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## PRESS RELEASE

### An initial appraisal of Africa's path towards sustainable development

*Joint AfDB-AU-ECA-UNDP baseline report urges sustained commitment to reducing poverty and calls for upgrading the continent's statistical capabilities to ensure and track future progress*

**New York, 18 October 2017** — A new report launched today states that in spite of recent progress, African countries need to sustain efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and gender inequality and also improve their statistical capabilities to implement and track progress towards Africa's own Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Jointly published by the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the [2017 Africa Sustainable Development Report: Tracking Progress on Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals](#), was launched today during a high-level event hosted by the African Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations.

In attendance were **His Excellency Ambassador Thomas Kwesi Quartey**, Deputy Chairperson, AUC; **Ms. Vera Songwe**, Executive Secretary, ECA; **Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye**, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, UNDP; **H.E. Victor Harrison**, Commissioner for Economic Affairs, AUC; **Mr. Desire Vencatachellum**, Director, Resource Mobilization and Partnerships, AfDB; and **Mr. Eddy Maloka**, CEO, Africa Peer Review Mechanism.

The baseline report focuses on the continent's advances along the six goals of the 2017 HLPF [**Goal 1** (End Poverty); **Goal 2** – (Zero Hunger); **Goal 3** (Good Health and Well-being); **Goal 5** (Gender Equality); **Goal 9** (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure); and **Goal 14** (Life below water)] and towards the realization the Africa's regional development framework.

In his opening remarks, UNDP Regional Director for Africa Abdoulaye Mar Dieye said that: "The positive progress that we see needs to be celebrated while accelerating efforts to diversify economies through increased strategic investments in infrastructure and innovation in order to reach our full potential."

#### Significant strides and lingering challenges

As the first comprehensive appraisal of its kind since the adoption of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, the new report acknowledges the region's significant progress in increasing agricultural value (up by 9 percentage points), improving



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gender parity in primary and secondary school (despite lingering low levels in tertiary education) and female representation in parliament, reducing child and maternal mortality (though very high compared to other regions) and HIV infection (down by 62% between 2000 and 2015), and increasing mobile network coverage (which has allowed for enhanced financial inclusion).

As the report's is informed by the theme of the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) on "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", it brings to attention areas of pressing concerns that need to be addressed in order for Africa to fully reach its potential.

Specifically, the authors call to attention the fact that in sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture value is only 62 % of the world average, that only 5% of agricultural land is irrigated (compared with 41 % in Asia and 21 % globally) and the persistence of conservative and harmful social norms such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Speaking to the imperative of leveraging Africa's youth potential, the AUC Deputy Chairperson Kwesi Quartey observed that: "If you want to reap a dividend you must first start by investing. This is the reason why our slogan at the AUC has been: Education, Education, Education!"

Furthermore, the report points to the region's high rate of road traffic-related deaths (26.6 % much higher than the global average 17.4 % in 2013), its underdeveloped infrastructure, underinvestment in research and development (less than 0.5% of its GDP compared with 2 % globally), and the prevalence of unregulated and destructive fishing practices in its 38 coastal States as potential threats to the realization of its sustainable development agenda.

### A call to harness the data revolution and upgrade the continent's statistical capabilities

Informed by the latest harmonized data and a broad range of sources (including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Statistics Division of the United Nations and the World Bank's world development indicators), the **2017 Africa Sustainable Development Report** builds on the finding of the earlier publications, especially the [2016 MDGs to Agenda 2063/SDGs Transition Report](#).

Covering all countries with relevant data, the baseline publication also addresses the gap in the continent's data collection capacities, which are seen as critical for the evidence-based policy making and tracking of progress towards the Agenda 2063's 20 goals and 174 targets and Agenda 2030's 17 goals and 169 targets.

"Six out of every 10 SDG indicators cannot be tracked in Africa due to data constraints. Strengthening our data ecosystem is therefore imperative not only for performance tracking but for informed policymaking." said ECA Executive Director Vera Songwe.

The report estimates that 1 billion dollars is needed annually to allow 77 of the world's lowest income countries to establish robust and reliable statistical systems that are capable of measuring and sustaining SDGs.



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“The increasing demand for data and statistics under the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 is an opportunity for Africa to embark on the data revolution in order to improve statistical capacity in all domains” the authors indicate.

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