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Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
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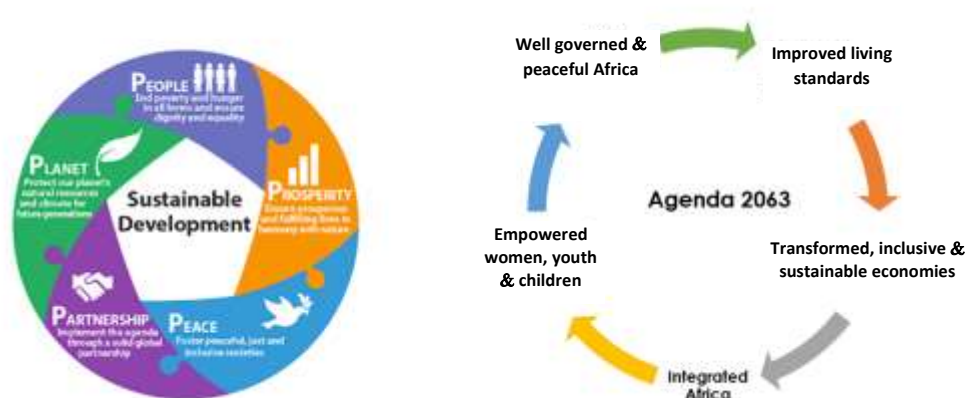
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Progress report on implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and tackling the COVID-19 crisis at the regional and subregional levels

Summary of the 2020 Africa Sustainable Development Report: towards recovery and sustainable development in the decade of action

Introduction

1. The present summary report brings together the key analytical findings from the five pillars of sustainable development, relating to people, prosperity, the planet, peace and partnerships, which are also in line with Agenda 2063 (figure 1). These five pillars are expected to be accomplished through a solid global partnership. The fundamental aim of the 2020 African Sustainable Development Report is to assess progress to date, chart the pathway to 2030 and assess the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on these pillars.

Figure 1
Pillars of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063



* ECA/RFSD/2021/1/Rev.1.



A. People

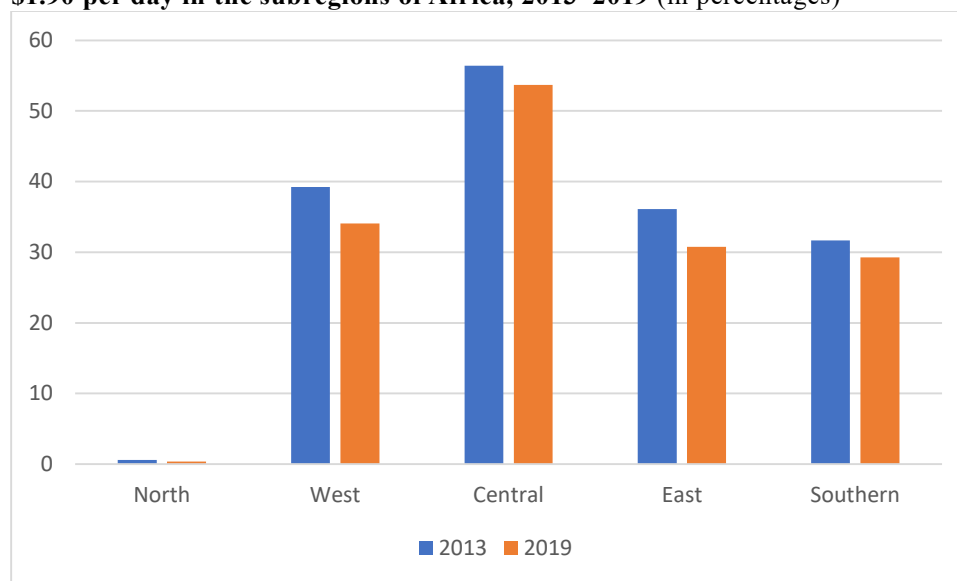
2. The social pillar, the “people” dimension of sustainable development, focuses on the welfare of the population, with the aim of ending poverty in all its forms, eliminating hunger through achieving food security and improving nutrition, reducing morbidity and promoting well-being for all. It also aims to ensure inclusive and good quality education and skills development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The key message is that, in terms of its progress in this social dimension, Africa is off track.

1. Poverty

3. Progress in poverty reduction has been sluggish in Africa, with a third of the continent’s population remaining in poverty in 2019. The share of employed population below the international poverty line (\$1.90 per day) dropped more in absolute terms in Africa (excluding the North Africa subregion) than elsewhere. Between 2013 and 2019, the rate of poverty reduction in the region (excluding North Africa) declined.

Figure 2

Proportion of employed population below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day in the subregions of Africa, 2013–2019 (in percentages)



Source: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Africa, 2020.

2. Hunger

4. The number of undernourished people in Africa (excluding North Africa) was 20 per cent higher in 2019 than in 2013. Food insecurity is higher in Africa (53.1 per cent of the adult population) than in any other continent and more than double the world average (25.4 per cent). The majority of the undernourished reside in East Africa, followed by West Africa. Southern Africa has the smallest percentage of severely malnourished population.

3. Health

5. While, overall, the health of Africans continued to improve, as indicated by the rise in life expectancy from 57 in 2010 to 61 years in 2018, Africa experienced slow progress towards other health-related targets. Maternal mortality rates in Africa remain 2.6 times higher than the world average.

4. Education

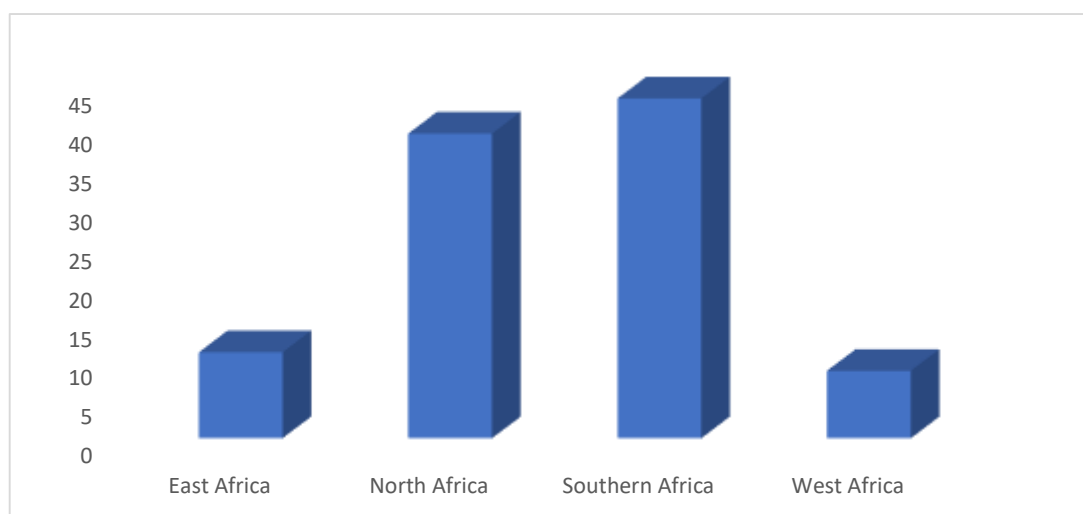
6. The gap between African and world literacy rates is declining, with the African literacy rate reaching 86.3 per cent in 2018, but progress has been sluggish. Participation in organized learning at pre-primary level in Africa is only slightly above 40 per cent (2018) and increased only marginally between 2013 and 2018. The quality of education has remained a concern in Africa.

5. Social protection

7. Although the global average rate for social protection coverage stands at 50 per cent, about 13 per cent of all Africans (excluding North Africa, where the proportion is 39 per cent) are covered by at least one form of social protection benefit (figure 3). The Southern Africa subregion has the highest level of coverage and the West Africa subregion the lowest.

Figure 3

Proportion of population covered by at least one social protection benefit (2016) (in percentages)



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020.

6. Gender equality

8. Africa registered mixed progress in terms of gender equality. While reported violence against women in partnerships is higher in Africa (21.5 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49) than in other regions in 2017, early marriage is more common in Africa than anywhere else. Political representation and economic empowerment look more hopeful, with the proportion of women in national parliaments almost reaching the world average (23.9 per cent compared to 24.3 per cent).

7. Other inequalities

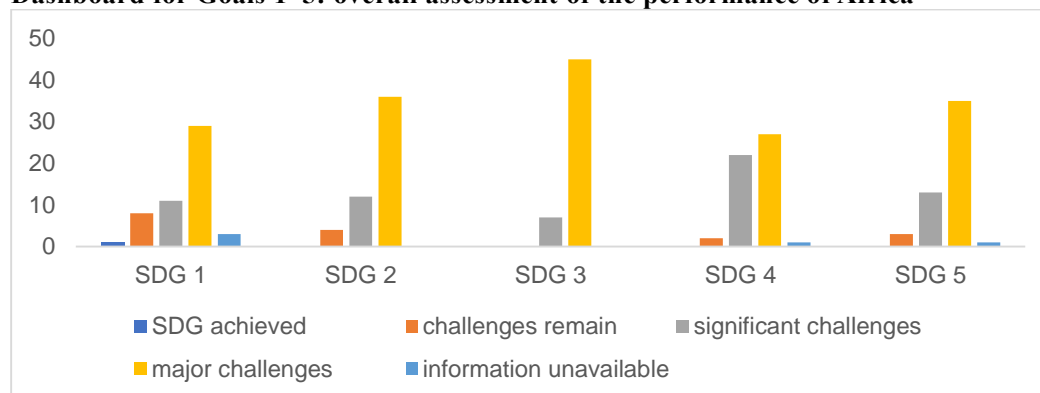
9. Income inequality continues to rise in Africa. In North Africa, extreme poverty has almost vanished, while in Central Africa it is still higher than 50 per cent. Progress in the sharing of prosperity remains uneven across the countries of Africa.

8. COVID-19

10. The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening the ability of African countries to reduce poverty and improve nutrition, education, health and gender equality. It is also threatening to undo much of the continent's progress over the last decade. Health services are too weak in most countries to tackle large epidemics. Reserves are too low to absorb the shocks of reduced incomes from exports and services and this will severely compromise the ability of Africa to meet its poverty, nutrition, education, health and gender equality targets.

