President and Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Malawi, reported that improved data quality was essential for Malawi's 2020 VNR. He emphasized data usage in tracking progress in achieving the SDGs. Highlighting Malawi's successes, he noted that they can be attributed to well-established monitoring and evaluation systems. He also noted the need to build capacity for adequate online systems, big data or large datasets including satellite imagery.



Ingrid Olga Ebouka-Babackas, Minister of Planning, Statistics and Regional Integration, Republic of Congo



Oliver Chinganya, Director of the African Center for Statistics, ECA

Endalkachew Sime, Deputy Commissioner, Planning and Development Commission, Ethiopia, highlighted his country's Ten Year Development Plan, which was created through large datasets and integration of commitments to Agendas 2030 and 2063. He highlighted a highly participatory process, rigorous data usage and integration of a robust monitoring and evaluation system. He further noted that data verification must be a rigorous process, drawing attention to this Commission's automated monitoring and evaluation system.

Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), said that while states are generating more data on mortality and human impact, less is available on economic loss and disruption of services. She further noted the lack of disaggregated data such as on gender and income, which is essential for formulating policies for disaster risk reduction and protecting vulnerable persons or sectors.

Kipyego Cheluget, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), drew attention to plans to establish a Digital Free Trade Area, which will eliminate fragmented national border controls through the use of block chain technology, and in addition will facilitate the sharing of information and data among stakeholders.

David Everatt, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, reported that though there is an increased appreciation of the importance of data for decision-making, not enough has been done to ensure verification and accuracy.

Stephen Chacha, Co-Founder, Tanzania Data Lab, highlighted the capacity gaps in big data and super-computers, and called for data scientists to have access to the policy sphere to inform change.

In the ensuing discussions, participants heard about high-level and UN-funded surveys in Benin for rapid responses to COVID-19. Some participants also urged reducing the digital divide for minorities, particularly persons with disabilities through initiatives such as disability-friendly websites.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed to the following key messages:

- data and information are major assets to Africa's development process, since high quality data are prerequisites to good policy, proper monitoring and evaluating implementation;
- high-quality data should be disaggregated, with a view to closing the digital divide and leaving no one behind, in particular minorities and other vulnerable groups;
- provision of timely and disaggregated data by national statistical systems is critical to informing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas;
- despite having sound statistical institutions, data collection in many African countries remains poor and scattered across multiple jurisdictions, and Member States are urged to break down existing silos to increase collaboration and the exchange of data; and
- there is an urgent need for African governments to invest in digital data infrastructure and capacity development.

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): Participants at this round-table, which was held on Tuesday, 2 March, discussed VNRs to be presented at the 2021 HLPF. The session also provided space for peer learning on ways to strengthen recovery from COVID-19 and on implementation.

Marion Barthélemy, ECA, moderated the session, recalling that 11 African countries will present their VNRs in 2021, which will give countries an opportunity to take stock of COVID-19's impact on achieving the SDGs.

Collen Vixen Kelapile, Botswana, and Vice-President of ECOSOC, pointed to the HLPF as a forum to facilitate critical discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas. He said countries can also share experiences and learn from one another on how to respond to the pandemic in a way that shifts countries' paths onto green, inclusive pathways.

Obeth Kandjoze, Director General, National Planning Commission, Namibia, said the 2021 VNR will be the second for Namibia, and noted it will build on lessons learned from the first review and also take into account COVID-19. He indicated that outcomes from the review process will be incorporated into policy frameworks and the next national development plan. He noted COVID-19's impact on Namibia, including delays in



Mbuipaha Kandjoze
Obeth Kandjoze, Director General, National Planning Commission, Namibia



Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children



July Moyo, Minister, Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, Zimbabwe

achieving targets across all sectors, declining growth, increasing inequality, and the need for significant investment post-COVID.

Sherif Dawoud, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt, noted VNRs are not a goal in themselves, but a tool for policy makers to assess progress, and emphasized that insufficient availability of data remains a challenge. As examples of recent national advances, he pointed to: “Vision 2030,” which Egypt adopted in 2016; a report on finance for sustainable development; work on localizing the sustainable development agenda; and the issuance of green bonds.

Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, emphasized that while ending violence against children is chiefly addressed by SDG 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children), it also relates to other goals, as it requires addressing drivers of violence in a comprehensive manner. She said the COVID-19 pandemic has led to dramatic increases in mental health issues and violence against children, and that this is also linked to violence against women. She emphasized that this increase especially impacts already vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities, refugees, and children residing in remote areas.

Kofi Kankam, Co-Chair, Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and other Stakeholders, called for participatory, whole-of-nation approaches to advancing sustainable development. He urged governments to support inclusive partnerships and recognize stakeholder expertise, and said civil society will prepare its own versions of reports for the VNRs, to ensure accountability. He said the COVID-19 pandemic hampered efforts to engage civil society in rural areas, which often lack access to communications technology.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed how COVID-19 challenges the achievement of the SDGs, whether there are national studies being conducted on the issue, and how digital technology is used as part of the response.

In closing, Marion Barthélemy said VNRs will inform stakeholders of the policy responses required to recover from the pandemic. Paul Mavima reiterated the importance of peer learning through the VNR process and through forums such as the ARFSD. He said the 2030 and 2063 Agendas are blueprints for achieving progress in Africa.

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs): Held on Tuesday, 2 March, this round-table allowed peer learning to bolster local action in order to build forward better from COVID-19. The session was chaired by Mehdi Remaoun, Algeria, and moderated by Thokozile Ruzvidzo, ECA.

July Moyo, Minister, Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, Zimbabwe, highlighted VLR experiences in Victoria Falls and Harare, noting a focus on increasing awareness of the SDGs through VLRs. He elaborated on how local governments are engaged in identifying a COVID-19 recovery strategy. Highlighting challenges such as the difficult macro-economic situation, prevailing sanctions and the impact of climate change, he called on international organizations to provide assistance on data collection.

Highlighting the significance of the informal sector in Africa, Dmitry Pozhidaev, UN Capital Development Fund, explained that in Uganda 85% of the population is engaged informally, but that this sector is delinked from the VLR process. He also emphasized the need for: a fiscal gap analysis; determining the public entity competences required for implementing the SDGs; and a reliable mechanism for continuous tracking and monitoring of implementation.

Oumar Sylla, UN-Habitat, highlighted the UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework as a tool to support local and regional governments to elaborate VLRs. He emphasized the need for a green and sustainable post COVID-19 recovery process, noting that 56% of informal settlement is in Africa, emphasizing social inclusion and the need for public spaces.

