



At sustainable development forum in Zimbabwe, Africa agrees to scale-up efforts to achieve SDGs

The Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (ARFSD 2020) ended Thursday, with delegates from all 54 African countries adopting the Victoria Falls Declaration on the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development in Africa.

The Decade of Action calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges, ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap. Earlier in the week, ARFSD's host Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa had called on the delegates to leverage Africa's comparative advantages to improve life on the continent, stressing the need for financial support for the reforms necessary to achieve the SDGs.

With just 10 years to 2030, delegates attending the ARFSD in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, agreed Africa should join the ambitious global effort that is underway to deliver the 2030 promise through new targeted interventions, including mobilizing more governments, civil society, businesses and calling on all people, including the continent's youth, to make the Global Goals their own.

In their declaration, delegates, including ministers from across the continent responsible for all the 17 sustainable development goals that were under the spotlight at the Forum, called on all African countries to urgently revisit their frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; align their national develop-



President Emmerson Mnangagwa and Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed interact with young scientist at ARFSD 2020

ment plans with the principles of the two agendas and set in motion programmes and projects to deliver.

Member States were urged to focus on achieving the SDGs at the local level, through local governance structures; harness diaspora remittances in order to finance the social, health and educational needs of their citizens living in Africa; and adopt a results-based management approach combined with a monitoring and evaluation system in

order to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Delegates also called on African countries to endorse the process of establishing an agreement relating to and operationalizing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with the United Nations system and development partners being urged to help to ensure there are effective partnerships to finance capacity-building and

Bringing SDGs closer to the people through local reviews

Review of the implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas played a central role in the African Regional Forum in Victoria Falls this week. As noted by representatives from Voluntary Local Reviews of progress at national and sub-national levels are critical in ensuring ownership, accountability and commitment of all stakeholders as sub-national governments are most immediately and directly responsible for the actual implementation of programmes and strategies to achieve the targets of Agenda 2030. SDGs must be brought closer to the people, for instance working with cities.



Participants at the ARFSD2020 SDGs selfie zone.

“Mayors have recognized and acknowledge the importance of VLRs, recognizing ECA’s ongoing support to some cities and encouraging the expansion of support to more cities to undertake

their VLRs, said ECA’s Thokozile Ruzvidzo adding, “member states recognize voluntary local reviews as key in ensuring accountability, transparency

and public ownership in the implementation of Agendas 2030 and Agenda2063.”

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Africa agrees to scale-up efforts to achieve SDGs *(continued from page 1)*

strengthening data collection to ensure Africa achieves the SDGs and aspirations of Agenda 2063.

Progress in implementing the two agendas has been made but, overall, action to meet the goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required. 2020, therefore, the delegates agreed, should usher in the decade of ambitious action to deliver.

The goals are the world’s shared vision to end poverty, rescue the planet and build a peaceful world hence the Forum focused on people, planet, peace, prosperity and partnerships.

In his closing remarks, Oliver Chinganya, the Economic Commission for Africa’s Director of the Africa Statistics Centre, said; “This is a watershed moment for the continent: challenges and opportunities present themselves to us in equal measure. We count on all our partners and member States to build an empowered, inclusive, equal, transformed and prosperous Africa.”

“We need to ensure that our efforts are equal to or greater than the challenges we wish to address. We have over 220 million people classified as hungry, one-fifth of children out of school, youth unemployment continues to grow and over half of the population without electricity. We must work together to deliver actions that match the magnitude of the challenges our people face.”

The ECA Director said he was pleased that ‘the continent met here and in one and coherent message, agreed to ensure Africa meets the SDGs in ten years. Not a single person said we shouldn’t, or we can’t – we all agreed that when can. It is my hope that the same positive and confident spirit will help us work in a coordinated and integrated manner to implement and realize the transformation that we seek’.

For his part, Zimbabwe’s Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Minister, Paul Mavima, said; “The Victoria Falls Declaration has very clear and

succinct recommendations that have come out of this Forum. What is left now is to go full throttle on the implementation while ensuring that no one and no place is left behind. Now is the time to positively change the narrative for Africa. This should start from Victoria Falls and yes we can transform the continent. Rise Africa, rise Africa, rise and shine!”

He continued: “We are proud to be associated with the outcome document the, the Victoria Falls Declaration and its ambitious work plan which we believe should find traction in future Forums for sustainable development.”

Over 3,000 delegates, including 60 ministers and other high level participants, attended the Forum that was held under the theme; 2020-2030: A Decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

AS DELIVERED...

Beyond ARFSD 2020

...the continent met here and in one and coherent message, agreed to ensure Africa meets the SDGs in ten years. Not a single person said we shouldn't, or we can't – we all agreed that when can. It is my hope that the same positive and confident spirit will help us work in a coordinated and integrated manner to implement and realize the transformation that we seek. We need to ensure that our efforts are equal to or greater than the challenges we wish to address. We have over 220 million people classified as hungry, one-fifth of children out of school, youth unemployment continues to grow and over half of the population without electricity. We must work together to deliver actions that match the magnitude of the challenges our people face..." -

Oliver Chinganya, ECA



Oliver J. M. Chinganya, Director, African Centre for Statistics

Youth Bootcamp, Africa Regional Science, Technology & Innovation Forum on AI and Robotics

"While it is regrettable that we are not yet on track to achieve the SDGs, it is clear that Science Innovation and Technology are accelerators to achieve the SDGs. The African Forum on STI has identified interventions to place STI at the heart of education systems. Young people are key drivers of this process. The first Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Bootcamp held in Victoria Falls has been truly transformative. It is not an exaggeration to say that many young people who have participated have said their lives have been transformed. We look forward to replicating the boot camp at future forums, and also explore ways to bring it into sub-national spaces and enhance participation of under-privileged groups.