Figure 4

Dashboard for Goals 1–5: overall assessment of the performance of Africa



Source: Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2019, and *Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2019*.

9. Looking ahead

11. North Africa has exceeded the target for 2023 of reducing its 2013 poverty rate by 30 per cent. The other subregions have been struggling to varying degrees to reach this target, ranging from more than 10 per cent growth rate to eight times the current rate for the Central Africa subregion. The average African still dies 11 years earlier than the average world citizen.

12. Progress towards each social pillar goal is closely linked to progress towards the other goals. In turn, the social pillar Goals are closely linked to the other Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with regard to growth. A growing economy is needed to finance efforts to reduce hunger, while better health and quality education, well-fed, healthy and skilled people are the basis for high sustainable growth.

13. Africa needs substantial support if it is to catch up in social development. To catch up in this area and to compensate for the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa needs substantial international support. This should not be allowed, however, to compromise national leadership and ownership.

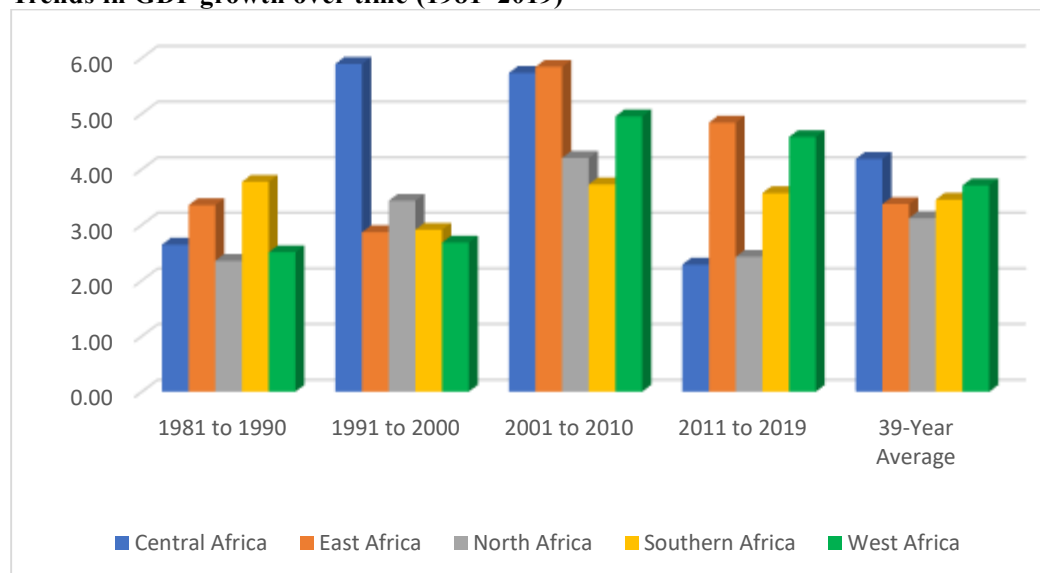
B. Prosperity

14. The prosperity pillar aims to ensure that “all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occur in harmony with nature”. There are five goals related to this pillar, as outlined below.

1. Economic growth

15. The overall rate of income growth in Africa is 4.6 per cent, well below the target growth rate of 7 per cent. Accordingly, sustainability has become even more difficult to achieve, under the constraints of the pandemic. The long-run average growth trend shows Central Africa as the consistent leader, followed by West Africa (figure 5).

Figure 5
Trends in GDP growth over time (1981–2019)



Source: World Bank, 2020.

16. Beyond income growth, half of the countries in the region are located in the extremely low income per capita growth band of -3.1 to 1 per cent, which makes it difficult to reduce inequality potentially across the board, even with redistributive spending. Periods of modest growth in gross domestic product (GDP) have not necessarily translated into higher standards of living for citizens. North Africa leads the field where translating income growth into prosperity for citizens is concerned (table 1).

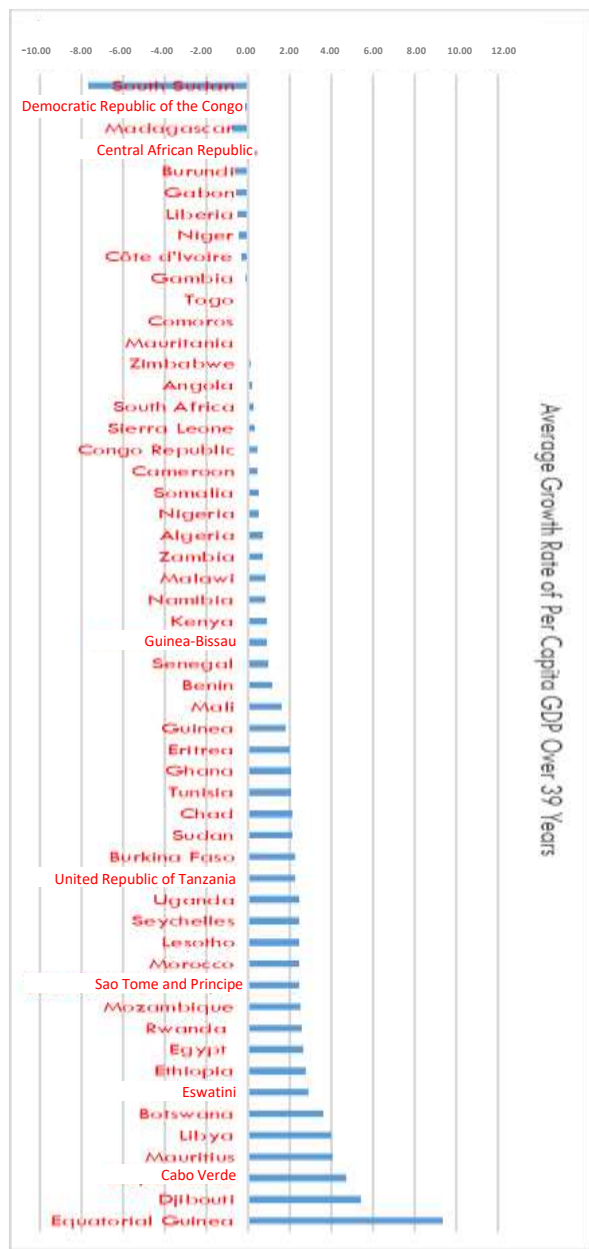
Table 1
Distribution of countries by income per capita average growth rates (2005–2019)

Growth interval	A (-7 to -3)	B (-3.1 to 1)	C (1.1 to 5.2)	D (5.3 to 9.3)
Frequency	1.9%	22.6%	71.7%	3.8%
Economies	South Sudan	Equatorial Guinea, Burundi, Gabon, Gambia, Central African Republic, Congo, Madagascar, Comoros, Chad, South Africa, Algeria	Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mali, Namibia, Togo, Benin, Tunisia, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Malawi, Eswatini, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Morocco, Botswana, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Lesotho, Cabo Verde, Zambia, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Mozambique, Mauritius, Seychelles, Ghana, Libya, Rwanda	Djibouti, Ethiopia

Source: Author’s classification based on World Bank data.

17. Since 2005, over 75 per cent of the economies experienced positive long-run growth rates and thus migrated to a relatively higher growth band. Commodity booms in the first decade of the millennium fuelled this growth, which subsequently collapsed, during the period 2011–2019. Economic performance was uneven across African countries.

Figure 6
Country-level GDP per capita over 39 years of average growth, 1981–2019



Source: World Bank, 2020.

2. Decent work

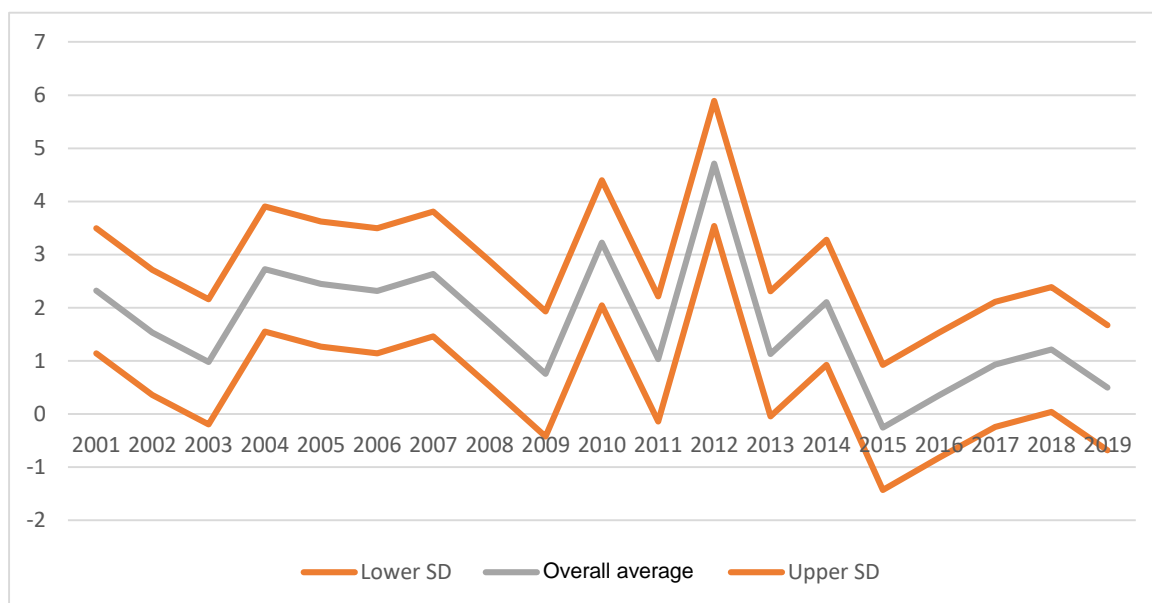
18. During the high growth period of 2001–2019, output per worker declined by 79 per cent (figure 7). The existing jobs are mainly in agriculture and services, but the trend has been for employment to be redistributed from agriculture to services

rather than expanding opportunities. Those participating in the rural labour migration to urban areas end up in the informal services sector.