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, described VLRs as “an empowerment tool” allowing cities to play a role in localizing the SDGs. He stated that “leaving no one behind extends to leaving no locality behind.” He noted that if current trends continue, local African governments would lose two-thirds of their financial resources, emphasizing the need for fiscal decentralization.

Ambrose Onoria, Uganda, noted that his country was still grappling with HIV/AIDs when the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced. He observed that Uganda’s debt servicing commitments means it cannot deliver on the goals of Africa’s Decade of Action. He stressed the need for increased disaggregated data to inform

local and national planning. Onoria also provided examples of the direct impacts of COVID-19 on the Ugandan economy, noting that roadside markets that service road transport trucks have been forced to close, as trucks from neighboring countries stopped coming during COVID. He predicted a long recovery and significant revenue loss.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the value of VLRs, noting they can be used by local governments for budgeting activities to achieve specific SDGs. Others questioned how the innovations of young people can be upscaled and supported.

The session concluded with panelists underscoring their key messages. These included urging ECA to identify and share success stories of the informal sector in defeating COVID-19 and creating livelihoods; underscoring the need to rebuild local “fiscal spaces” for COVID-19 recovery; bridging the digital divide and focusing on young people’s digital access, especially since half the world’s youth live in Africa. The need to improve and finance the collection of disaggregated data was also raised. Chair Mehdi Remaoun closed the session, stressing the importance of local action by underscoring that there is no COVID-19 recovery without recovery at the local level.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed that countries:

- continue with their commitments to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and to making progress on VNRs;
- draw on lessons from past completed VNRs when engaging in their second, third and fourth VNRs; and
- focus on policies for long-term sustainable socioeconomic development, and embed these in COVID-19 response packages.

The report also urges the UN System to:

- ensure that the global, regional and national pandemic response is a central element for discussion at the 2021 HLPF;
- strengthen the capacity of Member States to produce VNRs that integrate VLRs and other priorities, including green and resilient growth, trade and the Paris Agreement on climate change; and
- continue taking the lead on COVID-19-specific support and socioeconomic responses provided by the WHO, UNDP, UNFPA and regional commissions.

Leveraging Science, Technology, Innovation and Digital Transformation:

This round-table, which convened on Wednesday, 3 March, addressed the current status of science, technology, innovation and digital transformation required for implementation of and reporting on Agendas 2030 and 2063. Speakers also discussed the outcomes of the third Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa. Panelists highlighted the increasingly urgent need for approaches, policy options and investments to leverage science, technology and innovation to build forward better from the COVID-19 crisis to achieve the goals of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

Jean-Paul Adam, ECA, chaired this session. Cristina Duarte, UN Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, noted that African countries must transition from resource-



Cristina Duarte, UN Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa

intensive economies to knowledge-based ones. She explained that intellectual property rights (IPR) are a valuable commodity, but that Africa is yet to use them in this way. She also highlighted that Africa looks to move from importing, to producing vaccines, and that agreeing to exclusive IPR, as the AU has proposed, may block innovation and result in a significant opportunity cost for Africa. Duarte highlighted that in 2019, 1.4 million patent applications were made in China, compared to just 11,000 patent applications in Africa.

Hubert Gijzen, UNESCO, said the African continent needs a bold strategy with science and innovation at its core. He urged avoiding historic mistakes, and supported technological leapfrogging by selectively merging the second, third and fourth industrial revolutions. Noting that almost 50% of African university graduates fail to find employment in their field, Gijzen underscored the need for a focus on relevance, quantity and quality in higher education.

Hendrina Chalwe Doroba, African Development Bank Group (AfDB), highlighted the need for investment in research and development.

Wilhelmina Quaye, CSIR-Science and Technology Policy Research Institute, highlighted the need to focus on the private sector and the ability of industry to generate employment opportunities. Quaye also underscored the need to invest in and leverage emerging technologies.

Madiele Mabika Aimé, Marien Ngouabi University, Republic of Congo, highlighted the need to strengthen institutions and to expand innovation and scope.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed that Africa needs to prioritize low carbon development strategies, leveraging its natural resources and building value chains by adopting appropriate technologies and skills to optimize economic opportunities.

The report encourages countries to:

- increase investment in science, technology and innovation (STI);
- step up their investment in human capital development;
- develop strategies to use key assets such as energy and information and communications technology as catalysts for technological development and industrialization, capitalizing on the opportunities afforded by the African Continental Free Trade Association (AfCFTA);

- prioritize low carbon development strategies; and
- implement STI policies to accelerate attainment of goals in the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

Parallel Meetings on the Forum’s Sub-Themes

Meetings on the Forum’s nine sub-themes took place on Wednesday, 3 March, to identify and articulate policy options and other measures for building forward better and accelerating implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

No Poverty (SDG 1): Stan Nkwain, UN Development Programme (UNDP), moderated the session. Amarakoon Bandara, UNDP, presented the background report on this topic (ECA/RFSD/2021/5), noting that Africa is not on track to reduce poverty by 2023 or end it by 2030. He outlined a number of policy recommendations to tackle the challenge, including addressing data gaps, strengthening partnerships and international cooperation to improve market access, and focusing public-private investment towards poverty reduction.

Paul Mavima, Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe, said inclusive economic growth reaching all communities is necessary to achieve poverty reduction targets. To attain this, he said a majority of the continent’s population needs to be working in an efficient, productive manner, adding that programmes underpinned by domestic resource mobilization should be implemented.

Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Director of France’s ONE Campaign, underscored the importance of putting money into resilience and crises prevention rather than response, saying upfront investment in prevention is less costly than emergency response measures. She said investing in sectors such as healthcare is key for poverty reduction.

Peter Kamalengin, Pan Africa Programme Director, Oxfam, said COVID-19 has disproportionately affected the poorest populations. He said GDP is no longer an effective measure of success, and pointed to interventions for building forward better, including investing in universal, gender-neutral and high-quality public services, encouraging domestic resource mobilization and using it to redistribute wealth, and engaging in debt restructuring and debt relief for the continent.

Abebe Shimeles, African Economic Research Consortium, said evidence suggests countries able to accelerate economic

growth to 6-7% of GDP annually, and sustain it for eight years, will have a “growth episode” that can lift people out of poverty. He urged politicians to focus on high-productivity sectors to transform economies.