The AI and Robotics Bootcamp has been transformational for young participants. We look forward to replicating its success at future forums and exploring opportunities to bring similar events to the sub-national and community level..." - Jean-Paul Adam, ECA



Jean-Paul Adam, Director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, ECA

Bringing SDGs closer (continued from page 2)

To accelerate implementation, however, the Forum agreed that local and regional governments should be fully engaged in the Africa Regional Forums on Sustainable Development. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) should also be integrated into the Voluntary National Reviews, based on reliable and consistent local statistics. The local level reviews would improve accountability, transparency and public ownership of the implementation of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

Strong partnerships and coordination with local stakeholders was empha-

sized with a special focus on vulnerable groups, media and existing traditional communication channels. Transforming governance systems through effective devolution of responsibilities and resources was also raised, as well as peer reviews among local authorities to improve implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

The UN system present at the Forum was called on to develop a common template for Voluntary Local Reviews for ease of integration and standardization of procedures and design a template for peer-reviewed Voluntary Local Re-

views in Africa that are aligned to complement Voluntary National Reviews to better standardize key principles.

The Forum emphasized the need to institutionalize the engagement of youth as key stakeholders for the conduct of Voluntary Local Reviews including through youth and child parliaments and councils. It was also agreed that Member States should integrate, with the assistance of the ECA, local development and urban issues in national development, national budgetary instrument and key economic sector policies.

We Must Silence the Guns



“Without peace security and stability, prosperity in Africa will continue to remain elusive. Without peace and security, the commitment to leave no one behind will remain mere talk again. The potential consequences for us Africans, and for our teeming youth if things continue this way will be too dire to contemplate. This reality is our challenge.”

African Union Deputy Chairperson, Thomas Quartey Kwesi

‘Nothing for us, without us, is for us’

Excerpts, Official Opening Remarks-By Nkosilathi Nyathi, UNICEF Climate Youth Ambassador

I grew up just a few minutes from where we are today. In Chinotimba Township. And while I grew up in poverty, with everybody struggling all around me. I noticed something that affected the poverty of my community, of my family and friends, just as much as all the economic and social problems and the political issues we face in my country. It was the environment! Our natural world around us, our atmosphere and our biodiversity.

We are experiencing the worst drought, right here in my backyard, in 100 years. I live it. My family lives it. Farmers have had little harvest for years now. When it doesn't rain we suffer. And now when it does rain, it floods and we suffer.

Two weeks ago, about one hundred kilometres down the Zambezi river the town of Binga was left devastated after many homes and livelihoods were washed away by floods. We all know about the devastating impact of Cyclone Idai that hit Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe last year turning the lives of 1 million children upside down.

Friends, leaders...Climate Change is now our reality. It is causing these extreme weather events to be more fre-



Nkosilathi Nyathi, UNICEF-Climate Youth Ambassador

quent and more severe. The plagues of locusts that are decimating Eastern Africa –many of your countries –are made worse through climatic impacts such as drought and floods. Since I was ten, I have been passionate about this.

I am proud that I have been part of environmental clubs since grade 5. I am currently the vice president of the environmental club at my school –Inyathi-high school.

In December last year, I embarked on the biggest adventure of my life. I had the honour of speaking at the COP 25 in Madrid. I experienced and was involved in the debates, the meetings and the negotiations to figure out how

we can lower our emissions and adapt to climate change. It opened my eyes to the huge efforts going on at the global scale.

But what struck me, as I nervously sat in that airplane for the first time, and I looked down at the parched landscape of Zimbabwe and Southern Africa with farmland laying bare, the rivers and dams drying up. I thought to myself that there are millions of children and young people down there dealing with these harsh environments, food shortages and failing social conditions on the ground. They... We are the future.

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We are here to talk about Sustainable Development. But we need to recognise that the environment and climate change form the foundation of all the SDGs. If we fail to achieve the goals related to Clean Water and Sanitation, Climate Action, Life Below Water, and Life on Land, the world will fail to achieve all the other remaining goals. The eradication of poverty, zero hunger, peace and justice, education, good health, just to name a few. These are the goals that affect my life every day!

I am happy that in Zimbabwe, the government involved young people the production of the country's climate policy document. But please, can the plans now become actions! We are here. We are smart. We are activists. We have solutions. Involve us!

So, friends and leaders... As I speak to you here today on this stage, with my President beside me, other important leaders and decision makers, down here on the ground in Victoria Falls, in my backyard, I make a bigger plea to you.... A demand. Please take all the things we talk about and debate this week and put it into action....

Young people have already started putting their words into practice through the various forums on YouthSDGs. Go



back to Harare, to Nairobi, to Pretoria, to Geneva, to New York and Act! But in doing so, call on your young people... the student leaders, the activists, the science enthusiasts, the video gamers, the young sports stars and bring them into the rooms when you are planning your actions and policies.

Listen to their views and ideas! Because... 'Nothing for us, without us, is for us'

I hope you enjoy your stay in my hometown and that for generations to come Mosi-oa-tunya's smoke continues to thunder.



Youth representatives at the Forum



ARFSD in pictures



SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS