

## ARFSD Highlights Wednesday, 26 February 2020

On the third day of the sixth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD 2020), participants “knuckled down” to critically assess Africa’s performance across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the morning, two plenary sessions addressed two of the “5P” clusters, People (SDGs 1-5), and Partnerships (SDG 17). In the afternoon, three parallel sessions convened to address the remaining three Ps: Prosperity (SDGs 10-11); Planet (SDGs 6, 12, 13 and 15); and Peace (SDG 16).

### Plenary Roundtable Panels and Parallel Meetings on the Sub-Themes of the Regional Forum (5Ps)

**People:** This plenary roundtable took place in the morning and was moderated by Ann- Therese Ndong-Jatta, Regional Director for Eastern Africa, UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Julitta Onabanjo, Regional Director, UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern and Southern Africa, highlighted some key findings from a background paper on this sub-theme. While noting positive trends, including a reduction in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, and improved enrolment of girls in school, Onabanjo stressed that assessing progress from a “people lens” requires addressing the underlying drivers responsible for the slow pace of change. She underlined the importance of harnessing high-quality, contextualized data towards this end.

Highlighting lessons from implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SDGs in the health sector, Humphrey Karamagi, World Health Organization (WHO), said that while there have been some gains across the continent,



L-R: **Veronica Mwanza**, Deaf Zimbabwe Trust; **Vera Songwe**, Under Secretary-General, and Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); **Gertrude Gatsi**, Deaf Zimbabwe Trust; and **Oliver Chinganya**, ECA

the overall pace of progress remains low and many are being left behind. He highlighted five key lessons learned: the need to shift from single to multiple-service delivery models; build more effective coalitions by including multiple perspectives in dialogue between government and partners; go beyond tallying numbers to analyzing why some groups are consistently being left behind; engage with sectors that are driving inequality; and explore innovative financing models.

Abebe Haile-Gabriel, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) stressed that all the SDGs are intertwined. Noting that hunger and malnutrition are not limited to the agricultural sector, he called for expanding investment to education, infrastructure and health, if these goals are to be achieved.



**Paul Mavima**, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe



L-R: **Fatou Kinteh**, Minister for Women's Affairs, Children, and Social Welfare, The Gambia; and **Amon Murwira**, Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development, Zimbabwe

Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue, Cornell University, emphasized the importance of adopting systems approaches to assess SDG achievements, rather than the current focus on monitoring individual goals and targets. He underscored the need for strategic investment in people, and especially in the younger generation.

Margaret Agama-Anyetei, African Union Commission (AUC), mentioned some examples of how SDG ambitions are being translated into policy.

Fatou Kinteh, Minister of Women's Affairs, Children, and Social Welfare, The Gambia, presented a series of achievements in improving gender equality, highlighting an increase in the number of women in leadership positions, as well as improved school attendance by girls.

Remarking that "education is what happens between birth and adulthood," Amon Murwira, Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, Zimbabwe, noted that the state of wellbeing of a people reflects the quality of their education. He emphasized that Africa must move away from a colonial education system that was purposely designed to produce "clerks and pseudo engineers," into "Education 5.0" that inculcates values such as research, innovation, and community service, and uses African resources to produce the goods and services that the continent needs.

Gertrude Gatsi, a disability activist from Zimbabwe, underscored that leaving no one behind means addressing what inclusion means for people living with disabilities. Joshua Malinga, Special Advisor to the President on Disability, Zimbabwe, quoting a Ndebele saying, "every elephant can carry its tusks," stressed that society needs to examine its attitudes on disability.

In the general discussion that followed, one speaker noted there are more than 65 million older people in Africa and called for a life cycle approach to ensure they are not left behind. Another speaker suggested "re-educating" African leaders to address the continent's governance problems. In response to a proposal for a new mechanism to monitor how



ARFSD 2020 participants display their favorite SDGs. Photo by ECA

countries are addressing interlinkages among the people-centered SDGs, Agama-Anyetei reported that there is an existing body following up both the 2030 and 2063 agendas, citing the publication of the first 10-year report on the 2063 Agenda. Other issues covered by the panel included: the need to develop a purpose-built data ecosystem for Africa that can address local specificities, while also responding to fast moving changes; and creating new, Afrocentric, knowledge models that build on indigenous knowledge. Existing African Union protocols on inclusion of persons living with disability, as well as older persons, were also highlighted.

**Partnerships:** Moderated by Alexander Trepelkov, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the second plenary roundtable focused on how to strengthen partnerships to secure the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Thierry Amossougo, ECA, underscored the importance of innovative approaches to resource mobilization to reorient funding towards priority actions, and reforms to increase local funding. He also noted that funds from the diaspora can be an important source of revenue. Highlighting some challenges, he noted the high ratio of public debt to GDP, as well the negative impact of corruption, and illicit financial flows. Amossougo pointed to direct investment as an important way to fund sustainable development, noting, however that it requires an appropriate framework.