During the subsequent discussion, some participants called for innovative taxes to provide an additional revenue stream. On questions related to creating a pathway to sustained poverty reduction coupled with inclusive, job-rich growth, Shimeles suggested governments should indicate sectors where job growth is needed.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed:

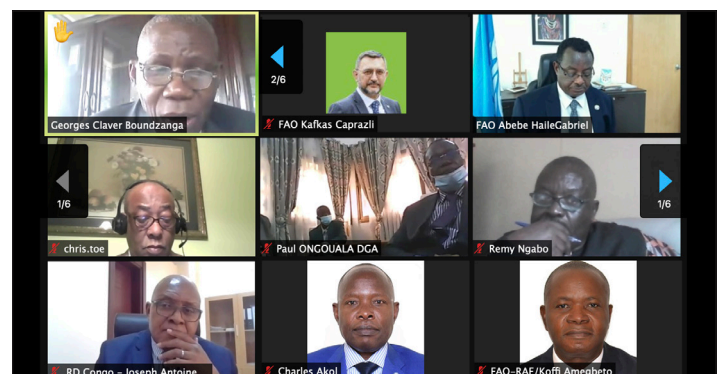
- to recognize the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in hampering Africa’s progress and reversing gains towards the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
- that data generation should be strengthened for poverty measurement and policy formulation;
- that partnerships should be strengthened so as to accelerate progress and reassess international solidarity as an economic principle;
- that international cooperation mechanisms should be strengthened to improve market access for African products and leverage the AfCFTA to add value and trade, improve welfare and reduce poverty; and
- that public and private investment should be focused towards poverty reduction and job creation.

Zero Hunger (SDG 2): Abebe Haile-Gabriel, FAO Regional Representative for Africa, moderated this meeting. In his opening remarks, he presented the background report on this topic (ECA/RFSD/2021/6) and said food systems on the continent are plagued by inefficiencies and structural deficits. He highlighted strengthening social protection as key for crisis prevention and building back better. He underscored that the transformation of African food systems should support more diverse, affordable, and healthy diets.

Chris Toe, World Food Programme, said African countries need to scale up investment, better connecting rural farmers to markets and expanding risk insurance coverage. He also called for investment in sustainable, climate, and disaster-resilient infrastructure, and human capital development. Toe pointed to the successful implementation of school feeding programmes across the continent, noting this created health, nutrition, and educational benefits, as well as supporting local agriculture



Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Director of France’s ONE Campaign



Panelists in the session on Zero Hunger

development. He noted that governments' economic, fiscal, and trade policy could either incentivize or disincentivize agricultural investment. He further observed that some tax regimes favor foreign over domestic investments, and called for supporting small-holder farmers and breaking down trade barriers on the continent.

Chimimba David Phiri, FAO representative to the AU and ECA, noted that while COVID-19 briefly increased the number of undernourished people, efforts have succeeded in limiting the intensity of this regression, and that communities are becoming more resilient.

Mukena Bantu, Ministry of Agriculture, Democratic Republic of the Congo, emphasized the need to strengthen small-holder cooperatives and said public-private partnerships are key to drive the agro-industrial transformation.

Georges Claver Boundzanga, National REDD+ Coordinator, Republic of Congo, underscored the value of non-timber forest products, such as fruits and mushrooms, for enhancing food security and nutrition. He said this potential is not yet adequately utilized.

Pauline Kariuki, Rural Women Network, Kenya, recalled the key role of women in ensuring household food security and driving climate-smart agriculture. To achieve SDG 2, she said resources should go to the "base of the pyramid" and support communities on the ground.

Final outcome: In its final report, ARFSD 7 agreed to scale up investment and political commitment by focusing on: linking rural actors to markets, financial services and innovation; sustainable development of food systems, climate adaptation and preparedness infrastructure; and human capital development in childhood learning, healthy diets and social protection.

The final report also states that:

- the transformation of food systems should focus on food safety, expanding early warning systems, and building resilient ecosystems;
- forest-product value chains should be strengthened to help diversify food and income sources; and
- addressing the impacts of COVID-19 should focus on saving lives and livelihoods through humanitarian and nutrition assistance.

Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3): This session was co-chaired by Matshidiso Moeti, WHO/AFRO Regional Director, and Germain Mpassi, Director General of Health in the Republic of Congo.

Humphrey Karamagi, WHO Regional Office for Africa, presented the background paper on this topic (ECA/RFSD/2021/7) noting that the region has made progress in this SDG, thus closing the gap between low- and high-income countries. He reported that the continent is still lagging behind in terms of unrealized Millennium Development Goals, however, citing maternal mortality as still among the highest in the world. On SDG targets, Karamagi highlighted challenges in limited resources to address non-communicable diseases and an inadequate number of health practitioners, which has been made more apparent by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Matshidiso Moeti, WHO/AFRO Regional Director

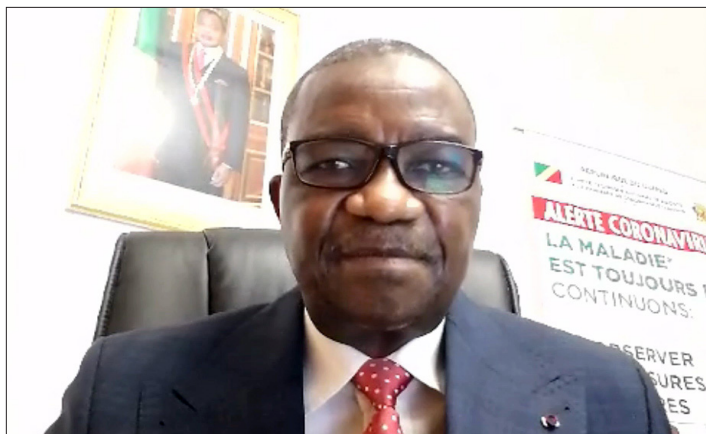
During the panel session, Maha El Rabbat, Executive Director, Middle East and North Africa Health Policy Forum, highlighted the need to prioritize health on the continent as a prerequisite for development. She reported that progress in this SDG has been constrained by resources, the burden of disease, and the fragility of health systems. She reported that COVID-19 has compromised progress made in the health sector and highlighted huge disparities and vulnerabilities.

Henry Chew Kansembe, Ministry of Health, Zambia, said Zambia has achieved the UNAIDS "90-90-90" strategy, with 90% of HIV-infected individuals diagnosed by 2020, 90% of whom are receiving treatment and 90% of whom will achieve sustained virological suppression. He reported that Zambia's National Health Insurance now has 25% coverage. Kansembe further noted the need to address disparities in health service provision between rural and urban populations, as well as to improve the quality of health services and focus more on non-communicable diseases.

Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA, South Africa, highlighted Africa's young population and said healthcare systems should focus more on adolescent reproductive health. Citing HIV-AIDS as an ongoing pandemic in Africa, she explained that it is responsible for 10% of maternal mortality in Southern Africa.



Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA, South Africa



Balandamio Florent, Vice Minister of Health, Republic of Congo

Balandamio Florent, Vice Minister of Health, Republic of Congo, reported that since 2016 his country has made efforts to increase access to healthcare at a district level, which has involved increased vaccinations and more training of healthcare practitioners. He noted positive impacts on maternal mortality and a great improvement in infant health.

Keith Andere, Regional Coordinator, Youth Caucus, emphasized that the cost of digital infrastructure and internet access are a barrier to achieving the SDGs. He called for more consideration of mental health, which is a key concern for youth, and highlighted opportunities to invest in young people in areas such as co-learning with women and girls.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agrees that Member States should pay attention to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on mental health, prioritize sexual and reproductive health services, and address sexual and gender-based violence.

The report also highlights the need to improve:

- readiness and functionality of health care systems;
- health-related decision-making by resource allocation for civil registration and collection of vital statistics; and
- diagnostic capacity and awareness on non-communicable diseases.

Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8): Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO, and Mehdi Remaoun, Algeria, co-chaired the session.

Bernd Mueller, ILO, presented a background note on this topic (ECA/RFSD/2021/8), observing that decent work is key to lifting people out of poverty and citing challenges due to COVID-19. He explained that economic growth in Africa excludes many people, with major challenges including the dominance of the informal sector, working poverty and underemployment. He stressed the need to create more productive jobs and social protection systems, in addition to employment protection. He also emphasized the need for structural transformation and economic diversification, mainstreaming policies to increase employment in national planning, and effective interventions to facilitate transition to the formal sector.

Jacqueline Mugo, Federation of Kenya Employers and Business Africa, emphasized the need to engage governments



Jacqueline Mugo, Federation of Kenya Employers and Business Africa

to create a sustainable environment for businesses and the economy. She pointed out that the aspiration of decent work and economic growth depends largely on the performance of business enterprises. She noted that many businesses have been decimated by COVID-19 and that interventions to tackle social and economic challenges must also address the state of these enterprises. She called for addressing regulatory barriers to business and cautioned against ignoring the role of agriculture.

Chris Ngige, Minister of Labour and Employment, Nigeria, reflected on employment challenges in his country. He explained that the lack of formal employment is an issue and that strategies are being deployed to skill youth and broaden capacity for self-employment. He said economic policies that promote growth, resilience and digitalization will unleash new potential, particularly among youth, and called for focusing on agriculture, describing it as the “low-hanging fruit.”

Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa), pointed out that economic growth has not resulted in structural transformation. He called for a new social contract to allow for more political accountability and recognition of the right to organize, as well as for a social dialogue between governments and workers. He highlighted ITUC-Africa’s efforts to support organized labor, adding that governments need to create the necessary space for engagement so that appropriate policies can be fashioned.

Prosper Chitambar, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, advocated for the creation of an appropriate institutional policy and regulatory framework to address the large size of the informal economy, as well as for expansion of the tax base. He further observed that in most African countries the business environment is challenging, with onerous and cumbersome tax regimes, which explains why most businesses prefer to remain informal. Chitambar advocated strengthening key social dialogue institutions, ensuring inclusivity, partnerships and ramping up critical investments in infrastructure, adding that 4.5% of GDP should be channeled towards social spending.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agreed to instigate decisive public policies for, *inter alia*:

- leveraging opportunities for a green transition;
- enhancing public investments;
- strengthening education and training;
- progressive taxation;
- social protection systems; and
- strengthening labor market institutions.

Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10): Charles Kwenin, Regional Director, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Southern Africa, moderated the session.

Phumza Manqindi, IOM, presented the background report informing the session (ECA/RFSD/2021/9), underscoring that COVID-19 has led to increasing job losses and unemployment, thus driving further income and societal inequality. She said the quantity and quality of fiscal policies need to be strengthened. To facilitate the free movement of persons, goods, and services, she called for tapping into the benefits of digital innovation.

Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director, UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office, urged governments to adapt policies to eradicate inequalities. He underscored progress made in empowering women and youth, who are often marginalized due to cultural practices, and noted that though school enrolment rates have increased they are still insufficient. He said key actions to address inequality include acting on climate change, which exacerbates inequality, and creating partnerships in priority sectors, such as education and health.

Cosmos Chanda, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), said it is imperative to promote inclusivity in building back better and advancing poverty reduction efforts in the COVID-19 recovery process. In this regard, he highlighted partnerships to support refugees in the Sahel. He said the UNHCR has significantly increased the scale and scope of initiatives on data analysis, which is key to driving change.

Judith Kaulem, Executive Director, Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, Zimbabwe, said the key to addressing inequality is to improve productive capacities. She urged interdisciplinary research to inform productive capacity policies and programmes, and called for African countries to support research through more meaningful investment. She said research is crucial for innovation, urging efforts to close the digital technology gap from the bottom up to ensure no one is left behind.

In the ensuing discussion, participants reiterated the importance of political will. They also underscored access to services, particularly water resources, and debated pathways for scaling-up successful initiatives.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 urges Member States to, *inter alia*:

- ensure implementation of UN and AU instruments that support social protection of vulnerable populations;
- improve socioeconomic data collection and analysis to inform decisions;
- engage with the private sector to enhance access to technologies that address inequalities; and
- invest in research and innovation to increase local productive capacities.



Samba Harouna Thiam, UNEP

Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12):

Samba Harouna Thiam, UNEP, moderated this session. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, UNEP Regional Director for Africa, introduced the background report informing the session (ECA/RFSD/2021/10) and highlighted that SDG 12 provides opportunities to leverage linkages among SDGs. She welcomed a greater focus on fossil fuel subsidy reforms, noting this is a key tool to reduce market distortions. In terms of challenges, she highlighted the lack of reliable data, for example on food waste and loss, insufficient allocation of financial resources, and lack of political will and institutional capacity to consistently implement sustainable consumption and production (SCP) objectives.

Mohamed Benyahia, Ministry for Energy, Mining, and the Environment, Morocco, delineated national SCP activities in different sectors. He highlighted an upcoming revision of waste treatment legislation, which will include extended producer responsibility and enhance waste separation at the household level. He reported that Morocco had adopted a principle of “governmental exemplarity” whereby the public sector will lead by example in the green transition.

Chimimba David Phiri, FAO representative to the AU and ECA, emphasized the scale of the resource use problem, which touches upon all aspects of peoples’ lives. Stressing the high social costs of dietary diseases, he called for increased awareness raising about sustainable diets.



Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, UNEP Regional Director for Africa

Mika Odido, Regional Coordinator for Africa, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, said the region does not yet optimally leverage its marine resources. He pointed to challenges such as: illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; the use of destructive fishing practices; and oil spills. He noted that many African countries lack ocean research vessels and pointed to the activities under the UN Decade for Ocean Science to address data challenges.

Nilgün Taş, UN Industrial Development Organization, underscored the importance of product design to ensure reuse and recycling potential and drive resource circularity. She emphasized that behavior change at all levels—from governments to businesses and citizens—is required to make global value chains greener.

In the subsequent discussion, participants highlighted progress in implementing the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP Patterns adopted in 2012, and the centrality of human rights in ensuring a “just transition.”

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 urges Member States to, *inter alia*:

- scale up measures to achieve inclusive green economies and SCP, such as telecommuting and greener public procurement;
- boost innovative capacities of small- and medium-sized enterprises and accelerate the transition to green economies;
- step up advocacy and educational measures that encourage young people to follow sustainable lifestyles;
- promote resource-efficient and cleaner production;
- step up efforts to harness the potential of the AfCFTA; and
- take all necessary steps to achieve sustainable ocean economies.

Climate Action (SDG 13): This session was co-chaired by Germain Mpassi, Director General of Health, Republic of Congo, and Mami Mizutori, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDRR.

James Murombedzi, ECA, presented the background report (ECA/RFSD/2021/11) and highlighted the impact of more frequent and intense climate change and weather-related events, observing that if temperatures increase by 4°C, Africa will lose 12% of its GDP. He cited Africa’s low adaptive capacity to climate change as a major challenge in light of limited access to climate funds for adaptation, with countries forced to spend 2-9% of income on climate adaptation. Murombedzi also explained that the AUC is in the process of finalizing the African Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030, noting that the challenge will be on means of implementation for low emission pathways, engaging stakeholders in climate action, and ensuring just transition.

Ernest Afiesimama, WMO, noted that African economies depend on agriculture, which is predominately rain-fed, so farmers need reliable weather and climate information. He called for a focus on digital solutions such as weather apps and other e-systems, as well as engaging young people in the development of climate-informed digital information systems.

Noting that the climate adaptation and finance gap amounts to around US\$7-15 billion per year, James Kinyangi, AfDB,



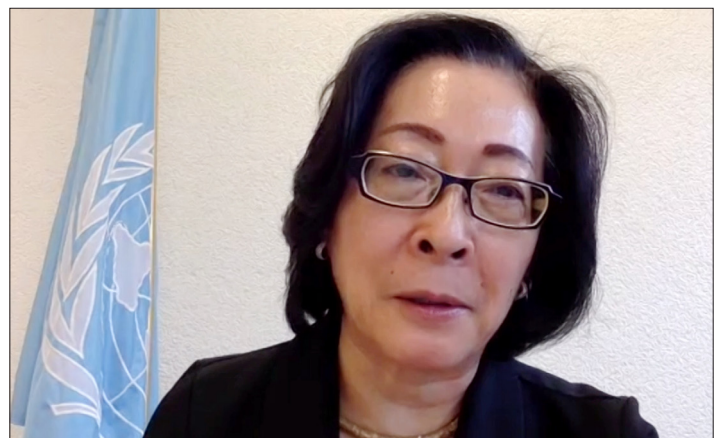
James Kinyangi, AfDB

explained that AfDB has set an ambitious target to allocate US\$25 billion between 2021-2025 for climate finance. He explained that AfDB’s Investment Climate Facility comprises 27 approved operations in 16 countries, and cited the Africa Climate Change Fund, a US\$22 million demand-driven window, aimed at supporting countries to develop their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and longer-term climate change strategies.

Mithika Mwenda, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, drew attention to communities on the frontline of the climate crisis, questioning whether climate funds reach the people most impacted by climate change. Mwenda underscored that a transition to low emission development entails a radical shift in how energy is governed and accessed and should address availability, affordability and production.

Laure Gnassou, UN Resident Coordinator Office, Burkina Faso, noted that climate change has resulted in the deterioration of natural resources and pressure on grazing, water, and forestry resources, explaining that the UN is prioritizing low emission development, with assistance being provided for the elaboration of a national climate change adaptation plan.

Chinma George, Youth Representative, Nigeria, highlighted the vulnerability of young people, explaining that they are at the center of conflicts resulting from climate change impacts. She called for climate change policies to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of young people, especially in terms of the COVID-19 recovery.



Mami Mizutori, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDRR

Razi Bozekri, Director of Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Green Economy, Morocco, outlined Morocco's experience in transitioning to renewable energy as part of a development strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Emphasizing South-South cooperation, he highlighted the work of three climate commissions: Sahel Regional; Congo Basin; and Island States. All three, he said, contributed to addressing climate change.

Bitsat Yohannes, UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, highlighted a UN monitoring mechanism to track and report on where climate finance is going. She noted that with the proliferation of grants and instruments, a "menu" for member states and community actors is needed to demystify climate finance and clarify options.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agrees that:

- the continent needs to invest in climate risk information and digital solutions;
- governments must promote a whole-of-society approach and implement disaster risk reduction, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies;
- climate actions need to be just and include local communities and youth;
- nature-based solutions should be prioritized;
- swapping debt for nature and climate protection provides a bridge to greater debt sustainability; and
- young people should be included in planning and policy formulation.

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16):

Christopher Gascon, IOM, chaired the session, underscoring that SDG 16 promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, and is vital to the achievement of all SDGs.

Allan Mukungu, ECA, presented the background report for the session (ECA/RFSD/2021/12). He observed an upward trajectory of improved governance in the region, but said only 8% of African countries can be considered truly democratic. He drew attention to the exponential increase between 2011 and 2018 of civil unrest and internally-displaced refugees. He noted that critical resources have been diverted to fight COVID-19, but explained that reductions in international assistance for counter-terrorism are counter-productive in the long term.



Christopher Gascon, IOM



Nora Benabbas, Algeria

Mukungu explained that Africa loses US\$87 billion annually through capital flight, and that illicit financial flows undermine development investments.

Nora Benabbas, Algeria, noted that access to justice in Algeria has been enhanced by certifying, improving and digitizing public services. She drew attention to government initiatives to provide social support to workers through increasing the minimum wage and providing bonuses to health workers.

Sara Hamouda, African Peer Review Mechanism, African Union, stressed that effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness are the three key principles of achieving SDG 16. Hamouda underscored that political accountability is crucial for mitigating shocks, providing examples of success stories in South Africa and Uganda.

Stating that SDG 16 is everybody's business, Stanlake Samkange, World Food Programme, said the absence of peace is the most significant barrier to food security. He underscored the need to design all programmes with this goal in mind. Samkange stressed that emergency relief, such as food programmes, should be executed sensitively to avoid undermining the capacity of the state. He cautioned against international programmes attempting to take credit for successes, which may cause people to infer that states have failed.

Joseph Whittal, Ghana, reflected that COVID-19 has shown us the "weak underbelly" of Africa, and underscored the need to adopt a human rights approach to development planning. He said principles of non-discrimination and accountable institutions are key.

Highlighting research showing that a quarter of Africa's population has paid a bribe to access a critical public service, Theo Chiviru, Open Government Partnership, stressed that business-as-usual is not a sustainable way forward. He highlighted that in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments are shrinking civil space and thereby eroding democracy. Chiviru underscored that trust in institutions is at an all-time low, pointing to the critical need for proactive institutions that are responsive to the needs of citizens.

Hussein Elshaar, Egypt, highlighted the need to tackle the various manifestations of inequality and to create a space for

participation of all stakeholders. Elshaar highlighted the damage and lost opportunities caused by illicit financial flows which, together with falling export revenues, constrain governments' ability to invest and respond to crises.

Enzo Fazzino, UNESCO, discussed UNESCO's activities that contribute to creating a culture of peace on the African continent. He drew particular attention to peace-building initiatives involving youth.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agrees that States would:

- foster political leadership and meaningful stakeholder participation in SDG implementation processes;
- provide adequate resources to strengthen human resources and disaggregated data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems;
- be accountable for the resources deployed in pursuit of SDGs;
- strengthen institutional capacity to adopt a human rights-based approach to development;
- protect the financial security of Africa through curbing illicit financial flows and corruption; and
- ensure human rights obligations and good governance.

Partnerships (SDG 17): This session was chaired by Mainassara Assouman, Niger. Thierry Hyacinthe Amoussoubo, ECA, presented the background paper on "Revitalizing Partnerships to Promote Post-Pandemic Recovery (ECA/RFSD/2021/13), reporting increased debt over the pandemic period, with weakening public financing mechanisms and resource mobilization capacity. He noted that the elevation of science and technology have provided opportunities to deal with the pandemic, with a pressing need for increased digitization and biotechnology.

Edward Kallon, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Nigeria, moderated the panel.

Franck Corneille Mampouya-Mbama, Ministry of Finance and Budget, Republic of Congo, noted increased capacity building in his country for development planning and a moratorium on debt, which has enabled progress on this SDG. He recommended robust reforms to support increased partnerships, including public-private partnerships, and to access innovative financing mechanisms.



Edward Kallon, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Nigeria

José Carbajo Martinez, Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank Group, discussed his organization's work on mobilizing private capital. Noting that financing is a pillar of partnerships, he added that with current trends we are unlikely to achieve the SDGs due to the ever-widening financing gap. He highlighted the need to mobilize private sector investments in order to finance development in Africa.

Margaret Malu, Deputy Regional Director, World Food Programme, said the pandemic has highlighted the need to rethink international cooperation for humanitarian challenges. She said progress cannot be achieved by any government acting alone, as the pandemic has wreaked havoc on supply changes and increased food insecurity and malnutrition.

Natalie Pilhes, Director of Migration, Justice and Security Issues, Union for the Mediterranean, said effective partnerships need to take into account civil society organizations. She highlighted the women's professional networks that will enable countries to ensure gender equality through partnerships.

Mohammed Abdiker, IOM, said migration is a key component of development and highlighted that the free movement of persons has been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has caused unemployment due to lack of access to jobs, and thus has been responsible for the sharp decrease in remittances from the African diaspora. He highlighted social repercussions to immigrants abroad, including xenophobia, detention and deportation.

Abdiker also highlighted the 2020 AUC Regional Economic Communities (RECs) High-Level Meeting. He explained that this meeting was held to launch the Joint Labour Migration Programme Strategic Framework, guide the continent on issues of migration for work, and create support for implementation of the strategy.

Talla Kebe, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), highlighted the importance of digital transformation, which had been brought to the forefront by the pandemic and can help address challenges in education, health, food and free trade. He highlighted the need to implement the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030).

In the ensuing discussion, participants noted the need to ensure civil society organizations are included in programme design and implementation. Speakers also noted the need to mobilize domestic resources to fight the pandemic and to ensure transparency in financial management of donor funds to enhance a favorable environment for partnerships with the private sector.

Final outcome: In its final report (ECA/RFSD/2021/L.1), ARFSD 7 agrees that:

- international development partners should ensure the full and timely disbursement of their financial pledges and meet their official development assistance commitments;
- African economies should strengthen domestic resource mobilization;
- Africa must invest more in research and development, infrastructure and human capital development;
- AfCFTA will promote intra-African trade, industrialization and facilitate recovery from impacts of COVID-19;

- national capacities to make effective use of innovative technologies and big data should be strengthened; and
- women's professional networks should be promoted and ensure women's full and active participation in SDG work.

Regional Dialogue on African Food Systems

This session was convened on Thursday, 4 March. The aim of the session was to provide ARFSD with a space for dialogue in preparation for the UN Secretary-General's Summit on Food Systems, which will convene in September 2021. The session explored how to rapidly transform food systems and identify pathways to accelerate progress for the SDGs.

Panelists examined drivers that shape future pathways of African food systems, highlighting complexity, challenges, and opportunities. They also pinpointed the importance of regionally coordinated actions and formulated actionable measures to help accelerate food systems transformation.

High-level Technical Round-table on Leveraging Regional Action for Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Food Systems:

Godfrey Bahigwa, Director of Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission, chaired the session. In a keynote presentation, William Lugemwa, ECA, said Africa's food systems are evolving towards intensified production systems. He noted several "mega trends," including the rise of the middle class, rapid urbanization and modernization of food value chains. He also said agribusiness has the potential to drive inclusive growth, adding that transformation is required in order to shift from food importation, which accounts for US\$35 billion annually.

After this presentation, participants gathered in two breakout sessions to address the five Action Tracks identified for the 2021 Food System Summit. These tracks were designed to identify solutions and accelerate actions in food production systems, and are aligned to the objectives of the Summit.

Break-out Session on Building Sustainable, Resilient Food Systems in Africa: This session considered two Action Tracks,; boosting nature-positive production (Track 3), and building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress (Track 5).

Chris Toe, World Food Programme, moderated the session. He noted that the UN will convene the Food Systems Summit in



Jamie Morrison, FAO

2021 as part of the Decade of Action to Achieve the SDGs. Toe drew attention to the overlapping shocks, conflicts, droughts and floods experienced in Africa, which he said are magnifying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. He underscored the need for more productive and inclusive food systems that are both environmentally sustainable and resilient to shocks.

