

Fifth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: 16-18 April 2019

The fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD 5) convened in Marrakech, Morocco from 16-18 April 2019, under the theme ‘empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.’ The session carried out an in-depth review of selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the corresponding goals of the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (Agenda 2063), namely: 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).

The Forum, attended by an unprecedented number of attendees, brought together over 800 participants from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS).

Pre-event workshops were held on 16 April 2019 to discuss ways of ensuring joint implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063; ensure effect participation of MGoS in implementation; and discuss ways of scaling up opportunities in research and development in Africa. These three events are:

- The Regional Preparatory Workshop for Africa Voluntary National Review (VNR) Countries, which created a space for peer-learning and experience sharing on VNR reporting in support of joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) and Agenda 2063;
- The MGoS Preparatory and Capacity Development Workshop for ARFSD 5 discussed the role of multiple stakeholders, including parliaments; and inclusive policies, notably for children, women, disabled and aging populations in implementation of both Agendas; and
- The African Regional Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Forum, which, considering the role of STI in accelerating efforts to achieve the SDGs under review by ARFSD 5, deliberated on, *inter alia*, opportunities for scaling up actions.

The pre-events were followed by two days of in-depth discussions featuring a high-level panel focusing on the ARFSD 5 theme, a panel session on VNRs and peer learning on implementing Agendas 2030 and 2063, and parallel panel meetings on the sub-themes of the Forum. The discussions from these sessions on progress of implementation, emerging issues,

challenges and opportunities, and means of implementation contributed to the ARFSD key messages.

The key messages reflecting Africa’s specific challenges in the SDGs’ implementation, gaps and levers of change to accelerate implementation, will be communicated to the July 2019 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF); and the September 2019 SDG Summit.

Brief History of the ARFSD

ARFSD 5 follows up on, and reviews the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Africa and provides input to the annual sessions of the HLPF under the auspices of the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The five Regional Forums (in Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Western Asia) were established following General Assembly resolutions 67/290, 70/1 and 70/299, which, *inter alia*, set out the importance of the regional dimensions of sustainable development, and invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the HLPF.

These Forums link national, regional and global discourses on the SDGs and serve as multi-stakeholder platforms to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The ARFSD was mandated by resolutions 930 (XLVIII) and 939 (XLIX) of the Joint Annual Meetings of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration, and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. In Resolution 939 (XLIX),

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the Conference of Ministers requested ECA, in collaboration with the AU Commission, the African Development Bank and other partners, to convene the ARFSD on an annual basis for follow-up and review of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Forum 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. Most significantly, the outcomes of the meeting 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 met from 7-19 May 2016, in Cairo, Egypt, under the theme 'Ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.' This regional forum was the first following the adoption of the Agenda 2030 in September 2015, and therefore focused on integration of this roadmap and Agenda 2063 to ensure their seamless implementation.

ARFSD 3: This meeting met from 18-19 May 2017, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and addressed six sub-themes, namely: eradicating all forms of poverty; ending hunger and achieving food security; healthy lives and promoting well-being for all; gender equality and empowerment of women and girls; building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation; and conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

ARFSD 4: This meeting convened from 2-4 May 2018 in Dakar, Senegal, and discussed 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 the Partnership for Sustainable Development).

Pre-Event Workshops

Preparatory and Capacity Development Workshop for MGoS in Africa

Edo Mahendra, ECA, opened the workshop on Tuesday morning. Emily Hosek, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and recalled the fundamental role of MGoS in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Stephen Chacha, Chair, Interim Committee for the Regional Engagement Mechanism of MGoS, said a roadmap should be developed to ensure the best approaches for facilitating the SDGs

and Agenda 2063's joint implementation with the support of the Major Groups.

Jacqueline Amongin, Pan-African Parliament, speaking on parliamentarians' role in SDG implementation, underscored "we represent everyone," and called on all delegates to contribute to this message.

Lilia Hachem Naas, ECA, underscored the need to ensure the SDGs are inclusive, reaffirming the importance of the workshop for sharing experiences on SDG implementation.

