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Preparatory and capacity development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region for the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Brazzaville (virtual), 26-27 February 2021

Concept note

I. Introduction and rationale

1. Major groups and other stakeholders¹ have been actively working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through projects, initiatives, knowledge-sharing, advocacy and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.² To that end, they contribute significantly to efforts to strengthen inclusion, including by giving voice to the voiceless and to marginalized and vulnerable populations, promoting accountability, transparency and responsiveness, engaging in capacity-building activities, sharing their experiences and knowledge in planning, implementation and review processes, and strengthening participation in and ownership of development processes by diverse communities at the national, subnational and local levels. Clearly, major groups and other stakeholders play an essential role in enhancing the reach, effectiveness and durability of development initiatives and outcomes.

2. In General Assembly resolution 70/1 on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the need was recognized for major groups and other relevant stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including in follow-up and review processes. In that regard, governments, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and other actors were called upon in the context of an enhanced global partnership to deliver on the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals and targets, which lie at the core of the Agenda.

3. A high-level political forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, was also established to carry out regular reviews in line with resolution 67/290. The reviews are intended to provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, major groups and other relevant stakeholders were called upon to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda. Furthermore, citizens of African countries, civil society organizations and all other identifiable groups are engaged in

¹ References to major groups and other stakeholders align with General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2012 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Further information on major groups and other stakeholders is available at: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/aboutmajorgroups.html.

² Further information about the contribution of major groups and other stakeholders is available at: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos.



the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, which is being implemented in coordination with the 2030 Agenda.

4. Accordingly, the effective implementation of the two Agendas requires various actors to work together and strengthen their collaborative and integrated approaches with major groups and other stakeholders. For the contributions of major groups and other stakeholders towards the successful implementation of the Agendas to be meaningful and useful, capacity development is required to enhance their knowledge of processes and procedures for engagement. They need access to information so that they fully understand their roles and the platforms that can be used to engage effectively with one another, governments and other development partners.

5. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, has been organizing workshops since 2015 to strengthen the capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to articulate inputs to the follow-up and review of progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda at regional and global levels. Through the capacity development workshops, major groups and other stakeholders have been actively engaged in the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which is one of the mechanisms providing inputs to the follow-up and review process at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

6. The seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will take place in the context of unprecedented global health and economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the pandemic, and as noted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, the world was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.³ The COVID-19 pandemic has since rolled back gains in economic development, disproportionately affecting the poor, exacerbating economic and social inequalities and vulnerabilities, and making the achievement of the Goals by the 2030 deadline an increasingly challenging task. Although the number of COVID-19-related deaths in Africa has been much lower than the number of such deaths in other global regions, African economies have been severely affected by the pandemic, owing to their limited fiscal space to roll out stimulus packages, weak social protection mechanisms and suboptimal health-care systems.

7. The seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is therefore designed to be an action-oriented Forum for member States and other stakeholders to explore and propose a set of concrete and workable solutions that will enable countries to rebuild from COVID-19. That recovery should lead to a greener, more inclusive and resilient Africa while also advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In that regard, major groups and other stakeholders must be equipped with tools and information to ensure that post-COVID-19 recovery efforts are people-centred and “leave no one behind”.

8. It is against this backdrop that the Economic Commission for Africa, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, and the Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and other Stakeholders are organizing a preparatory and capacity development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in Africa to help them prepare for the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held from 6 to 15 July 2021. The workshop will take place during the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, to be held in Brazzaville from 1 to 4 March 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Forum will take place both in-person in Brazzaville for local participants and virtually for international participants. The

³ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Global Sustainable Development Report, 2019 – The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*. Available at: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

theme of the session will be “Building forward better: Towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.” The Regional Forum will focus, in particular, on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 16, and 17 and the corresponding aspirations, goals and targets of Agenda 2063.

II. Objectives of the workshop

9. The workshop will be held on 26 and 27 February 2021, the day before the start of the main session of the Regional Forum. It is anticipated that the workshop will:

- (a) Brief major groups and other stakeholders on the follow-up and review process related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on the nine selected Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) Highlight and share contributions and experiences of major groups and other stakeholders in responding to the health and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.
- (c) Promote dialogue and consensus among the major groups and other stakeholders with regard to steps that should be taken to address the health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic while accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, with a particular focus on the nine Sustainable Development Goals that will be considered at the 2021 high-level political forum.

III. Expected outcomes

10. The workshop is expected to lead to the following outcomes:

- (a) Increased understanding and capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to implement, monitor and review progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations, goals and targets of Agenda 2063;
- (b) Greater understanding of efforts exerted by major groups and other stakeholders to mitigate the health and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa;
- (c) Enhanced cooperation among major groups and other stakeholders and between them and other actors, including national, subregional and regional policymakers, practitioners and experts, and United Nations entities.

IV. Expected outputs

11. The workshop will generate the following outputs, which will be disseminated widely:

- (a) A joint statement of the major groups and other stakeholders to be delivered during the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;
- (b) A communiqué by the major groups and other stakeholders on the workshop and the seventh session of the Regional Forum;
- (c) A summary report on the workshop.

V. Key documents

12. The documents for the workshop include the following:
- (a) The present concept note and the programme of work for the workshop;
 - (b) The concept note and programme of work for the seventh session of the Regional Forum;
 - (c) Background papers on the sub-themes of the seventh session of the Regional Forum.

VI. Participation

13. The workshop will be attended by representatives of the nine categories of major groups, namely women, children and young people, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community, and farmers. Other stakeholder groups, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and their families, older persons and persons with disabilities, will be invited to attend.

VII. Working languages

14. The meeting will be conducted in English and French with simultaneous interpretation in both languages.

VIII. Venue and date

15. The workshop will be held on 26 and 27 February 2021 virtually through an online platform.

IX. Contact

16. Enquiries concerning the organization of the preparatory and capacity development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region for the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development should be directed to:

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