19. Decent jobs are created through investment in health, education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, sustained investment in research and development, a competitive industrial policy, and a macroeconomic environment that can sustain competitive wages and avoid cycles of industrial unrest resulting from the wage-inflation spiral. Law and order and security of lives and property are at the heart of modern enterprise and hence key to the creation of decent jobs.

Figure 7

Trend in productivity growth rate



Note: SD – standard deviation

Source: International Labour Organization, 2020.

3. Reduced inequalities

20. Nobody is safe when society grows more unequal. Inequalities occur in other spheres of the socioeconomic and political environment but are manifested in the conventional metrics of wealth, income and other socioeconomic status. Indicators of inequality have since been broadened to include those with enhanced capabilities. The three major compound indices considered for this purpose relate to income inequalities, energy mix, and access to digital services.

4. Access to energy

21. Where access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking is concerned, there are stark subregional inequalities and an extremely high level of disparity within subregions, and even within countries, between urban and rural dwellers. Even under an optimistic assumption of a sustained annual growth rate of 7 per cent during the COVID-19 pandemic, it will still be difficult to achieve universal access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking by 2030.

22. Where electricity is concerned, North Africa outdistanced other subregions with near universal access, followed by Southern, Central, West and East Africa, in that order, where access to electricity remains low. These observations demonstrate the persistent inequality in access to energy and electricity across the continent.

5. Income inequalities

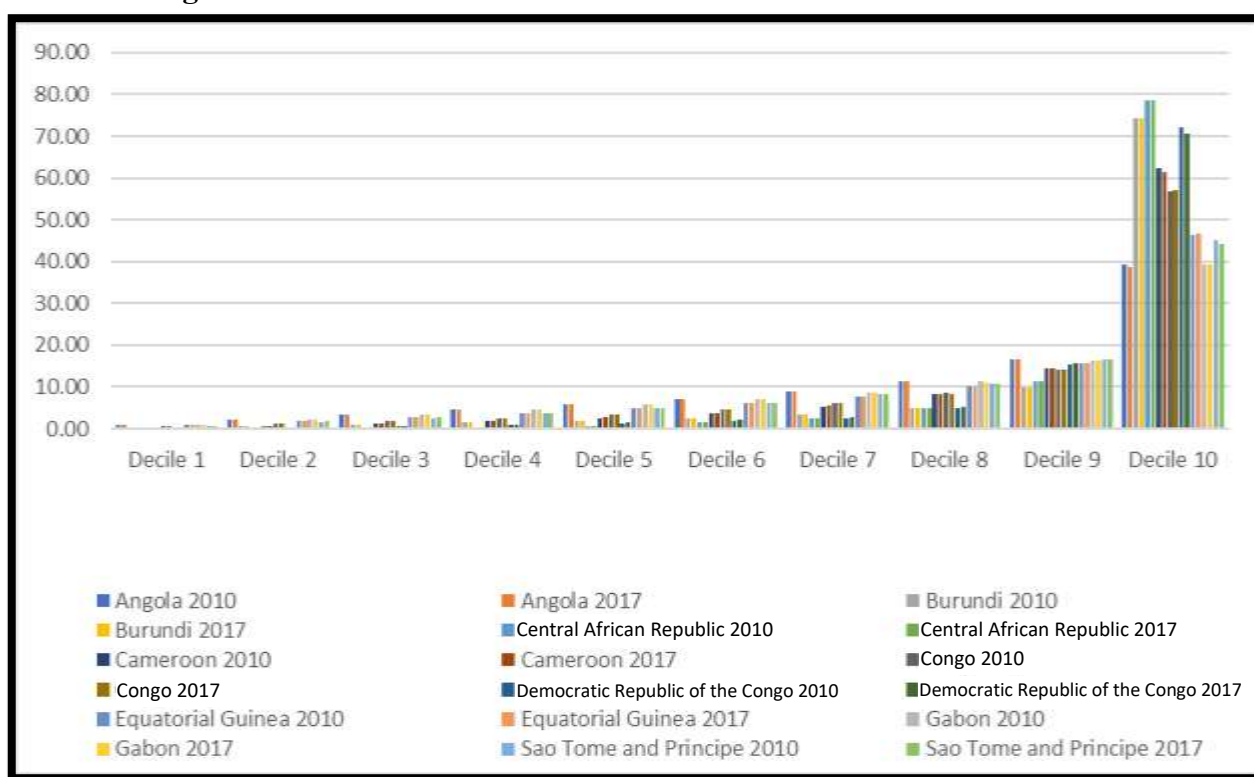
23. Africa faces persistent income inequalities. Achieving by 2030 and then sustaining an income growth for the bottom 40 per cent of the population that is higher than the national average will require much more concerted efforts. The continent’s growth record and its distributional dynamics fall short of those needed to meet the target. The sources of income growth have predominantly been commodity booms and the booms and busts of the commodity trade are exogenous to the region.

24. Rent seeking has been rampant in the region and can account for a large proportion of the observed pattern of unequal income distribution (figure 8). The seeds of inequality sown in the pattern of income dynamics then cause ripples to other aspects of prosperity, where the same group of citizens are disadvantaged. Africa needs to grow at an even faster rate to close the performance gap required to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

Figure 8

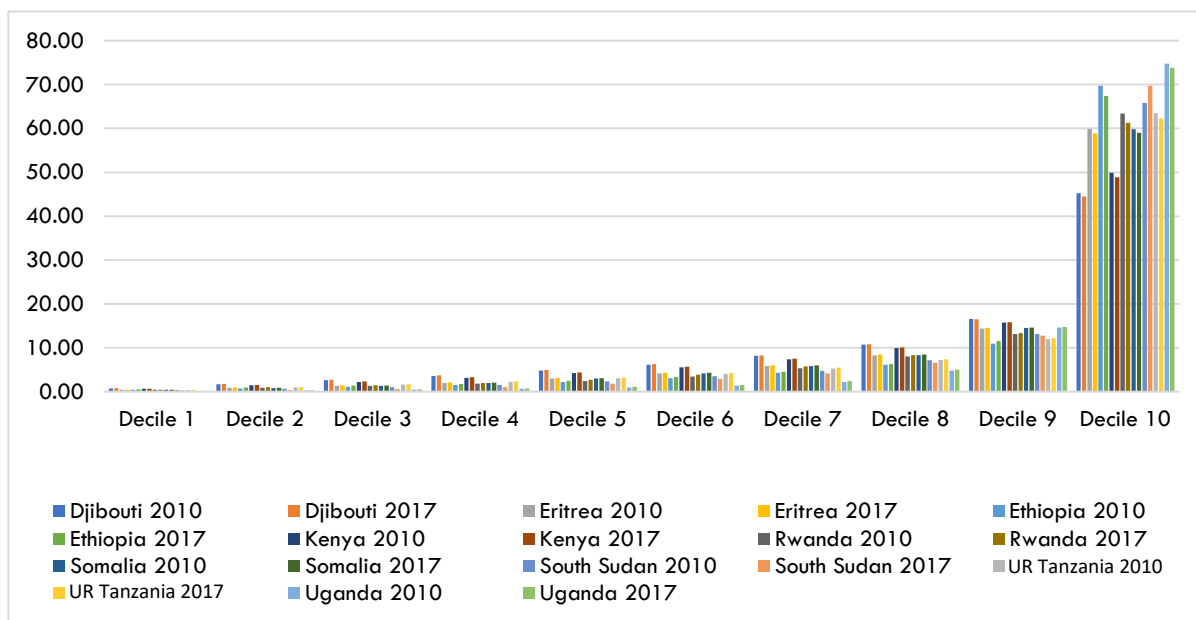
Labour income distribution across subregions:

A. Comparison of labour income distribution for the Central Africa subregion



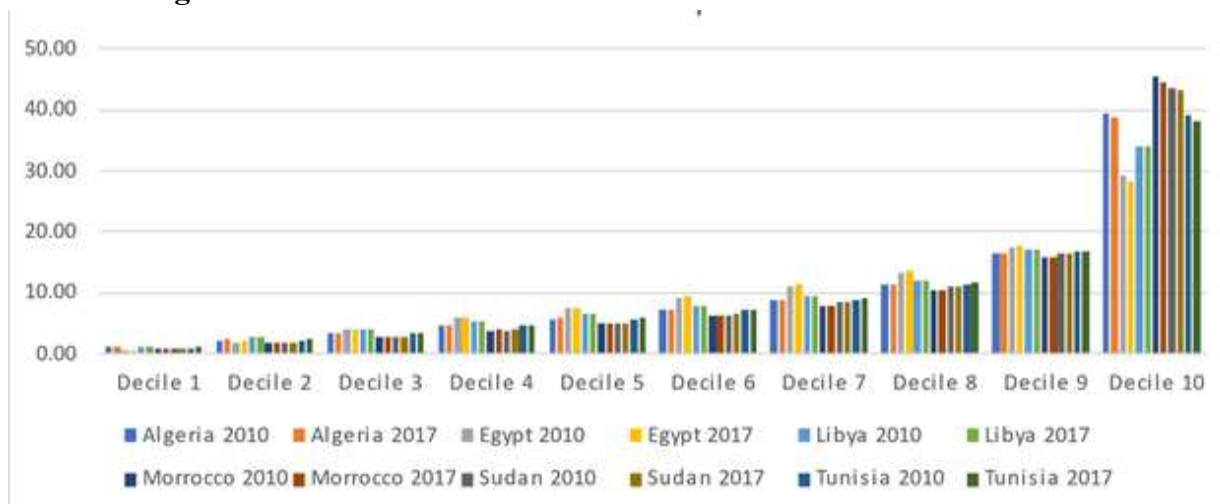
Source: International Labour Organization, 2020.