Jamie Morrison, FAO, discussed the continent-wide trends, including that 60% of cultivated land in Africa is under cereal production. He said increasing shares of maize and rice are leading to reduced diversity in cereal crops, which is making the food system less resilient. Morrison explained that livestock production is constrained by the degradation of grasslands. He said a deeper understanding of drivers can provide deeper insights and advocated for a systems approach that leverages interdisciplinary expertise.

Joan Kagwanja, Land Policy Initiative, underscored that tenure and land rights are essential to sustainable agriculture. Highlighting that 50% of Africa's agriculture labor force is women but that women own less than 15% of land, Kagwanja said women's land rights must be secured. She reported that the Land Policy Initiative advocates for at least 30% of land to be owned by women. She noted most of Africa's land is managed under customary land rights.

Eshete Dejen, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), said the East African region is the most vulnerable in Africa, suffering floods, droughts, desert locusts, as well as COVID-19. He said the economy is slowing and there are severe disruptions to the import supply chain, meaning restricted availability in agricultural inputs, including seeds and fertilizer.

Luca Rossi, UNDRR, underscored that sub-Saharan Africa includes some of the most food insecure countries, with disasters most commonly triggered by drought, flood and (to a lesser extent) wildfires. He said COVID-19 has disrupted food supply chains and pushed up prices.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the use of satellite information for early warning signals of drought and floods. They also discussed the need to focus on indigenous food production to ensure these foods are not lost. Several participants mentioned the need for consultations at the local level and the need for community and youth engagement.



Chris Toe, World Food Programme



Jemimah Njuki, Director for Africa, IFPRI



Felicite Tchibindat, Regional Nutrition Advisor, UNICEF

Break-out Session on Promoting Sustainable, Inclusive Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition: This session considered three action tracks: ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all (track 1); shifting to sustainable consumption patterns (track 2); and advancing equitable livelihoods (track 4).

Jemimah Njuki, Director for Africa, The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), moderated the session. In her introductory remarks, she highlighted that food systems are struggling, food waste is a problem and food is not just about keeping people fed but extends to dietary diversity and quality.

Ntiokam Divine, Managing Director, Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network, highlighted the upcoming 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, underscoring the role of Summit “heroes.” He highlighted activities undertaken in the lead up to the Summit, including support to the youth agenda. Divine emphasized that in the future, African food systems would be driven by young people and civil society, underscoring the role of information and communication technology (ICT) for agricultural food systems, as well as the contribution that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could make.

Ousmane Badiane, IFPRI, noted public expenditure on agriculture is declining, which he said must change. On consumption and nutrition levels, he noted that while progress has been made on eliminating hunger, there are serious issues concerning nutrition adequacy. Turning to food processing, he pointed out that this sector is growing rapidly and is mainly centered on traditional (rather than imported) staples like millet, sorghum and cassava. He suggested that in less than two decades, African staples will mostly be consumed in their processed forms, which has implications for the sustainability of small holder farms. He also highlighted the need for: inclusive food systems and safety nets; investing in technology and agri-business; and examining the role of global and domestic trade, including how the AfCFTA can play a part in this.

Felicite Tchibindat, Regional Nutrition Advisor, UNICEF, noted that malnutrition has remained unacceptably high in Africa, adding that many children aged 6-23 months are deprived of minimum diet diversity, which should consist of at least four food groups. She elaborated on the continent’s high vulnerability due to climate change, conflicts, and now COVID-19, also noting that historically

the focus has been on production and aggressive marketing of ultra-processed, poor quality food, rather than on dietary diversification.

Robson Mutandi, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), discussed challenges incentivizing small holder farmers so they can transition to commercial production, noting the need to reorganize markets to facilitate small holder access and opportunities provided under AfCFTA. Explaining that a huge funding gap needs to be filled, he said innovation and digital platforms, research and development, and private sector engagement, will all be vital.

Alex Ariho, CEO, African Agribusiness Incubators Network, highlighted constraints faced by small holder farmers across Africa, including issues relating to lack of skills and competences to run and manage enterprises, and the absence of affordable financing. He noted that access to technology and innovation is also limited, which hampers quality market access. He also observed that the majority of small holders experience post-harvest handling losses, which limits their capacity to deliver at scale and reduces their ability to grow. He said taking advantage of ICT and innovations in terms of connectivity and e-trade would be transformative, as well as also ensuring that food supply systems are sustainable. On global connectivity, he stressed that small holder farmers need to be better connected with the rest of the world. He explained that his organization is now looking at championing incubation at the regional and national level and mentoring young food system start ups.

High-Level Policy Round-table on Leveraging Action for Sustainable Food Systems in Africa: Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development, chaired this session. Godfrey Bahiigwa, African Union Commission (AUC), shared key messages from the technical round-table breakout sessions.

On building sustainable, resilient food systems in Africa, he highlighted the need for:

- resilience against climate change and other disasters;
- free flow of food across continental borders;
- better access to digitalization;
- improved land tenure systems; and
- supporting local food markets.



Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development

On promoting sustainable, inclusive food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition, he reported on a need to:

- improve cross-sectoral collaborations to accelerate transformation of food systems;
- advance the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP);
- develop and implement comprehensive continental strategies for modernization of food systems;
- promote coherent nutritious food policies and strategies that are evidence based; and
- invest in food system approaches that address affordability of nutritious foods.

Jerome Afeikhen, AUC, speaking on behalf of Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, AUC, noted the need to bridge the gap between food production and demand, adding that resilient systems should include national food reserves for staple foods, improved national food markets, and addressing impacts of climate change on food production.

Martin Bwalya, NEPAD speaking on behalf of AUDA-NEPAD CEO Ibrahim Mayaki, emphasized the importance of empowering grassroots communities through access to information and technical expertise, as well as involvement in decision making.

Martin Frick, FAO, cited ongoing dialogues hosted by UN agencies, governments and civil societies in the buildup to the Food Systems Summit. He highlighted the need to mobilize conversations on food systems from the bottom up and top down in order to transform food systems in Africa.

Noting existing inefficiencies in Africa's food systems, Abebe Haile-Gabriel, FAO, said system transformation requires a market-driven approach, an industry-led process, and strong reliance on science, technology and innovation. He noted the need to assure value addition for consumers and producers along the value chain.

During the ensuing discussions, participants called for greater support for gender equality and more engagement in the Summit dialogues at local levels in local languages. They took note of FAO's work on cities and food security and urged for greater



Martin Frick, FAO

recognition of small and medium-sized enterprises, which form 64% of the value chain.