Paul Mpuga, ECA, presented an overview of the progress on the implementation of selected SDGs, highlighting the need for: quality education and effective learning; enhancing measures to combat climate change and community engagement; measures to scale up financing; and the need to overcome trade barriers. Participants met throughout the day and discussed:

- the best approaches to facilitating joint implementation of the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063;
- the role of multiple stakeholders, including parliaments;
- inclusive policies, notably for children, women, disabled and aging populations; and
- measures to mobilize resources and overcome finance gaps.

Workshop participants noted the need to ensure the full participation and engagement of MGoS in order to hold governments accountable to implementation of both Agendas. Noting the challenges faced by inadequate coordination of their activities and limited financial resources, they agreed to accelerate efforts to establish the African Regional Engagement and Coordination Mechanism, a coordination mechanism for more meaningful MGoS engagement in sustainable development in Africa.

Africa Regional STI Forum

Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, ECA, facilitated the opening of the first African STI Forum. Afework Kassu Gizaw, State Minister, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ethiopia, discussed STI in Ethiopia, highlighting the importance of research and development for ensuring industrial growth of



Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

the continent. Yasser Refaat Abdel-Fattah, Deputy Minister for Scientific Research Affairs, Egypt, presented STI initiatives in Egypt, underscoring the need for coordinated efforts in research and development in Africa. He reported that his country is aiming to achieve significant economic growth by 2030, by creating an innovative society, which can produce science, technology, and knowledge to meet national objectives.

Mmboneni Muofhe, Department of Science and Technology, South Africa, called for recognizing that industry requires skilled labor, suggesting stakeholders identify skills required for the jobs of tomorrow.

The ensuing breakout sessions addressed the role of STI in accelerating efforts to achieve the SDGs under review by ARFSD 5.

The STI Forum highlighted the need to resolve inequalities caused by excluding rural regions from technology, and called for homegrown solutions to respond to the challenges of sustainable development on the African continent. The STI Forum highlighted the need to accelerate the application of machine learning, artificial intelligence, open data, robotics and the internet, among other technologies, to assist in achieving sustainable development in Africa.

Regional Preparatory Workshop for Africa VNR Countries

Oliver Chinganya, ECA, emphasized that the goals of the Agendas 2030 and 2063 are unlikely to be achieved, as ambition is not commensurate with action on the ground, and questioned how to utilize VNR tools to achieve agreed goals.

Tonya Vaturi, UNDESA, said that VNR preparations mobilize all parts of governments and society, providing an opportunity to anchor sustainable development at all levels and allows for ownership of the SDGs. Mansour Ndiaye, UN Development Programme (UNDP), stated that VNRs are a learning platform providing an opportunity to share best practices and challenges. He underscored VNRs as a means to accelerate progress on SDGs, underscoring the need for greater investment in data and metrics to measure progress.



Oliver Chinganya, ECA

Juliet Wasswa-Mugambwa, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), underlined the critical importance of a joined, integrated approach for the implementation, review and reporting of Agendas 2030 and 2063, as they are complementary.

Leila Ben Ali, AU Commission, introduced the AU Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC), whose mandate is to lead in providing and promoting, among others, quality statistics, and statistical information on the continent. Its functions, she added, include encouraging collection of quality data to support monitoring of progress on achieving Agenda 2063, outlining programmes that support implementation of both agendas, including through enhancing data collection capacity.

Mohamed Benyahin, Secretary General of the Sustainable Development Department, Morocco, suggested governance is a vital topic in the VNR process, calling for meaningful civil society engagement.

Charles Akol, ECA, said the workshop provided an opportunity to report on VNR progress, exchange lessons learnt and strengthen capacity for implementing the Agendas 2030 and 2063. He further noted the workshop is a platform to understand the role of supreme audit institutions (SAIs) and linkages with other UN processes and agendas, including the human rights agenda.