B. Comparison of labour income distribution for the East Africa subregion



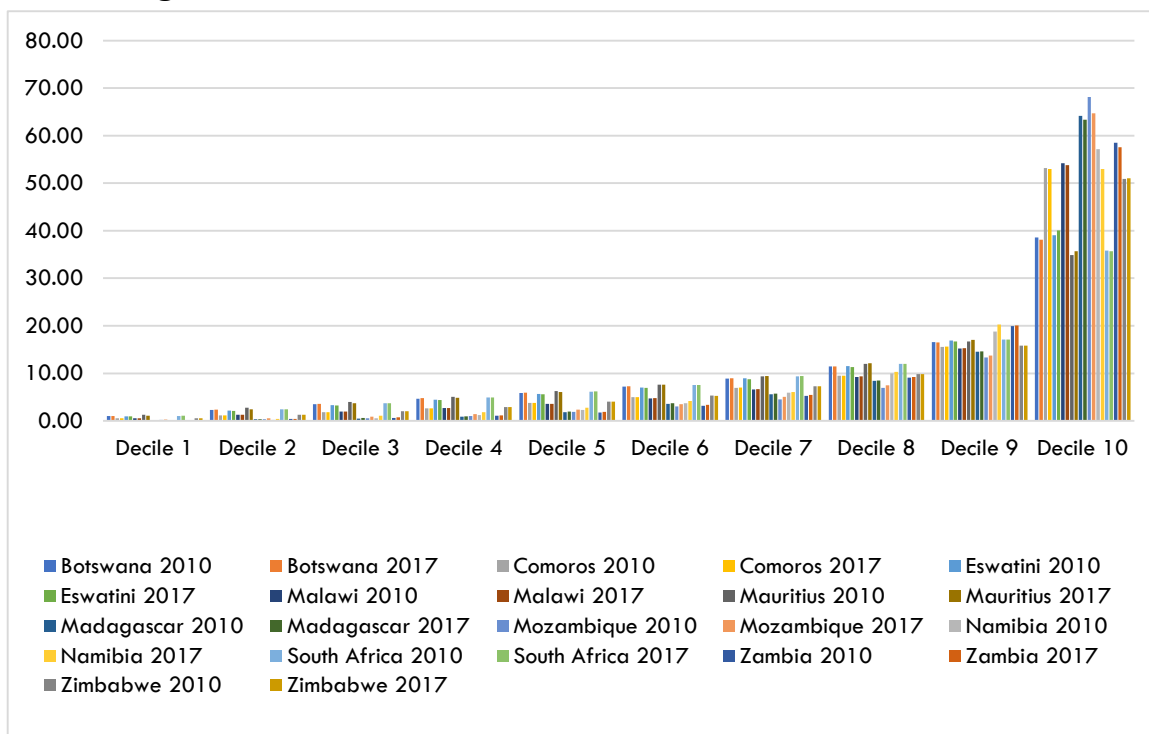
Source: International Labour Organization, 2020.

C. Comparison of labour income distribution for the North Africa subregion



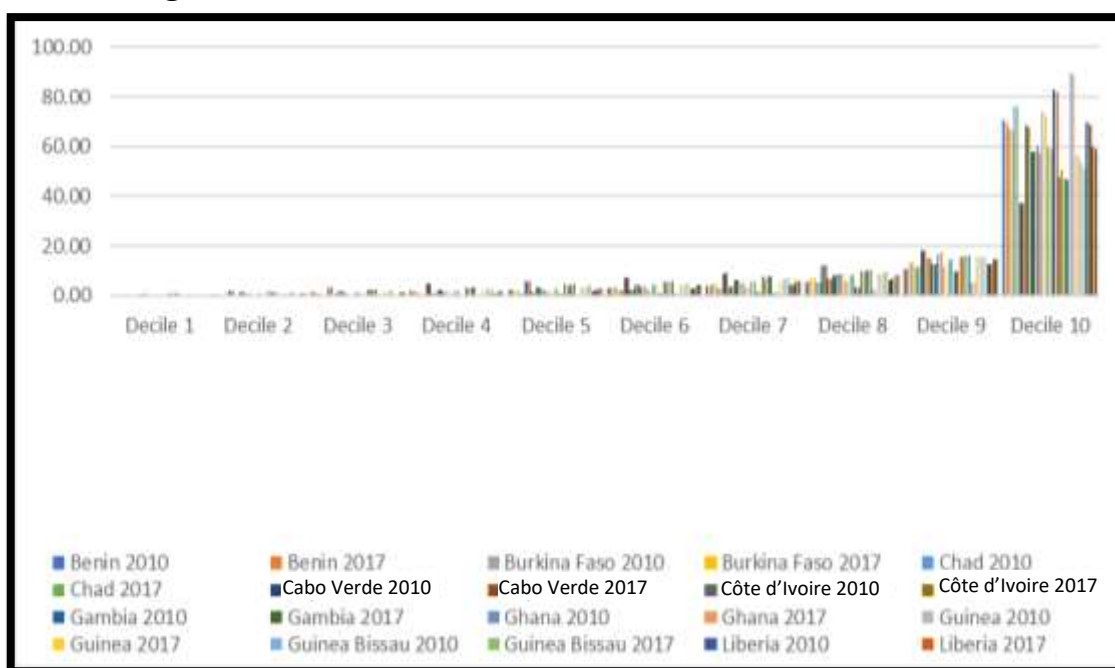
Source: International Labour Organization, 2020.

D. Comparison of labour income distribution for the Southern Africa subregion



Source: International Labour Organization, 2020.

E. Comparison of labour income distribution for the West Africa subregion



Source: International Labour Organization, 2020.

6. Looking ahead

25. Achieving prosperity requires investments on multiple fronts and increased investments in reproductive health, mental health, primary health care, education and quality of governance. Governments must liaise with the African Development Bank, the African Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to coordinate development financing for power infrastructure, in particular to develop the regional power pools. There is an urgent need to increase investments in emerging technologies. By 2035, 5G technology is projected to enable \$13.2 trillion of global economic output and the 5G value chain could support up to 22.3 million jobs.

C. Planet

26. In Africa and elsewhere, environmental issues are considered a low priority compared to other Sustainable Development Goals because of concerns about basic human needs such as food security, water, education and security. Paradoxically, all those basic needs are ultimately predicated on the cooperation of nature in sustaining the environment in its customary form.

27. Assessment of the “planet” pillar is greatly challenged by paucity of data and low investments in environmental issues. Only 22 per cent of African countries have independent databases from which the requisite statistics may be drawn, and just 40 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators can be tracked with the available data. The Africa region scores lower than any other region, with African countries occupying 32 of the bottom 50 rankings.

1. Overall progress

28. Within Africa, the planet – or environmental – pillar has performed badly, with slow progress recorded as of 2020 against the 2015 baseline. Only a small number of Sustainable Development Goal targets were achieved during this period, such as those related to the signing of protocols and policies. At the subregional level, North Africa appears to have relatively more gaps to close in meeting the planet-related Goals, in particular in terms of economic activities and marine life, compared with the Southern and East Africa subregions (table 2).

Table 2
Progress dashboard

Region	Goal 6	Goal 12	Goal 13	Goal 14	Goal 15
North Africa	On track	Stagnating	Moderate progress	Stagnating	Moderate progress
West Africa	Stagnating	Moderate progress	On track	Moderate progress	Moderate progress
East Africa	Moderate progress	On track	On track	Moderate progress	Moderate progress
Central Africa	Stagnating	Moderate progress	On track	Moderate progress	Moderate progress
Southern Africa	Moderate progress	On track	On track	Moderate progress	Moderate progress

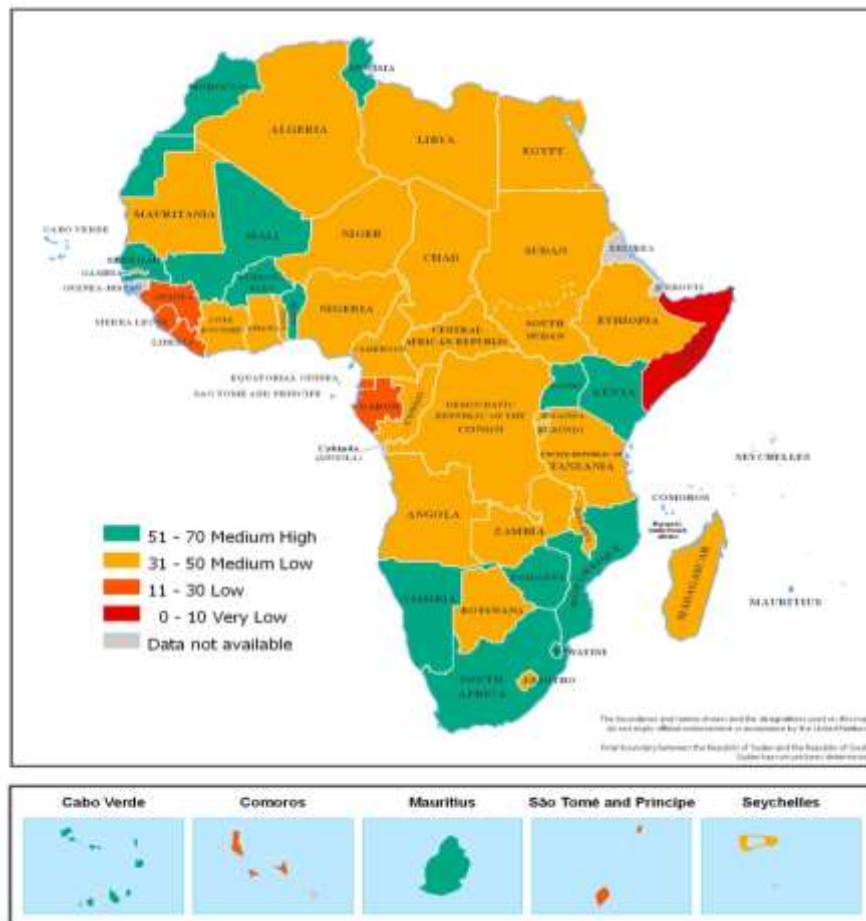
Source: Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2019.

2. Clean water and sanitation

29. The continent maintains its poor record of implementation of integrated water resources management, with a 40 per cent rating compared to a world average

of 49 per cent. Progress in transboundary cooperation on shared waters has also been limited, with only 19 countries or 35 per cent of those regions engaged in such cooperation. Implementation has been equally slow.