Fatou Kinteh, Minister, Women, Children and Social Welfare, The Gambia, emphasized revitalized and enhanced partnerships bringing together all actors to mobilize all available resources. She further advocated a shift away from business as usual and a focus on technology. Highlighting national reforms, she said they were targeted at broadening the tax base and also included a public-private-partnership policy.

Amol Muwira, Minister for Higher and Tertiary Education, Zimbabwe, underlined partnerships as one of the most important SDGs, being a driver for implementation. He also emphasized cooperation and innovation in science and technology to ensure that that trade can happen and for Africa to use its competitive advantage in this respect.



Gertrud Gatsi, Deaf Zimbabwe Trust

Lucy Edeh Okpanachi, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Nigeria, highlighted national efforts, including the creation of a special office to report on SDG activities and an integrated national financing framework to unlock financing for the SDGs from the public and private sectors, foundations and philanthropies.

Moulay Abdeljebbar Salim, High Commission for Planning, Morocco, described efforts to engage in south-south partnerships and concrete measures to reduce Morocco's debt. He also highlighted initiatives including a tourism cooperative agreement with other African countries and favorable import duty levies and preferential rates for the least developed countries and small island developing states. He noted that an African migratory observatory was aimed at examining flows and coming up with viable solutions for migration.

Laura Ahtime, Chief Executive, National Bureau of Statistics, Seychelles, focused on the importance of statistics, as data cuts across all the SDGs. She also maintained that funding decisions by development partners need to be based on empirical data rather than anecdotal evidence.

Jacqueline Amongin, Member of Parliament, Uganda, observed that only two African countries, Kenya and Uganda, have come up with streamlined policies for implementing climate change action.

Issues raised in the ensuing discussion emphasized the importance of interagency coordination, strengthening domestic resource mobilization, and putting in place effective monitoring mechanisms, to harness the full impact of SDG actions.

**Prosperity:** This discussion chaired by Professor Byeragi Georges, Bureau Member, ARFSD, and co-chaired by Charles Kwenin, Regional Director for Southern Africa, International Organization for Migration (IOM), focused on key messages, actions and opportunities on prosperity to inform the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

Alexio Musindo, International Labour Organization (ILO), framed the key issues, noting the need to put people at the center of prosperity by focusing on inequality, decent work and social protection. He emphasized the need for a migration governance system where skills can easily move across borders and highlighted the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as a catalyst for industrial transformation.

Judith Kaulem, Executive Director, Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, Zimbabwe, highlighted the brain drain problem, observing that Africa is a "training ground," and called on governments to put in place incentives to keep skilled citizens in the country and reattract people from the diaspora.

Aurelia Patrizia Calabrò, Director of the Regional Hub in Ethiopia, UNIDO, underscored AfCFTA, and the fourth industrial revolution and digitalization, as key to implementing the SDGs. She also highlighted good governance and policies that create enabling environments, as well as infrastructure, education and capacity building for creating jobs and increasing productivity. She proposed bench marking the best performing countries, citing Ethiopia as an example of a country making great strides.



Jacqueline Amongin, Member of Parliament, Uganda

Thomas Chiramba, UN Habitat, noted the value of focusing on human settlements in development interventions, adding that prosperity is not an event but a process that entails long-term planning and proactivity. He said local authorities should not only be viewed only as service providers but need to assume a stronger role in promoting economic development.

Fatou Kinteh, Minister for Women's Affairs, Children and Social Welfare, The Gambia, emphasized investments in energy as key to prosperity. She shared her country's experience in rolling out basic services to all, noting that in 2019, 60% of the population had access to electricity. On employment, she pointed out that men still dominate decent jobs and so the focus should be on creating opportunities for women and men, as well as people living with disabilities.

July Moyo, Minister of Local Government and Urban Development, Zimbabwe, stated that "in Africa every urban area should be planned so that it can deliver services." He also stressed the need for enabling full participation from labor, government and employers to make decent work a reality.

Freda Prempeh, Deputy Minister, Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana, highlighted initiatives on free compulsory basic education and various social protection systems aimed at the vulnerable. She explained that the Livelihood and Empowerment Programme (LEAP) transfers cash to vulnerable households, while the school feeding programme provides almost three million hot meals daily, generating jobs for 28 000 caterers, 90% of whom are women.

Issues highlighted in the ensuing discussion included the need for: transformative policy shifts to create growth; human rights-based approaches to implementing the SDGs; the role of education and innovation in prosperity; and the prohibitive cost of data.

**Planet:** Samba Thiam, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) opened the session on opportunities and challenges relating to several SDGs targets and indicators. He presented

data demonstrating that Africa has 20% of global land cover and 65% of arable land, but unfortunately desertification is affecting 45% of Africa's land.

Gabriel Ajedra, State Minister of Finance, Uganda, explained that despite the average national coverage of clean water of 85%, challenges remain in rural areas, where scarcely populated settlements make it difficult to provide this service.

Washington Zhakata, Director for Climate Change Management, Zimbabwe, mentioned that most electricity is generated using coal, and flash floods end up wetting stockpiles, affecting electricity production.