Tonya Vaturi, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Overview on VNRs, the 2019 HLPF and the SDG Summit: Tonya Vaturi, UNDESA, said the HLPF enhances integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, provides leadership, and highlights emerging issues and challenges. She noted VNRs assess all SDGs and not just those being considered by the HLPF in a particular year. She recalled the HLPF would convene twice in 2019, first in July under the auspices of ECOSOC, and then in September

under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, the latter being referred to as the SDG Summit.

In the ensuing discussion, participants enquired about the SDG Summit outcomes. Vaturi explained that a political statement will be adopted to provide political leadership to boost the SDGs' implementation. Participants also asked how to encourage greater MGoS involvement in the VNR process and suggested VNRs be presented at the national level.

Regional perspective on preparations for VNR and linkages to Agenda 2063: Leila Ben Ali, AUC, chaired the session. Paul Mpuga, ECA, provided an overview of synergies, tools, and follow-up on the SDGs and Agenda 2063. He shared strategies to improve coordination, engagement, and support at



regional and country level, emphasizing lessons learned, notably: SDGs' implementation is still slow; support is required to address challenges; opportunities identified in VNR reports should be capitalized on; stakeholder engagement on both Agendas is key for national ownership and inclusive participation; policy dialogue and consultations are needed to boost state institutional, private sector and civil society capacities; Agenda 2063 is not integrated into most VNRs; and it is important to increase infrastructure given rapid population growth and urbanization to leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Juliet Wasswa-Mugambwa, OSAA, reminded participants of the peace-development nexus, arguing for greater attention to joint advocacy by all relevant African agencies and stressing human rights' importance to combat social and political exclusion.

Tonya Vaturi, UNDESA, invited country representatives to share lessons on key areas of progress and main challenges encountered with SDG implementation thus far.

Several country and MGoS representatives articulated best practices, and barriers for harmonization between the SDGs and the Agenda 2063. Main challenges raised included: difficulties with current joint reporting methods; statistical deficits in many countries and lack of resources for capacity building; fragmented actions across ministries; weak regional coordination; and a lack of clarity regarding the respective institutional responsibilities at the African level.

On opportunities for linking VNR to Agenda 2063, countries called for further investment in peace-development linkages, suggesting integrating indicators and strategic partnerships to enhance harmonization of reporting methods to improve implementation of both Agendas. Some also noted the relevance of combatting illicit financial flows and corruption.

In conclusion, panelists stressed that the alignment of national development plans with regional and global strategies facilitates international reporting obligations. They also highlighted the importance of building platforms for multistakeholder participation on VNRs.

The role of SAIs in the implementation of, follow-up to and review of the SDGs: Rakesh B. Bhuckory, Minister Counsellor, Mauritius High Commission, chaired this session. Freddy Yves

Ndjemba, International Organization of SAIs (INTOSAI), Development Initiative, discussed the role of SAIs, in supporting SDGs' review. He noted that, in Africa, SAIs: provide independent oversight of government actions; issue "doable" recommendations; add value to government actions; provide input to review and follow-up processes; and enable stakeholder engagement by giving them a voice in the audit process.

During the ensuing discussion, Ndjemba informed delegates that his organization is building the capacity of SAIs to assess SDG implementation. He also noted that since SAI reports are available to the public, these can empower citizens to take action on SDGs. Delegates also noted the need to ensure legal bottlenecks and jurisdiction difficulties do not impede SAIs.

Preparation of VNRs and Integration of the Agendas 2030 and 2063: Mohamed El Hadi Aouaidjia, Director General, Social Development Agency, Algeria, chaired this session. Tonya Vaturi, UNDESA, outlined the VNR guidelines, emphasizing that the VNR preparation process enables coordination of stakeholder engagement. She noted VNRs facilitate the synthesizing of ongoing progress in achieving national, regional and international goals and targets. She reported that 18 African countries have elected to submit VNRs in 2019, and highlighted the VNR database as a useful tool to help others prepare their submissions, underscoring the usefulness of the updated VNR guidelines.