Figure 9
Status of integrated water resource management in Africa



Source: <https://sdg6data.org/indicator/6.5.1>.

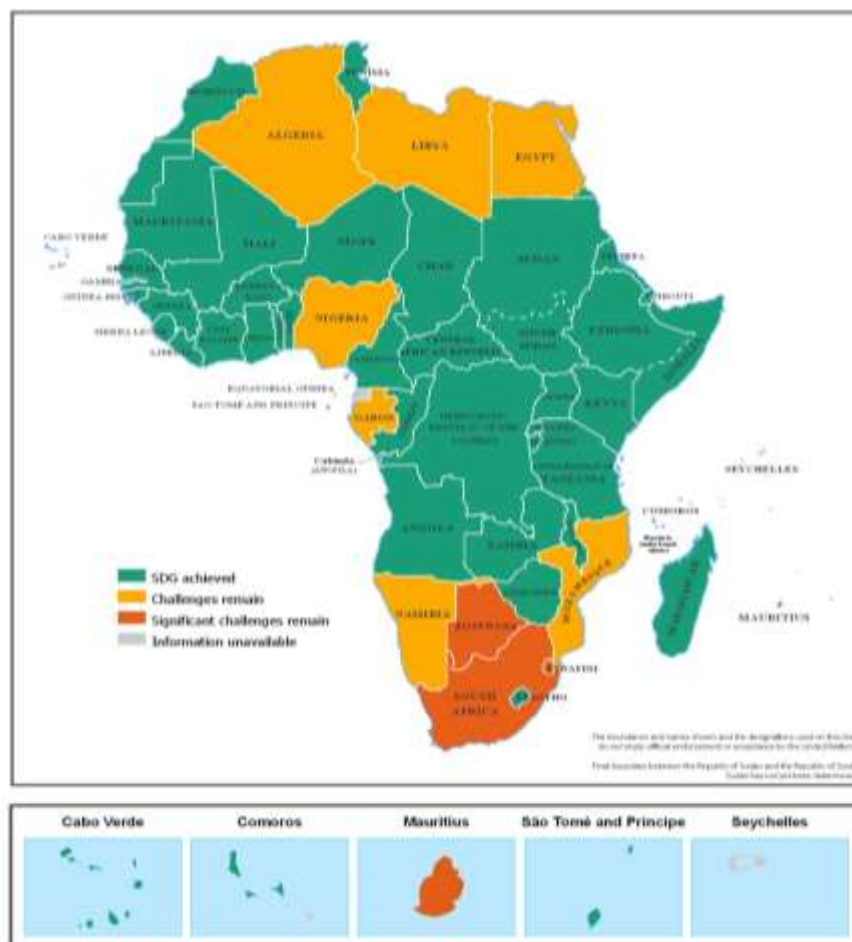
3. Sustainable consumption

30. The management and use of natural resources continue at unsustainable rates. Food waste and food losses are estimated at 14 per cent as a consequence of production inefficiencies, while poor infrastructure causes further losses along the distribution and retail segment of the value chain, altogether contributing to a high rate of post-harvest losses. The region has shown limited progress in the management of chemical wastes, including electronic wastes. Africa performed poorly on waste recycling, with only negligible quantities of electronic waste recycling.

4. Climate action

31. This is the only goal in respect of which most African countries are on track. These countries are making the needed progress towards the emissions reduction target, and 43 countries have achieved the targets for climate action. But the continent is still vulnerable to climate change as there is limited response capability. Furthermore, climate change is under-resourced and competing with other pressing development agendas.

Figure 10
Progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 13



Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map/goals/sdg13>.

5. Life below water

32. Africa achieved mixed progress against this goal, with a protection rate of only 46 per cent of its marine key biodiversity areas. Its marine resources are less polluted, however, than those in other regions of the world. The major gaps in this regard relate to unsustainable fisheries exploiting fish stocks that are dwindling as a consequence of illegal fishing, the lack of surveillance and uncoordinated policies on the trade.

6. Life on land

33. Progress by Africa in efforts to attain this goal has been poor. Sub-Saharan Africa has continued to suffer land degradation. Over the period 2010–2020, Africa had the largest annual rate of net forest loss, at 3.9 million hectares per year, due to population increase, poverty and agricultural expansion. Its total forest areas have remained largely the same, except in North Africa. In biodiversity, only 10 of the 54 countries had achieved their national targets. On the positive side, however, the region has marginally increased its proportion of key biodiversity areas, by 4.5 per cent between 2010 and 2020.

7. Looking ahead

34. Ironically, the short-term impact of COVID-19 on the environment has been generally positive, allowing the earth to rejuvenate from reduced environmental pollution thanks to a severely reduced level of economic activities and constrained pattern and levels of consumption. On the negative side, many scheduled activities in pursuit of the environmental Sustainable Development Goals have either been halted or slowed down. The long-term effects of COVID-19 are mixed. The continued economic downturn could result in shifting priorities, with a negative impact on allocations for environmental programmes.

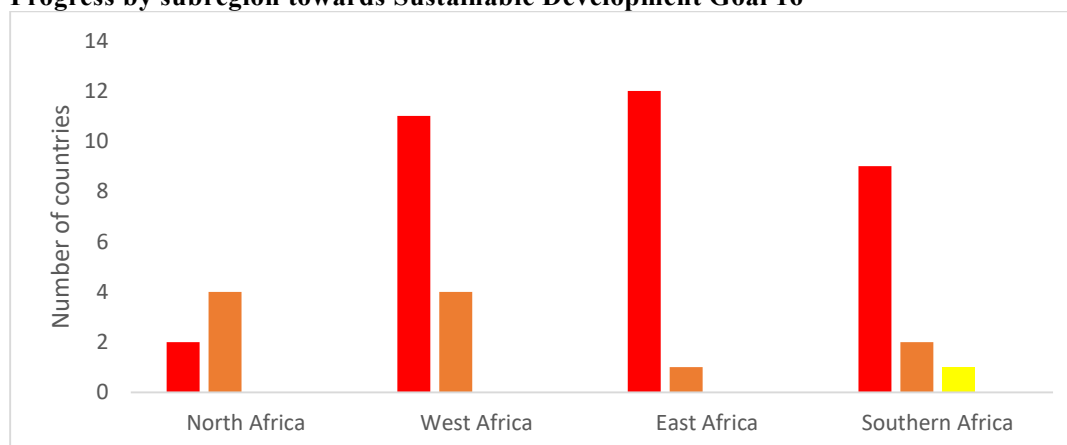
D. Peace

35. The 2019 Africa Sustainable Development Report noted that only six indicators of Goal 16 had data that could be readily collected. The situation has not improved since that report. Consequently, the present year’s report depends on a review of the literature to generate a blend of qualitative and quantitative analysis, with a view to discerning trends in progress.

1. Overall progress

36. Overall, 74 per cent of African countries face major challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, while 23 per cent face significant challenges (figure 11). Only one country is on track for this Goal. Without a significant push forward, Africa is unlikely to achieve its governance, peace and security goals by 2030.

Figure 11
Progress by subregion towards Sustainable Development Goal 16



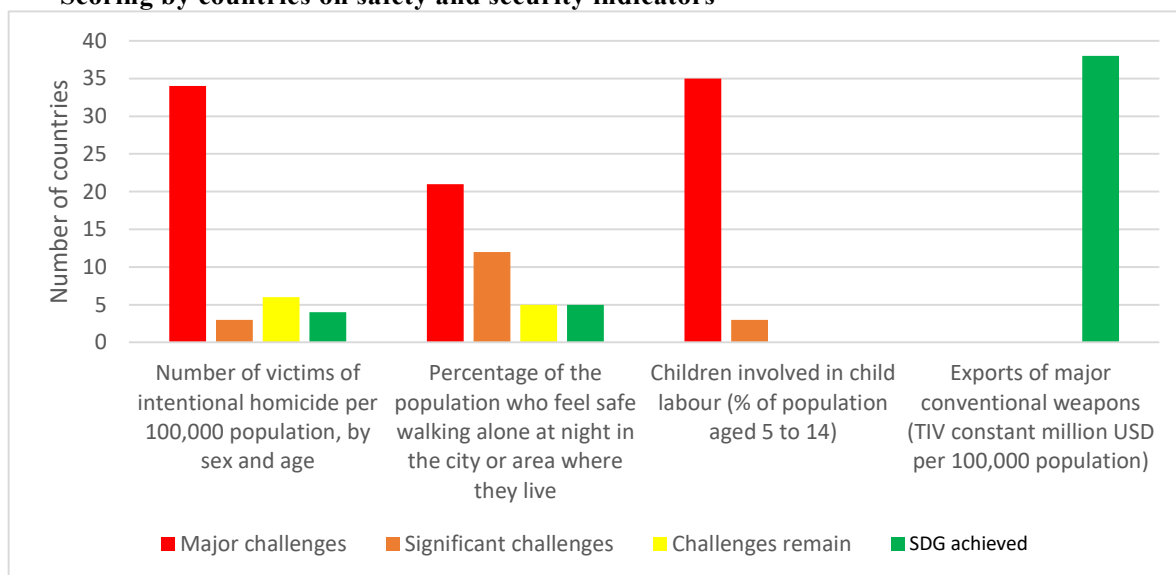
Source: Based on the ECA integrated planning and reporting toolkit.

2. Peace and security

37. The issue of safety and security remains a concern across the continent and there is a wide perception that the situation of both personal and national safety has deteriorated. In 2019, safety perceptions worsened in 19 countries, while only in four countries did they improve (figure 12). The Mo Ibrahim Index shows that the decline in the rate of perceptions of personal safety slowed in the last five years, but the rate for national security has worsened. Africa continues to experience conflicts, terrorism, insurgency and other upheavals. Lack of government capacity and heavy-handed responses, compounded by low levels of development, have led to the growth of terrorism.

Figure 12

Scoring by countries on safety and security indicators



Source: 2019 Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report.