Presentations and Discussions on Sustainable Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis and Implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas

Munyaradzi Chenje, UN Development Coordination Office, moderated the session, which considered the implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

Joy Kategekwa, UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa, outlined the ways in which the UN System has coordinated activities and enhanced collaboration with the African Union. She highlighted the pooling of pharmaceutical procurement through the African Medical Supplies Platform, which she said has facilitated regional access to personal protective equipment. She underscored the importance of the AfCFTA, noting it holds the promise of accelerating development in Africa.

Coumba Mar Gadio, UN Resident Coordinator, Zambia, said the UN Country Office in Zambia has provided assistance to the Zambian Government in conducting outreach on the SDGs, as well as engaging at the highest level through participating in a national development coordination committee. Coumba underscored the need to also collaborate with international financial institutions, and said the UN had assisted in mobilizing resources.

Micheline Baussard, Adviser, ECA, presented perspectives on the regional strategy to support the Decade of Action, noting the need for investing in human capital and harmonizing the development agendas. She identified three major actors: governing authorities; civil society; and policy and the enabling environment, emphasizing that achieving the Agendas is everyone's business and so everyone has to play their part.

Edith Madela-Mntla, University of Pretoria, South Africa, presented the perspectives of Major Groups and other stakeholders on implementing the Agenda 2030 under the subthemes of people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships. Recommendations included ensuring that equity, inclusion and non-discrimination underpin all efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. She also recommended inclusive

and gender-based economic policies to foster sustainable development.

Closing of the Forum

Consideration of Key Messages: This session was chaired by ARFSD 7 Chair Arlette Soudan-Nonault, and moderated by Jean-Paul Adam, ECA. Adam presented an outcome document containing key messages from the Forum. He reported that the document would be circulated for comments from Member States and other stakeholders until 14 March 2021, and that the finalized messages would be forwarded to the ECOSOC Council of Ministers and the HLPF.

Highlights from the key messages include that:

- data and statistics are key to a sustainable, resilient recovery, and there is need for capacity building on data collection and analysis;
- VNRs and VLRs offer an opportunity for peer-learning;
- models for increasing economic growth in Africa should be re-examined to improve inclusiveness and poverty reduction efforts;
- policy support and capacity building for emerging technologies are needed; and
- the AfCFTA should be leveraged to ensure job creation in areas such as green industrialization and climate smart agriculture.

Nassim Oulmane, ECA, presented the draft “Brazzaville Declaration,” noting it will also be open for comments and further development until 14 March 2021. The Forum adopted the Declaration, which, *inter alia*:

- invites development partners to mobilize financing to operationalize the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin;
- urges international collaboration to support the conservation of peatland in the Congo Basin, noting its contribution to carbon sequestration;
- calls upon African governments to redefine and develop economic models that protect natural resources, promote renewable energy, and foster green and resilient infrastructure and inclusive digitalization; and
- calls upon African governments to make better use of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain to support the sustainability transformation.

In response to Le Toudjida Allara, Executive Director, Strategies to Advance and Network Deaf Africans for Ubuntu, who in sign language praised the incorporation of sign language interpreters at ARFSD 7 and urged continued dialogue with all stakeholders, Jean-Paul Adam underscored that the Secretariat will ensure engagement with stakeholders on finalizing key messages. Nayah Lekunze, Mubwert Women Cooperative, Cameroon, called for increased emphasis on empowering women and ensuring all children have access to education. She also noted that climate change is severely impacting household food security.

Theme, Dates, and Venue of ARFSD 2022: Delegates approved an offer from Rwanda to host the eighth session of the ARFSD in 2022.



Arlette Soudan-Nonault, Minister of Tourism and Environment, Republic of Congo; **Le Toudjida Allara**, Executive Director, Strategies to Advance and Network Deaf Africans for Ubuntu; and a sign language interpreter

Closing Statements: During the final plenary on Thursday afternoon, 4 March, Jean-Paul Adam, ECA, thanked the Republic of Congo for their leadership at ARFSD 7 and highlighted the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the University of Denis Sassou Nguesso on artificial intelligence. Calling for more affordable financing, Adam said building forward better can only occur if all partners work together.

ARFSD 7 Chair Arlette Soudan-Nonault thanked participants for their robust discussion during the Forum. She said many of the discussions underscored the critical role of data and statistics, emphasizing that progress in this area is imperative for Africa to have a successful Decade of Action on sustainable development. She closed the meeting at 6:21 pm (GMT+1), stating “the challenges are considerable but together we can and shall meet them.”

Upcoming Meetings

53rd Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development: Addressing the theme, “Africa’s sustainable industrialization and diversification in the digital era in the context of COVID-19,” the meeting will explore how digitization is opening up opportunities in agriculture, services and clean energy. It will also examine how these can help spur the processes of industrialization and diversification while providing options for adapting to climate change, including methods to ensure resilience. **dates:** 17-23 March 2021 **location:** In person for speakers, Ambassadors based in Addis Ababa, and Bureau members ECA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Virtual **www:** <https://www.uneca.org/cfm2021>

HLPF 2021: ECOSOC will convene the 2021 session of the HLPF under the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.” Following the first five days, the HLPF’s three-day ministerial segment takes place jointly with ECOSOC’s high-level segment.

dates: 6-15 July 2021 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York
www: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021>

2021 Food Systems Summit: Convened by the UN Secretary-General, the Summit aims to maximize the co-benefits of a food systems approach across the 2030 Agenda and address the challenges of climate change. The Summit will provide a platform for ambitious new actions, innovative solutions, and plans to transform food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the SDGs. **dates:** September 2021 (TBC) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York (TBC) **www:** <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26): The 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26), the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 16), and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 3) are expected to convene one year after their originally scheduled dates. **dates:** 1-12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, UK **www:** <https://unfccc.int>

UNEA-5 Resumed Session: Convening under the theme, “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs,” UNEA-5 will provide a platform for discussing and implementing nature-based solutions that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, by holistically addressing its social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Building on the online session that convened in February 2021, the meeting will discuss ways to ensure that policies for economic recovery following COVID-19 lead to a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. A special session of UNEA to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP will be held for two days (5-6 March 2022) in conjunction with the resumed session of UNEA-5. **dates:** 28 February – 4 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

AFRSD 8: AFRSD 8 will convene in Rwanda in early 2022.
dates: TBC early 2022 **location:** Rwanda **www:** TBC

Glossary

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
MEA	Multilateral environment agreement
ARFSD	Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IPRT	Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
STI	Science, technology and innovation
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review