Participants then broke into two groups to debate integration of the Agendas 2030 and 2063 with national plans and how to improve stakeholder engagement. On integration, the groups recognized the goals and objectives of the Agendas are generally only integrated into national development plans and strategies after the national development plans have been agreed. They observed integrating the Agendas with national plans is a multi-year process due to the intricacies of national planning processes.

On stakeholder engagement, they said many countries have identified and engaged stakeholders in the VNR process, cautioning that, despite best efforts, those stakeholders engaged with may not represent the entire sector. They also lamented the reluctance of some stakeholders to engage with government.

In the ensuing discussion, participants, *inter alia*, noted that engaging stakeholders in national development planning implies that the process is inclusive and called for awareness raising on this matter.

Forging synergy between the implementation and reporting procedures of the SDGs and the human rights

mechanisms, and institutions and governance: Keflloe Masiteng, South Africa, chaired the session. Abdu Ali, UN Human Rights, argued there is a need to identify linkages between the SDG targets and human rights recommendations, using reference tools, like the Universal Human Rights Index.

Sara Hamouda, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), noted the African initiative, ‘Silencing the Guns by 2020,’ a roadmap from the AU for a conflict-free continent, and said SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) is ambitious but its measurements on progress are currently informed by weak assessment methodologies.

Joint session of countries involved in VNR and MGoS and closing of the workshop: Kavita Desai, UN Foundation, chaired the session, which she said aimed to explore the challenges related to VNRs in a peer learning exercise.

Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director, African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, emphasized the importance of aligning national development goals with global targets, calling for more efforts to enhance multistakeholder participation in development policies and SDGs’ implementation.

Momodu-Lamin Deen Rogers, Sierra Leone, shared Sierra Leone’s experiences on aligning existing development plans with the SDGs, noting challenges with corruption, data availability, budget allocations, and ministerial coordination. He reported improvements in his country’s VNR experience by enhancing national platforms for civil society participation.

Abel Koka, Restless Development, Tanzania, provided an overview of a number of activities to engage youth in implementing SDGs, including data generation to highlight gaps in SDG action. He said his organization engages youth to actively take part in contributing to the SDGs, including through holding decision makers to account, and underscored the need for more outreach to rural youth.

In the ensuing discussion, participants queried how to overcome limitations to accessing statistics. Others recommended using accessible language for greater youth engagement on the SDGs. They also addressed, among others: how to achieve the SDGs in rural areas; the need for disaggregated data; involving national statistic offices in grassroots data collection; and reaching vulnerable sectors, which includes those with disabilities and migrants.

Alyson Neel, UN Foundation, closing the session, provided an overview of the day’s discussions stating that all the actions discussed aim to strengthen the process for achieving the SDGs.

ARFSD 5 Report

Opening Session

Oliver Chinganya, ECA, moderated the session on Wednesday, 17 April. Amadou Lamine Guisse, Chair, ARFSD 4, Senegal, presided over the session and thanked the Kingdom of Morocco for organizing ARFSD 5, commending African countries for the high level of commitment to the regional implementation of the Agenda 2063.

Giovanie Biha, Deputy Executive-Secretary, ECA, recalled that the Forum provides a platform to facilitate peer-learning and efficient action on both Agendas. She noted that the increase in countries submitting VNRs is a positive sign, calling for enhancing institutional governance and South-South cooperation.

Mesfin Tessema, AUC, pointed out the synergies between the AU’s recently launched Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced People, with the Forum’s discussion on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and strong institutions) goal, highlighting opportunities for providing concrete inputs for the HLPF and to mobilize resources.

Nezha El Ouafi, Secretary of State in Charge of Sustainable Development, Morocco, reminded delegates that Africa needs bold transformation and a roadmap with clear indicators for implementing the SDGs. She affirmed that civil society and the private sector have demonstrated that “the solutions are in our hands,” and invited the Forum to produce a “tangible vision.”