3. Democratic governance

38. Africa continues to show sluggish progress in governance. Only 26 per cent of the African Union's 2019 target has been achieved in terms of the percentage of the population who believe that elections were free, fair and transparent. West Africa, in particular, has seen a decline in the quality of democracy due to politically motivated prosecutions, failure to implement electoral reforms and a trend by heads of State to seek third and successive terms. A number of countries have also gone through unconstitutional changes of government. There are also growing concerns over judicial independence and a fear that more authoritarian countries will appoint judges favourable to their regime. The delay of elections in some countries and limited voter turn-out in others due to COVID-19 has generated civil unrest and may affect perceptions of government legitimacy.

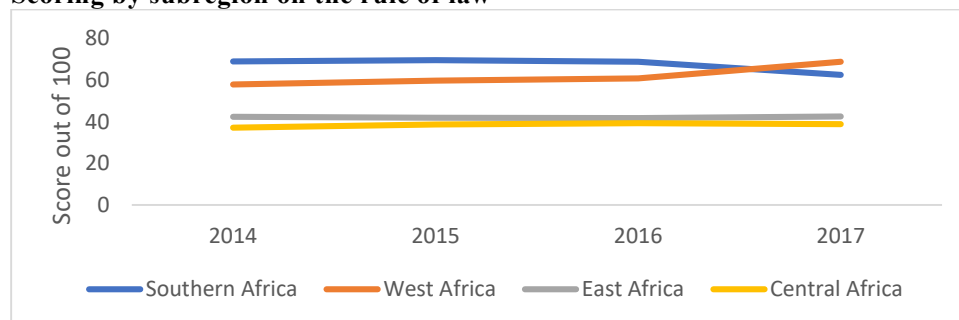
4. Rule of law

39. Progress towards rule of law has been uneven in many African countries, with regressions in Southern, East and Central Africa. West Africa leads the continent, while Southern Africa has shown signs of deterioration (figure 13). East and Central Africa, however, continue to face significant challenges to the implementation of even basic governing functions. As reported by Amnesty International, the issue of human rights also remains a significant challenge across the continent, owing to protracted conflicts, the operation of armed groups, State abuses and the widespread repression of dissent. State compliance with African

Union mechanisms also remains low and national human rights institutions face a range of challenges.

Figure 13

Scoring by subregion on the rule of law



Source: Based on 2019 figures from the Ibrahim Index of African Governance.

5. Governance

40. Africa registered the lowest scores for governance. Although improvements in governance may be seen in West Africa, challenges remain in East, Central and North Africa. Low levels of participation in government decision-making are a source of concern, as social and economic rights form the basis for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced participation and may lead a breakdown of trust and the social contract between governments and civilians in the future.

6. Corruption

41. Africa fares worse than other parts of the world in terms of corruption. The continent is the lowest scoring region in the Corruption Perceptions Index and only 4 per cent of the African Union's target value for 2019 was achieved. As observed by Transparency International in its report Global Corruption Barometer Africa, 2019, corruption hinders economic growth, good governance and certain freedoms, has a severe impact on service delivery and hinders chances of a stable and prosperous future. COVID-19 may also exacerbate corruption through the diversion of resources.

7. Looking ahead

42. Designating 2020 as the “year of silencing the guns in Africa”, the African Union has called for a redoubling of efforts to enhance peace, security and governance. Africa is unlikely to achieve any of its goals by 2030. Conflicts are expected to continue in hotspot areas, with delays to conflict management and resolution mechanisms, while the COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated already existing governance deficits on the continent. There has been a decline in democratic values, obstructions have been mounted to the holding of free and fair elections and unconstitutional changes of government have continued.

43. The partnerships pillar and the governance, peace and security pillar are, together, the driving forces behind all other goals. These two pillars are also the most difficult to get right because of the issue of sovereignty. Securing accountability necessitates efforts to reduce inequalities and uphold human rights for citizens, who are the ultimate guardians of liberty. These conditions, which challenge or even constrain the power of the State, are fundamental tenets that governments everywhere are loath to accept.

E. Partnerships

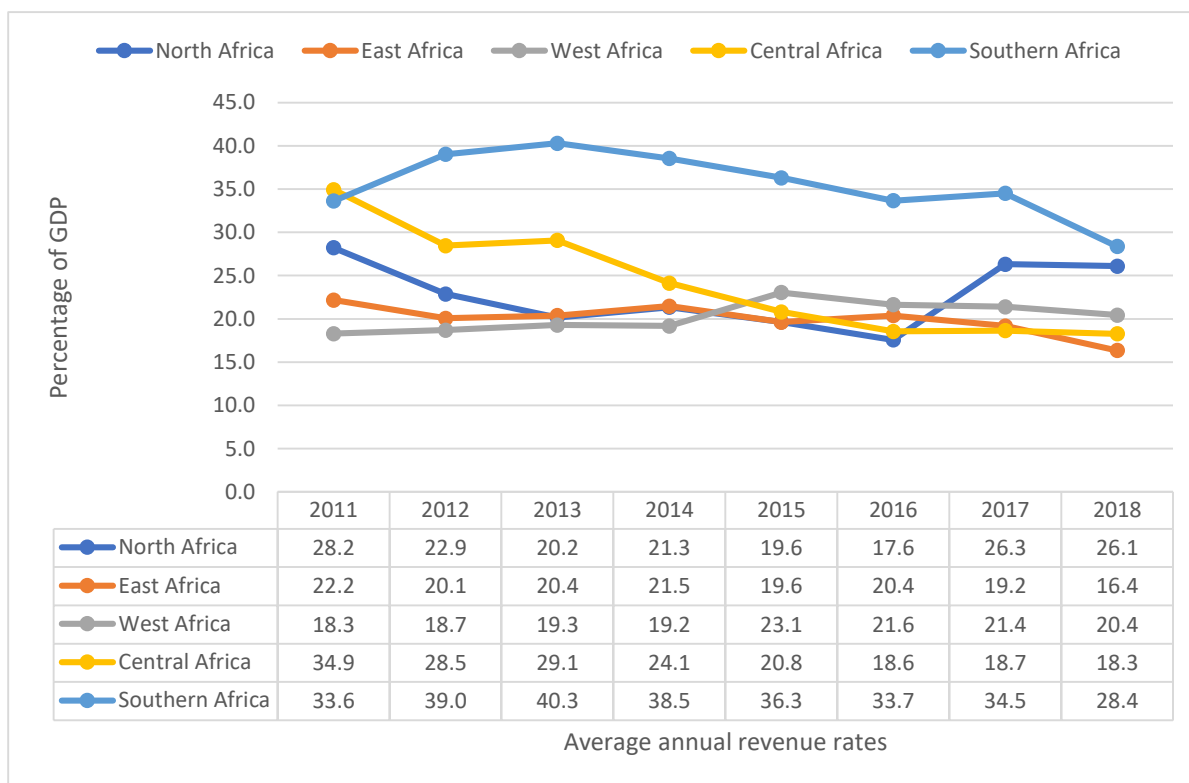
44. The partnerships pillar aims to ensure sustained partnerships and collaboration at various levels to provide an enduring foundation for the advancement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. There are five areas covered under this pillar: domestic resource mobilization; official development assistance (ODA) and remittances; trade including foreign direct investment and Aid for Trade; debt management; and science, technology and innovation.

1. Overall progress

45. Africa has not performed well on the core indicators of Goal 17 or those of Agenda 2063, with significant gaps persisting. Specifically, domestic resource mobilization in Africa is below the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 targets of 7 per cent GDP growth by 2023 and beyond to achieve economic transformation. Total government revenue as a share of GDP declined by 5.7 per cent, while the proportion of budgets funded by domestic taxes increased by 7 per cent over the period 2011–2018, as reflected by the subregional performance in this regard, shown in figure 14. Despite positive progress prior to the onset of COVID-19, there are unfavourable outcomes regarding the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, such as low revenue-to-GDP ratio, sluggish inflows of foreign direct investment, rising debt rates, weak debt management and low Internet access across the continent.

Figure 14

Proportion of revenues to GDP rates across Africa by subregion, 2011–2018



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020.

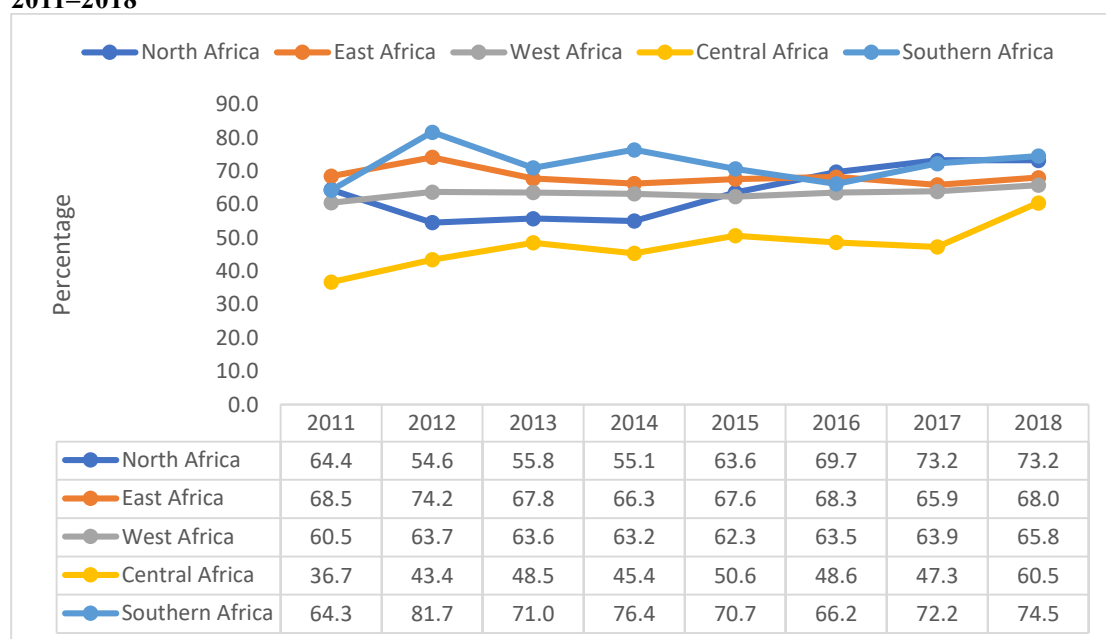
2. Domestic resource mobilization

46. Statistics Division figures show that, across the continent, the share of the budget that is domestically funded increased from 61 per cent in 2011 to 67.8 per cent in 2018. The proportion of revenues to GDP declined, however, from 25 per cent in 2011 to 19.3 per cent in 2018. Domestic resource mobilization in Africa remains insufficient to finance planned growth or meet the 2023 target of 75 per cent as the minimum share of domestic funding in budgets.

47. For the period 2011–2018, Southern Africa registered the highest revenue-to-GDP ratio – at 36 per cent – compared to 20 per cent in East and West Africa (figure 15). Likewise, the share of domestic funding in the budget was 72.1 per cent in Southern Africa and 68.3 per cent in East Africa, with cross-country variations (figure 16).

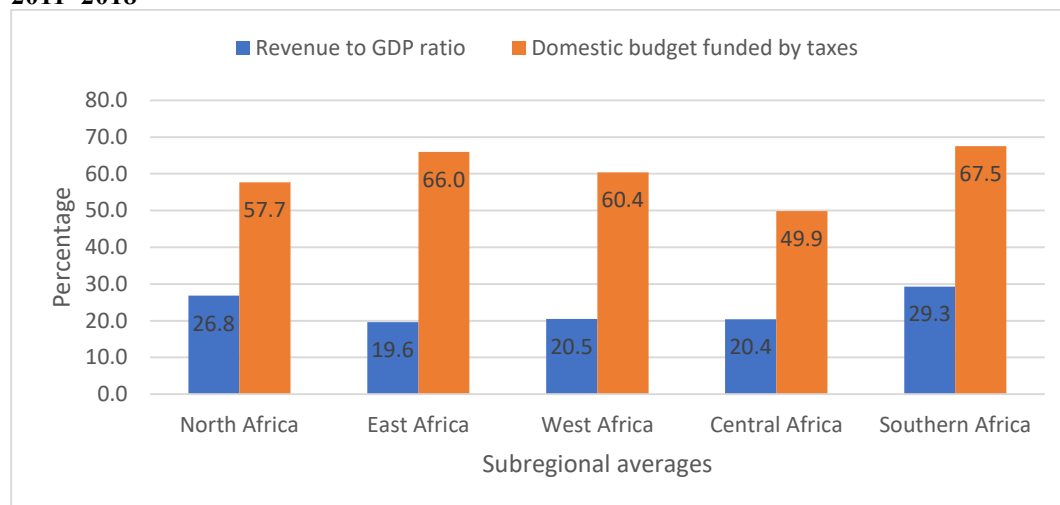
Figure 15

Analysis by subregion of the proportion of domestic budgets funded by taxes, 2011–2018



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020.

Figure 16
Analysis by subregions of average revenue-to-GDP and tax-funded budgets, 2011–2018

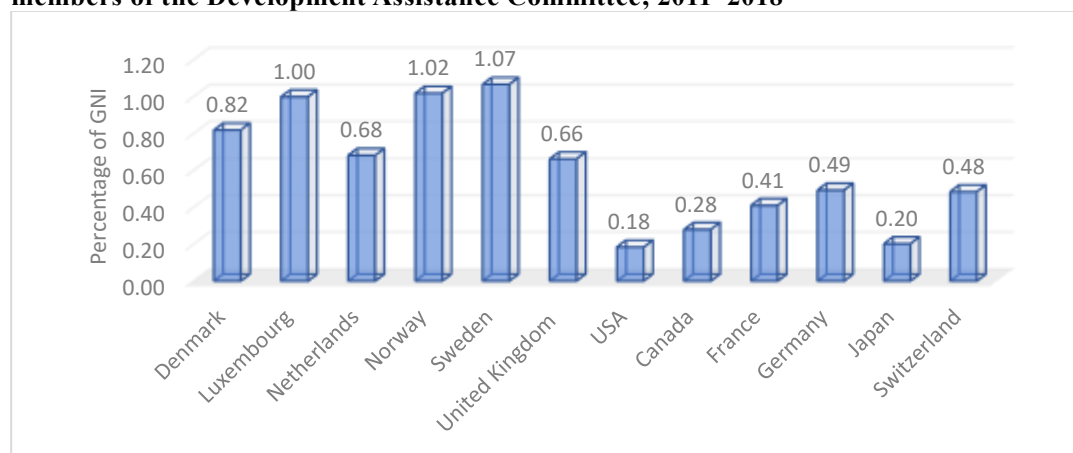


Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020.

3. ODA disbursements from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

48. ODA inflows have remained below the target set by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) of an annual disbursement on ODA by countries members of the Development Assistance Committee of at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income per capita. Between 2011 and 2018, only four of those countries met that target.¹ The partnerships pillar is even more crucial for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, given the additional resource constraints necessitated by the pandemic.

Figure 17
Net annual ODA flows as a percentage of the gross national income of countries members of the Development Assistance Committee, 2011–2018



Source: 2020 figures from the OECD development finance database.

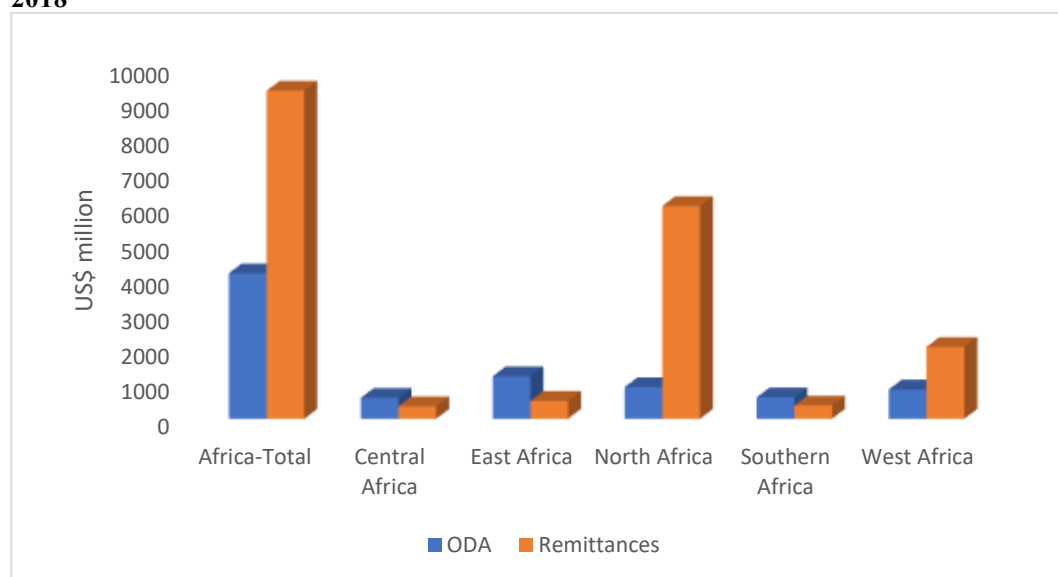
¹ These are Sweden 1.07 per cent; Norway, 1.02 per cent; Luxembourg, 1.0 per cent; and Denmark, 0.82 per cent.

4. Remittance inflows

49. The region has experienced a slight increase in remittance inflows, from 3.5 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 4.0 per cent in 2018, as recorded by the World Bank in its world development indicators database for 2020. Moreover, remittance inflows varied across the subregions, with West Africa receiving 33 per cent of the continent’s inflows, followed by North Africa (21 per cent). Remittance inflows exceed ODA inflows by a ratio of 2 to 1. North Africa received \$6,040 million in remittances compared to \$898 million in ODA, while East Africa received \$507 million in remittances as against \$1,206 million in ODA inflows.

Figure 18

Subregional comparison of ODA and remittance inflows (US\$ million), 2014–2018



Source: OECD and World Bank estimates, 2020.

5. Foreign direct investment and Aid for Trade

50. Aggregate foreign direct investment inflows exceed those in the form of Aid for Trade. On average, as reported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in 2020 Aid for Trade constituted only 19 per cent of the total trade inflows to Africa, whereas foreign direct investment constituted 81 per cent of total trade inflows. In Africa, Aid for Trade inflows are increasing faster than those of foreign direct investment. Between 2011 and 2018, Aid for Trade increased by 41.2 per cent, compared to less than 1 per cent for foreign direct investment. North Africa shows the most stable growth in both foreign direct investment and Aid for Trade, whereas Southern Africa shows the most volatile trend in foreign direct investment.

51. The continent’s debt rate and debt burden are worrisome. As recorded in the word development indicators for 2020, African debt increased from 32.4 per cent in 2011 to 39.6 per cent in 2018, with corresponding debt servicing rates of between 3 and 8.5 per cent, indicating a debt burden of 183 per cent.

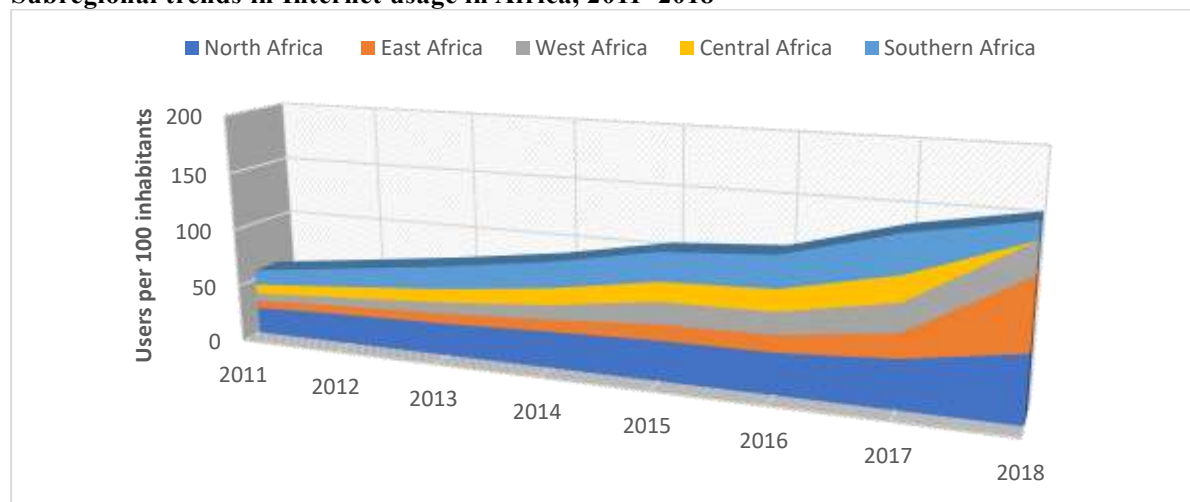
6. Science, technology and innovation

52. Africa lags behind in science, technology and innovation. Internet access and usage are rising in Africa but rates remain below those of other regions and the Agenda 2063 targets. Significant investments are yet to be made in such areas as soft and hard infrastructure, digitalization, research and development, education in

the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and patents, if the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 goals are to be attained.