Jean-Paul Adam, ECA, stated that in a best-case scenario, climate change has an impact on 3% on GDP. Resource mobilization and increasing the amount of money available for adaptation is therefore a key element to tackle climate change and also achieving the SDGs, he concluded.

Elizabeth Gulugulu, Youth Advocate for Climate Action, Zimbabwe, told the audience that "we are just here to remind you that if you do not stick to your promises, the earth is going to fall apart, and we will not let you make that happen." She reassured the older generations that youth have their best interest at heart, with a commitment to work together to protect our environment.

Joseph Mukabana, Senior Scientific Officer, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), talked about the science and information necessary for tackling the challenges Africa faces as a very vulnerable continent to disasters, severe weather and extreme climatic events. He proposed strengthening resource mobilization to build resilience, and enhancing institutions that generate data.

Issues raised in the discussion highlighted the lack of transparency of domestic public financing, the high dependency on fossil fuels in some countries, the need to build partnerships to tackle climate change in some countries, and Africa's role in the intergovernmental climate change process.



Youth participants reading information on the SDGs

Panelists highlighted potential solutions to address climate change, such as using plastic waste for building, and reducing single-use plastics, as well as initiatives in Uganda on waste management. Some mentioned implementing climate-smart agriculture to reduce GHG emissions. On resource mobilization, panelists indicated that enhancing water management is one of the priorities for financing. On building partnerships, panelists advised that the global movement on climate change should always be focused on sound science. Finally, one panelist stressed that the African Group is one of the most active in the climate change negotiations.

In a presentation earlier during the day, Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, ECA, drew attention to the impact of the climate crisis on the continent, in particular those linked to water, energy, conflict, food security, and hydropower production. She highlighted efforts underway to craft a common regional position for the 2020 UN Climate Conference, noting the need for a sense of urgency, she cited estimates that some countries are spending the equivalent of 2-3% of their GDP on unplanned response weather and climate impacts, stating they are impeding implementation of the SDGs.

**Peace:** Discussions under this sub-theme focused on transformative actions for peace, justice and strong institutions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The session was co-chaired by Albert Chikondo, Office of the President and Cabinet, Zimbabwe, and Mahamane Cisse-Gouro, Regional Representative, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), West Africa. Discussions were moderated by Jimmy Ocitti, ECA.

Eunice Ajambo, UN Resident Coordinator Office, Namibia, highlighted key findings and conclusions from the background paper on this sub-theme, emphasizing that SDG 16 is also “the governance SDG” and a key enabler for achieving all the other Global Goals. She highlighted data showing that, overall, the continent is off-track on this SDG, with only four countries able to reduced conflict, while it has escalated in 22 countries. Concluding that Africa is doing better on economic rather than political governance, Ajambo enumerated lessons learned, including the need for: implementation to focus on national-level policies and institutions; leveraging ICT solutions that engage and include the most excluded groups; and tackling corruption.

Umaru Koroma, Deputy Minister of Justice, Sierra Leone, discussed his country’s experience as a post-conflict state, noting efforts to heal the wounds following one of the most violent conflicts on the continent through, *inter alia*, investing in education, and providing legal aid to those who can’t afford it. He called for African solutions to implement the African Union’s roadmap on “Silencing the Guns.”

Emily Chweya, Ministry of Justice, Kenya, discussed strategies adopted to rebuild public trust in the legal system in light of a culture of impunity and public mistrust in the



Delegates from Kenya at the SDG Village

legal system. She highlighted the establishment of Court User Committees at subnational level as one of the measures introduced to enhance access to justice.

Hagar Monsif, African Affairs and SDGs Unit, Egypt, stressed that peace is not only about the absence of war and violence, and underscored the need to respect all citizens. She gave the example of Rwanda as a country that has made strides in promoting the rights of the most excluded, including women, youth and people living with disabilities.

Gilles Fabrice Zoh Ondo, Ministry of Justice, Cameroon, called for region-wide approaches to facilitate access to justice. He emphasized that countries need to not only ratify regional and global human rights frameworks, but also domesticate them to ensure their applicability to the local context. He highlighted successes in recovering embezzled funds and a campaign against torture as two positive examples of SDG 16 implementation.

Sara Hamouda, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), described the rationale for adopting “Silencing the Guns” (STS) as the African Union theme for 2020, noting it was necessitated by the continued rise of violent conflict. Among successes, she cited the adoption of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and the first continent-wide assessment of the STS roadmap. On the role of the APRM, she said it can serve as an early warning tool, and encourages a frank and homegrown approach to dealing with African issues.

In a lively discussion, participants emphasized, *inter alia*: the importance of an “EU style” regional mechanism that can “silence the killers” and protect the rights of citizens; develop frameworks to enhance mineral resources governance by African states; and protect women and girls who are often the first casualties of conflict.

The *ENB+ Meeting Coverage* summary of the ARFSD 2020 will be available on Sunday, 1 March 2020 at <https://enb.iisd.org/uneca/arfsd2020/>