In a keynote address, Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Head of the Government of Morocco, described ARFSD 5 as

a watershed moment for Africa to unite in stepping up efforts to achieve the SDGs. Referring to the youth as Africa’s greatest asset, he called on ARFSD 5 to “leave no stone unturned” in harnessing the continent’s resources. He added that the Forum is “the grist to the mill” that will spur Africa to increase the pace of the SDG implementation in the run up to the 2030 Agenda.

High-level panel on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: stepping up action to deliver the commitments contained in Agenda 2030

This panel, chaired by Nezha El Ouafi, and moderated by Jenerali Ulimwengu, Tanzania, convened on Wednesday morning. Oliver Chinganya, ECA, discussed empowerment and the transformative action required for inclusive, job-creating growth. He reported that low employment rates on the continent are inadequate to create the desired impact for sustainable development and stressed that job-creating growth requires strong institutions, enabling conditions for investments, and targeted skills development tailored to youth inclusion.

Batio Bassier, Minister of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change, Burkina Faso, cited the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C findings that keeping climate change within the limits of 1.5°C will make it easier to achieve the SDGs. He highlighted the Sahel Climate Commission and its Priority Regional Program as an example of concrete sub-regional actions necessary to step up climate action.

Moumina Houmed Hassan, Minister of Women and Family, Djibouti, said achieving social inclusion and equality requires realistic strategies. She drew attention to Djibouti’s experience in implementing the SDGs, including through investment in education, universal healthcare, social assistance for vulnerable families, and gender mainstreaming.

Afewerk Kassu Gizaw, State Minister, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ethiopia, highlighted ways of harnessing STI to achieve the SDGs. Science, he said, provides evidence-based solutions, technology provides the tools to achieve results, and innovation provides the keys to replicating successes. He



Nezha El Ouafi, Secretary of State in Charge of Sustainable Development, Morocco

emphasized the need to harness Africa's scientific skills to provide "homegrown solutions for homegrown challenges."

Robert Chakanda, Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Sierra Leone, said credible data is necessary to support public decision-making. Chakanda also stated that although some data gathering institutions may need strengthening, the time to start achieving the SDGs is still now.

Suleiman Hassan, Minister of Environment, Nigeria, said that Nigeria has mechanisms in place to ensure SDG implementation, including governmental and interministerial committees, as well as a presidential advisor on the SDGs. He announced that Nigeria has also launched Sub-Saharan Africa's first green bond.

Sheila Gweneth Carey, Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the UN and Co-facilitator of the Political Declaration of the Leaders' Summit of the HLPF, said the SDG Summit is a critical milestone, as it is the first occasion that progress in achieving all SDGs will be assessed.

In the ensuing discussion, participants considered the importance of local innovation, action on SDGs in the face of limited resources, investment in research and development, and reconciling the limits of natural resources with economic growth and job creation.

Closing the panel discussion, Secretary El Ouafi declared "now is the time to move from commitment to engagement to action" on the SDGs.

Organizational Matters

Election of the Bureau: The Forum elected, by consensus, Morocco as the Chair of the ARFSD 5 and the bureau member for North Africa. Three vice-chairs were also elected: Angola for Southern Africa; Chad for Central Africa; Uganda for East Africa; the Republic of Guinea, for West Africa, also to serve as the Forum's rapporteur.

Adoption of the agenda and programme of work: The Forum adopted the agenda and programme of work without amendments.

Support and progress made at the regional and subregional levels on implementation of the Agendas 2030 and 2063

On Wednesday afternoon, Paul Mpuga, ECA, presented the regional report on implementation of the SDGs and the goals of Agenda 2063. He said Africa needs empowerment, inclusiveness and equality in order to reach its full potential. Highlighting key messages of the report, he said the quality of education in the region remains low. He underscored trade as a key element for African's transition and SDGs' implementation and called for more investment in social services, health and sanitation. On SDG 8 (decent work), he emphasized that growth is still limited and vulnerable to changes in commodity prices, conflicts, limited infrastructure and financial services. He suggested more training on entrepreneurship to overcome these challenges.