Figure 19

Subregional trends in Internet usage in Africa, 2011–2018



7. Looking ahead

53. The continent's GDP growth has been sluggish and is projected to decline by 2.1 per cent in 2020 under the impact of COVID-19. Other Sustainable Development Goal indicators, such as fiscal deficits, debts and remittances in Africa, also worsened in 2020 and will continue to do so owing to the pandemic, with notable differences across countries. Differences in commodity exports, economic diversification and fiscal policies account for the differences in impact. As concluded by the World Bank, the initial trajectory of recovery from the pandemic shows a positive GDP growth of 3.2 per cent in Africa in 2021, below the 7 per cent target set for the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063.

F. Conclusions and recommendations

54. New ideas and approaches with a strong African flavour are required to address structural bottlenecks and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063. These are outlined below, under the five pillars of sustainable development.

1. People

55. In the social development dimension, under the “people” pillar, the following measures will be key:

(a) *Poverty reduction, in particular with a renewed focus on building social protection systems*: Social protection systems need to be strengthened to reduce poverty sustainably and in a resilient manner;

(b) *Strengthening of research capacities*: These must be strengthened to generate local and national knowledge in relevant sectors. This also requires regional and international cooperation among research agencies;

(c) *Building the capacity of non-State entities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063*: Systematic cooperation and coordination between public, private and other non-State entities is necessary in planning efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of

Agenda 2063, monitoring progress towards those goals and empowering citizens to that end;

(d) *Regional integration in economic and social aspects*: Such integration will be conducive to supporting the development endeavours of Africa and expanding its growth opportunities;

(e) *Building resilient health systems in Africa*: This undertaking requires increased investments in disease surveillance systems, to make them responsive to emergencies, flexible and adaptable to rapidly changing situations, and equitable in nature;

(f) *Promoting literacy, numeracy, vocational training, higher education and the acquisition of new skills*: Beyond speeding up literacy and numeracy, countries must focus their vocational training and higher education on developing a critical mass of skilled citizens to increase productivity;

(g) *Improving gender equality*: This will contribute to the attainment of other social goals and to progress beyond those goals. Women need to be empowered both economically and politically to boost economic growth.

2. Prosperity

56. In pursuit of the “prosperity” pillar, the following measures are recommended:

(a) *Investment in key infrastructure to accelerate economic growth and transformation*: Investments must be increased in such areas as reproductive health, mental health, primary health care, education and quality of governance, to engineer growth, address income inequality and reduce rent-seeking impulses. Other enabling conditions include the availability of economic and social infrastructure;

(b) *Adoption of a coordinated approach to development financing in Africa*: Such an approach is vital at country, subregional and regional levels in all power infrastructure, in particular in regional power pools;

(c) *Investment in digitalization and modern technologies*: Building on lessons from the pandemic, increased investment in emerging technologies is crucial;

(d) *Renewed focus on the transformation of economic infrastructures and sectors*: Africa needs to increase investments in strategic infrastructures and sectors to build resilience, reduce inequalities and support social development. African economies must grow at an even faster rate to close the gaps and achieve real progress. Beyond recovery, Africa should redirect investments to growth drivers that have large multiplier effects.

3. Planet

57. In terms of the “planet” pillar of sustainable development, the following measures are imperative:

(a) *Enhancing the environmental components of the Sustainable Development Goals*: African countries have signed up to relevant multilateral environmental agreements, but turning policy into action remains a challenge. Countries need to cooperate to ensure that transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers are managed in an equitable and sustainable manner through regulations and incentives, thereby ensuring progress towards attainment of the planet-related Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) *Tackling the issue of food loss, in particular at production and post-harvest levels*: The recycling of waste, including e-waste, must be promoted, to safeguard health and environmental integrity. The main challenges in this area include poor infrastructure and low funding for investments needed to reduce food production losses and wastes and to incentivize the development of waste-recycling systems;

(c) *Safeguarding untapped natural resources for environmental sustainability*: African countries must protect their resources through both legislation and programmes such as those set out in other Sustainable Development Goals that support environmental conservation and protection;

(d) *Implementing regulations governing marine ecosystems at national and international levels*: Supporting fisherfolk with other livelihood options through capacity-enhancement programmes will relieve pressure on fisheries. The enforcement of international protocols on protecting international waters is essential to reduce marine pollution;

(e) *Diversifying options for the financing of environmental programmes*: Innovative mechanisms are needed for African countries to take forward land recovery programmes and policy options. Awareness must be raised on the interconnections between people and the natural world to ensure a more balanced coexistence;

(f) *Weaving in new mechanisms for a sustainable environment during and after the COVID-19 pandemic*: Alongside planned activities in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, a focus should be placed on measures targeting urban areas, such as the adoption of green infrastructure.

4. Peace

58. In addressing the governance, peace and security aspects of sustainable development, the following measures are recommended:

(a) *Enhancement of governance*: Governance is a critical enabler upon which other Sustainable Development Goals depend. Good governance is important for achieving transformation, as recognized by the calls to measure performance against the extended Goal 16 indicators, including equality, inclusion and human rights. Governance is a key entry point for calls to action, including human well-being and capabilities, sustainable and just economies, sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition, energy decarbonization with universal access, urban and peri-urban development and global environmental commons;

(b) *Incorporation into national frameworks of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 aspirations on governance, peace and security*: Africa performs poorly across the governance, peace and security indicators and often worse than the rest of the world; the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the situation. Governments need to focus on policy coherence and break down sectoral silos, while the African Union needs to support countries in their efforts to ratify its charters, treaties and pacts. Member States must be held accountable for failing to adhere to African Union norms and standards;

(c) *People-centred approach to promoting governance, peace and security*: A people-centred approach to governance entails the provision of social and economic rights for all, since the failure to uphold human rights and freedoms can derail peace and security efforts and lead to growing social unrest. It is also important to ensure accessible, available and appropriate justice for all citizens. Community engagement in the measurement of progress towards Goal 16 and the related goals of Agenda 2063 is vital for generating awareness, ensuring

transparency in the allocation of resources and developing trust between governments and their citizens;

(d) *Financing for peace, security and governance*: Finance for governance, peace and security and progress is essential to root out corruption and it should be monitored. Corruption and illicit financial flows undermine the effective spending of resources. In addition, different financing options available to countries can be drawn upon to promote gender mainstreaming, good business practice and social and environmental outcomes. These could include inclusive and sustainable financing arrangements, progressive tax systems, reform of energy policies and the reduction of illicit financial flows.

5. Partnerships

59. Where the “partnerships” pillar and the means of implementation are concerned, the following measures are recommended:

(a) *Mobilizing domestic resources through efforts to expand revenue sources, broaden tax bases and stem corruption*: Priority must be given to the generation of domestic revenues and conduct of scrupulous financial accounting, to ensure efficiency and productivity for sustainable development. Policy reforms should aim at introducing appropriate, context-specific digital systems for collecting domestic revenues, such as e-tax systems; reaching out to non-traditional areas, such as the informal sector; and, through labour-saving technologies, ensuring inclusion and job security;

(b) *Reducing remittance costs and promoting regional integration*: Africa has the highest remittance costs, estimated by the World Bank in 2020 at 8.90 per cent, well above the 3 per cent limit set in Sustainable Development Goal target 10.c. This requires introducing policies to reduce the transaction costs of remittances. Promoting peace and subregional cohesion and regional trade links and commerce among Africa countries will stimulate remittance flows across the continent and mobilize crucial resources needed for the continent’s development;

(c) *Encouraging ODA flows by promoting principles of global and regional solidarity and humanity*: Africa leaders and policymakers should adopt and promote policies in favour of the determinants of ODA, such as political will, public sector support, global solidarity and international cooperation. These efforts should also include increased outreach to traditional donors and development partners and the forging of new alliances to enhance the flow of ODA to Africa in a post-pandemic world;

(d) *Promoting factors conducive to foreign direct investment, Aid for Trade and capital inflows*: These include fiscal and monetary policies to build investor confidence and diversify the market economy, while other factors, such as civil unrest and political instability, adversely affect foreign direct investment and other forms of capital investment in Africa. In 2019, foreign direct investment to Africa experiences a huge dip and, after 2021, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend in such investment remains uncertain. Sustainable development depends as much on the quality of investment as on the quantity. The creation of a conducive business environment, political stability, carefully designed incentives and other regulatory and legal reforms are crucial for managing investment inflows;

(e) *Enhancing debt management through coordination and management at the country level with support from regional and global international financial institutions and development partners*: Debt sustainability analysis must be integrated into national plans by working collaboratively with development agencies to ensure proper debt sustainability analysis and avoiding further debt distress. The World Bank’s Debt and Fiscal Risks Toolkit can be used to manage

the potential sustainability of debts in a post-pandemic world where high interest rates may be lethal for economic development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063;

(f) *Creating an environment conducive to science, technology and innovation and to broadened partnerships:* Policymakers should promote viable measures that enhance investments in science, technology and innovation-related infrastructure in the continent. This calls for building on the existing North-South, South-South, and intra-Africa trade and partnerships in pursuit of a transformed Africa. Strategic partnerships should be adopted and prioritized for institutional development pertaining to domestic resource mobilization and management, such as online database management systems for coordinating public-private sector partnerships in artificial intelligence and the Internet.