Josephine Etima, AUC provided an overview on the support provided for the implementation of the Agendas. She recalled the AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, signed in

January 2018, and stressed the challenges of data collection and data quality, underscoring financial constraints. She further recalled the AUC-led development of the Agenda 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan Core Indicator Handbook, highlighting areas of joint support, including monitoring frameworks and evaluation processes, as well as governance tools.

In the ensuing debate, one delegate commented on the challenge of data availability, inviting ARFSD 5 to explore the SDG Index and Dashboards Reports (www.sdindex.org).

Round-table panel on VNRs and peer learning on implementation, follow-up and review of Agendas 2030 and 2063

Mansour Ndiaye, UNDP, moderated the session on Wednesday afternoon, stating VNRs are an opportunity to share lessons learned.

Senegal stressed the VNR is an opportunity for showcasing political will, demonstrating policy coherence and strengthening national coordination for SDG implementation. South Africa noted that processes for implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in her country have informed their SDG implementation process. Mauritius said it will showcase the SDGs most relevant to African SIDS in its VNR. He said Mauritius will also underscore efforts undertaken to move from being an "island state" to being an "ocean state."

Jacqueline Amongin, Parliamentarian, Uganda and Pan-African Parliament, said the VNRs submitted to date have underscored the central role of parliaments in SDG implementation, outlining parliaments' role as oversight bodies. Tonya Vaturi, UNDESA, outlined key activities for success, as evidenced by the VNRs, including: integrating SDGs into existing national and regional development plans, roadmaps and frameworks; SDG units to facilitate interdepartmental coordination; and multistakeholder participation. Hellen Malinga, MGoS representative, lauded the creation of fora to allow engagement with governments at a national level, and urged enacting and strengthening laws to address the gaps highlighted by the SDGs.



ARFSD 4 Chair **Saliou Niang Dieng**, Senegal

Ensuing discussions focused on best practices to link academia with private sector, reducing barriers to civil society participation, and challenges of countries in implementing STI policies.

Parallel Meetings on the Sub-Themes of the ARFSD 5

Six parallel sessions met on Wednesday afternoon to strengthen the key messages to be adopted by the ARFSD 5. The groups reported back to plenary on Thursday morning.

SDG 4 (quality education): The panel noted the importance of strengthening curriculum to include aspects of sustainable development; and called for entrepreneurial training. They also underscored the need for strengthening data and information available on children with special needs in order to enhance monitoring methods.

In ensuing discussion, delegates advocated for strengthening adult vocational training, and the inclusion of age-appropriate sex education to reduce school dropouts due to pregnancy and HIV infections.

SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth): Noting the growing importance of the informal sector, the panel recommended enhanced sharing of experience through South-South cooperation. They also suggested partnerships between the private sector and training institutions to ensure requisite skills development for future jobs. Delegates suggested including measures to curb the “brain drain” in Africa through job opportunities, develop conducive work environments to allow decent work, and take into account the contributions of unpaid work to achieving this SDG.

SDG 10 (reduced inequalities): The panel noted that, to date, many countries have focused mainly on gender and economic inequalities, and recommended: sharing of best practices for social protection policies; distinguishing poverty from extreme poverty, since the tools to address them are different; transforming tax systems to reduce inequalities in countries with tax-exempted multinational organizations; and enhancing hygiene facilities in schools to raise girls’ school attendance. They also noted that caste systems in Africa are a source of inequality, leading to modern forms of slavery.

Delegates also highlighted inequalities faced by persons with special needs, included the disabled and the elderly.

During the debate, delegates emphasized the urgency of ensuring refugees are provided dignified resettlement and return. They also suggested registering digital devices as a means of tackling ethnic and post-election violence, which is currently gaining traction through digital technology by spreading of propaganda.

SDG 13 (climate action): This panel recommended enhancing science-policy interfaces, calling for resource mobilization to support climate mitigation and adaptation measures, and including climate change in primary, secondary and tertiary education. During the ensuing discussion, delegates suggested emphasizing innovative ways to tackle the drivers of climate change and

using indigenous knowledge to increase resilience, notably in the agriculture sector.

SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions): Key issues raised by this panel included: improving governance, recommending increased efforts to curb corruption and tax evasion; investing in human and institutional capacities; resolving conflict through dialogue; involving human rights organizations to enhance peace efforts; and improving financial resources to limit transboundary conflicts, and enhance border security.

SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals): Key issues raised by the panel included the need to: combat illicit financial flows and tax evasion; improve synergies across both the Agendas 2030 and 2063; and ensure effective engagement of stakeholders. They also noted the importance of removing trade barriers within Africa, including by ratifying the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Pedro Bayeme Ayingono, Economic Monetary Community of Central Africa, reported on initiatives to support sustainable development in agriculture, pastoralism and fisheries, in the central African region. Noting the economic difficulties faced by central Africa, he emphasized the need for cooperation and resource mobilization to support sustainable development.



Pedro Bayeme Ayingono, Central African Economic and Monetary Community

Yasser Refaat AbdelFattah, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Egypt, presented the commendations from the First Africa Regional STI Forum including the need to: provide opportunities for young African innovators; finance research and development; develop STI infrastructure; provide enabling conditions such as inclusive societies; good governance to ensure fair application of technologies; and scaling up competences in research and institutions.

Consideration and Adoption of Key Messages

On Thursday evening, participants convened in plenary. Republic of Guinea, as Rapporteur, presented the summary and key messages of ARFSD 5 (ECA/RFSD/2019/L.1). Delegates reviewed the document section by section, and the final document was adopted with no amendments. The Secretariat asked delegates to submit any additional suggestions and observations by writing for inclusion in the final document following the close of ARFSD 5.

Theme, Dates and Venue of the ARFSD 6

ARFSD 5 Chair El Ouafi noted that the date and theme will be decided by a future HLPF decisions. Zimbabwe offered to host



Giovanie Biha, Deputy Executive-Secretary

ARFSD 6 in Victoria Falls, to which delegates agreed. He said that ARFSD 6 is expected to be held in April 2020.

Other Matters

The Seychelles proposed that the first African STI Forum recommendations be adopted, which the Chair said will be considered. A representative of Persons with Disabilities urged the Government of Zimbabwe to engage with local disability organizations to ensure Persons with Disabilities play an active role in ARFSD 6. Cape Verde urged for parliamentarians to be involved in future Forums. A representative of the Ageing Major Group lamented the lack of mention of the needs of older people in the key messages. The Secretariat suggested the representative draft and forward draft text for inclusion in the key messages. An Indigenous Peoples representative lamented their minimal role in the ARFSD and queried how this can be improved. An Education and Academia representative asked for the role of African universities in SDG implementation to be strengthened, encouraging the development of networks to drive cooperation and collaboration.

Presenting an overview of the draft Marrakech Declaration, Chair El Ouafi recalled the need for consensus and resources for protecting people and planet. She emphasized that the Declaration takes into account the urgency of SDG implementation and recalled that faster action is still urgently required. She reminded delegates that the Declaration is a milestone, given that it is a strategy to ensure that everyone “walks the talk” and effectively deals with climate change, reduces inequalities, improves education, reduces violence and injects a new impetus into the SDG process.

ARFSD 5 adopted the Declaration without amendment.

Closure of the Session

During closing remarks, Giovanie Biha, Deputy Executive-Secretary, ECA, recalled the unprecedented number of attendees, underscored active participation of all participants, and thanked everyone involved for contributing to the Forum’s success. She expressed support to all African countries to “close the poverty

gap” and emphasized the urgency to act, specifically, in support of the fast growing youth population. She invited countries to come back in 2020 with concrete strategies and methodologies for measuring progress, and ensuring significant resource allocation. Biha also praised the gender equality of the current Bureau composition and commended the work of all delegates for helping Africa to “speak with one voice.”

Concluding, Chair El Ouafi said, “together we can move forward to a brighter future,” and, reaffirmed Morocco’s commitment, as the Bureau Chair, towards ensuring the attainment of the SDGs and the 2063 Agenda in Africa.

The Forum closed at 8:00pm.

Marrakech Declaration

In the Declaration (ECA/RFSD/2019/L.2), delegates:

- reaffirm their commitment to implementing the SDGs and adhere to the guidelines set out for implementing the 2030 Agenda by the regional meetings and the key messages adopted at ARFSD 5;
- call upon all African countries to strengthen South-South cooperation and experience sharing with a view to addressing the multiple and complex challenges and building multistakeholder partnerships, plans and programmes at regional and subregional levels;
- welcome the initiatives launched at the first Africa Action Summit convened by His Majesty King Mohammed VI on the sidelines of the 2016 UN Climate Conference, including the Congo Basin, Sahel, and Island States Climate Commissions;
- welcome efforts made to ensure implementation of these initiatives;
- reaffirm the urgent need to take appropriate measures to bring the consequences of global warming under control;
- emphasize the interdependence of peace, security and sustainable development, recognizing that progress has been made by African countries in this regard;
- reiterate the strategic importance of mobilizing adequate, predictable and additional financial resources to accelerate implementation of the SDGs in Africa, urging member States to establish effective financing strategies and call upon development partners to meet their respective commitments in support of Africa;
- highlight the difficulty faced by a number of African countries in reporting on the SDG indicators and call for establishing a solidarity fund for statistical development to support African countries in collecting necessary statistical data;
- call for efforts to foster and promote innovation and technology to fill the gaps in data needed for preparing national and regional development policies;
- call for strengthening the role of stakeholders, in particular parliamentarians, in attaining the SDGs; and
- call on all countries to implement the key messages of ARFSD 5 and request the Kingdom of Morocco to present these messages on behalf of African to the HLPF and the SDG Summit respectively.

Upcoming Meetings

UNPFII 18: The 18th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will be held under the theme of “Traditional knowledge: generation, transmission and protection.” UNPFII 18 will follow up on the outcome document of the World



Delegates posing for a family photo

Conference on Indigenous Peoples on implementation of action plans, ways to enhance participation of indigenous peoples at the UN, and implementation of the UN system-wide action plan on indigenous peoples. **dates:** 22 April-3 May 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNPFII Secretariat **email:** indigenous_un@un.org **www:** <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2/18-2.html>

Fourth UN Multi-stakeholder STI Forum: The Fourth STI Forum will meet under the theme ‘STI for ensuring inclusiveness and equality, with a special focus on SDGs 4 (quality education), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), 13 (climate action), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).’ It will provide a venue for facilitating interaction, matchmaking and establishing networks between relevant stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to identify and examine technology needs and gaps. **dates:** 14-15 May 2019 **venue:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** DESA **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/tfm>

HLPF 2019: The 2019 HLPF will address the theme, “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” It will conduct an in-depth review of SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, and 16, in addition to SDG 17, which is reviewed each year. Among other items, the Forum will consider the Global Sustainable Development Report, which is issued every four years. **dates:** 9-18 July 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for SDGs **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/contact/> **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>

Global Science, Technology and Innovation Conference (G-STIC) 2019: G-STIC aims to accelerate the development, dissemination and deployment of technology innovations that enable the achievement of the SDGs. Themed, ‘creating an impact on the achievement of the SDGs,’ G-STIC 2019 will build

on the results of previous editions, and further discuss the policy changes needed for the technological transition to sustainable societies. **dates:** 20-22 November 2019 **location:** Brussels, Belgium **phone:** +32 (0)3 2867458 **e-mail:** info@gstic.org **www:** <https://2019.gstic.org/>

UN HLPF under UNGA Auspices: The UN General Assembly will hold a meeting of the HLPF at the level of Heads of State and Government to consider, among other items, the GSDR issued every four years. **dates:** 24-25 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for SDGs **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/contact/> **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsummit>

Glossary

Agenda 2063	Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want
ARFSD	Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
AU	Africa Union
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the UN
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
SAIS	Supreme Audit Institutions
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
OSAA	UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
UNDESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	UN Development Programme
ECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews