



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2020

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-ninth session

8–17 February 2021

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly**

Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/6](#) to improve the effectiveness of the work of United Nations bodies with regard to the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the latter's links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The report, written in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, contains a review of its socioeconomic impacts in Africa and the corresponding response of African countries and their partners, including the United Nations system. It showcases the progress made in ensuring a coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, as well as the collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union to build Africa back better, post-pandemic. Policy recommendations for a sustainable recovery are provided.

* [E/CN.5/2021/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted in 2001 by the African Union, has provided a vision and policy framework for Africa's development and integration into the world economy. The goals of NEPAD have since been echoed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, generating further momentum for action towards an inclusive, prosperous and peaceful world, where no one is left behind, including in Africa. The present report, written in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, contains a review of its socioeconomic impacts in Africa, followed by an account of the response of African countries and their partners, including the United Nations system. Lastly, the report showcases the progress made in ensuring a coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, as well as the collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union to build Africa back better post-pandemic.

II. Socioeconomic impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and selected responses

2. Although it began as a health emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a devastating socioeconomic crisis in Africa, reversing hard-won development gains such as poverty and inequality reduction. It has hit the poorest and most vulnerable hardest and laid bare structural shortcomings such as inadequate health, educational and technological infrastructure, limited social protection, gender inequality, large informal economic sectors, lack of access to basic services, constrained fiscal policy space and a high risk of debt distress in many countries, making them particularly vulnerable to the lasting effects of the pandemic.

A. Health

3. Compared with other continents, Africa has seen relatively low numbers of cases and deaths of COVID-19. As at 20 October 2020, there had been 1,665,653 confirmed cases and 40,225 deaths, meaning that Africa, which has 17 per cent of the world's population, accounted for only 4.1 per cent of the total confirmed cases and 3.6 per cent of deaths.¹ Early interventions played a crucial role in curbing the spread of the virus. Governments throughout Africa, supported by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and other partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa, rapidly introduced lockdowns and other preventive measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the light of fragile health systems and on the basis of the continent's experience from the Ebola virus disease pandemic that has devastated several countries over the past decade.

4. The younger age structure of its population has also shielded Africa from high rates of infection and death. In sub-Saharan Africa, some 91 per cent of cases were among people below 60 years of age and more than 80 per cent of cases were asymptomatic.² Other factors such as pre-existing immunity and the fact that the population is mostly rural, less dense and less mobile have also been put forward as plausible explanations. Infections are concentrated in a few countries, with 10 accounting for 82 per cent of all reported cases and 5 accounting for 77 per cent of all deaths. South Africa is the hardest-hit country, having recorded almost half of all

¹ World Health Organization (WHO), Regional Office for Africa, "COVID-19 situation update for the WHO African region", External Situation Report 34 (21 October 2020).

² Ibid., "Social, environmental factors seen behind Africa's low COVID-19 cases", 24 September 2020.

reported cases and deaths.³ Empirical data show that older people over 60 years of age, people with chronic or immunocompromising diseases, and people living in poor conditions are at a higher risk of becoming very sick with COVID-19. The higher number of deaths recorded in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and South Africa is therefore likely associated with their relatively older populations, while that of Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria is due to their densely populated capital cities. South Africa's higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS has also been found to have increased its COVID-19 mortality.⁴

5. Although Africa appears to have escaped a health crisis, the future direction of the pandemic remains uncertain at a time when African countries are easing their lockdowns and opening up their borders to business travellers and tourists. Even if younger populations are less vulnerable to the COVID-19 illness, the pandemic has affected the health of Africa's population indirectly. Local or national lockdowns have disrupted health-care services primarily, including routine immunization campaigns, malaria, tuberculosis and HIV control programmes, and family planning and antenatal care services. Fear of contracting COVID-19 at health-care facilities, mobility restrictions and socioeconomic strains resulting from job loss have also prevented parents from bringing their children to health-care centres. The five countries hardest hit by the disruptions are Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Libya, Madagascar and the Sudan. COVID-19-related disruptions in essential health and nutrition services could result in significant increases in undernutrition and the deaths of children under 5 years of age – an additional 1.5 million children with wasting and an additional 67,000 preventable child deaths in sub-Saharan Africa during 2020.⁵

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed health-care deficiencies in many African countries where access to health care is one of the most pressing challenges that many people face, owing to the low number of health facilities and health workers; and financial and other constraints to gaining access to health services. For example, in Kenya and Senegal, 45 per cent of payments that Kenyans and Senegalese make for health-care services is done out-of-pocket.⁶ The high burden of financial costs often pushes many into poverty and means that people delay seeking medical attention until the condition becomes chronic. African countries, in collaboration with WHO and other partners, are working hard to ensure that essential health services can be delivered even as countries respond to the pandemic. Many African countries lack doctors (0.2 per 1,000 people), hospital beds (1.8 per 1,000) and the basic health infrastructure, including diagnostic laboratories, necessary to adequately respond to the pandemic.⁷ In addition, health workers are facing a high risk of contracting the disease owing to a lack of adequate personal protective equipment. Health worker infections have been increasing gradually, with a cumulative 44,055 positive cases reported in 43 countries as at 20 October 2020. South Africa remains the most affected, accounting for 62 per cent of these cases (27,360 health workers infected).⁸

7. As the case of Mauritius shows, success in addressing the health consequences of the pandemic lies in strong political will, adequate investment in health-care infrastructure and equipment, universal health coverage, and a multisectoral approach. As at 21 May 2020, Mauritius had reported no new cases for 23 days and was conducting 3,000 screenings per day. Aside from its natural advantage of being

³ Percentages taken from WHO, Regional Office for Africa, "COVID-19 situation update for the WHO African region".

⁴ United Nations, "Policy brief: COVID-19 and universal health coverage", October 2020.

⁵ Derek Headey and others, "Impacts of COVID-19 on childhood malnutrition and nutrition-related mortality", *Lancet*, vol. 396, No. 10250 (August 2020).

⁶ See www.ilo.org/africa/areas-of-work/social-protection/lang--en/index.htm.

⁷ United Nations, "Policy brief: impact of COVID-19 in Africa", updated, 20 May 2020.

⁸ WHO, Regional Office for Africa, "COVID-19 situation update for the WHO African region".

an island, which allows easy control of people's movement in and out of the country, it provides universal health coverage and a strong laboratory system to its population. Lastly, the Government conducts daily multi-stakeholder meetings to discuss the pandemic.

B. Economic growth, employment and trade

8. The unprecedented restrictions on movements and activity to slow the spread of the deadly coronavirus have disrupted global value chains and plunged the world economy into recession. Dramatic reductions in the global demand for their goods and services adversely affected African economies. In particular, demand for and prices of oil, metal and tourism have collapsed. Foreign direct investment (FDI) dropped and capital flight increased. Domestic production and demand have also been disrupted. Africa is heading towards its first economic recession in 25 years, with a forecast of -1.6 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2020.⁹ In sub-Saharan Africa, growth is projected to contract by 3.3 per cent in 2020 and per capita GDP by more than 6.0 per cent, halting a decade of economic progress. The subregion's growth is projected to recover to 2.1 per cent in 2021, below its 2.4 per cent level in 2019, assuming a rebound in economic activity and a recovery in investment and domestic consumption.¹⁰

9. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on economic growth has been the largest in tourism-reliant countries. In countries where the travel and tourism industry contributed to more than 10 per cent of GDP in 2019, economic growth is expected to drop, on average, to -3.3 per cent in 2020.¹¹ Commodity-exporting countries have also been hit hard. Africa's export revenue may be reduced by approximately \$101 billion in 2020 owing to projected losses from oil shocks alone.¹² By contrast, countries with more diversified economies, including a strong agriculture sector, will likely see their economic growth slow down but remain positive.¹³

10. Because COVID-19-induced recessions in advanced economies negatively affect the economies of the least developed countries and small island developing States, the latter groups of countries will risk being disproportionately affected by the crisis. Assuming that the economies of the Group of 20 countries rebound in 2021, the least developed countries and small island developing States will require four to five years to have their GDP return to the path that was projected before the crisis.¹⁴ Given that 75 per cent of the 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa are either the least developed countries and small island developing States, the short- to medium-term impacts will be hard.

11. Lockdown measures and the economic recession are having a dramatic effect on the jobs and livelihoods of workers and their families, as well as on enterprises. In 2020, the percentage of working hours lost in Africa was highest during the second quarter, at 15.6 per cent. North Africa experienced a greater loss than sub-Saharan Africa, that is, 21.2 per cent and 14.5 per cent, respectively. These percentages correspond to 60 million, 13 million and 45 million full-time equivalent jobs lost by

⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World economic situation and prospects as of mid-2020", January 2020.

¹⁰ World Bank, *Africa's Pulse*, vol. 22 (October 2020).

¹¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "COVID-19 in Africa: regional socioeconomic implications and policy priorities", 7 May 2020.

¹² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World economic situation and prospects as of mid-2020".

¹³ World Bank, *Africa's Pulse*, vol. 22.

¹⁴ Namsuk Kim, "How long will it take for LDCs and SIDS to recover from the impacts of COVID-19?", DESA Working Paper, No. 170 (New York, October 2020).

Africa, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, respectively, in the second quarter of 2020.¹⁵ South Africa, which imposed one of the strictest lockdowns in the world, shutting down almost all sectors of its highly developed economy during the months of April and May 2020, lost 2.2 million jobs in the second quarter of the year, bringing the unemployment rate to a record high of 42 per cent.¹⁶

12. Eighty-five per cent of workers are in the informal sector in Africa. These workers, in particular those in informal urban employment in sub-Saharan Africa, where more women and young people work, are particularly vulnerable, given that they generally lack social protection and have lower average income. In the first month of the crisis, the earnings of informal workers are estimated to have declined by 81 per cent.¹⁷

13. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, which account for 80 per cent of total employment and which tend to employ a larger share of the vulnerable groups of the workforce, such as women, young people and people from poorer households, have been disproportionately affected by the detrimental economic consequences of the pandemic. Owners of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular those in the informal sector, usually lack financial buffers to face a crisis and have been forced to sell their productive assets for immediate consumption and survival, jeopardizing their livelihoods and those of their workers.¹⁸

14. Within Africa, trade flows typically occur inside regional economic communities, thanks to lower tariffs among member countries. In the East African Community, intraregional trade appears to be increasing in response to the pandemic. Kenyan exports to Rwanda and Uganda have surpassed their pre-pandemic levels, and re-exports to the United Republic of Tanzania sharply accelerated by July. African countries should seize the opportunity from COVID-19 to fully implement the African Continental Free Trade Area, which can further expand intra-Africa trade, promote regional value chains and organize production across countries within regions, to offset in part the difficulties in importing from external partners.

C. Poverty, food insecurity and inequality

15. Before COVID-19, income poverty had been falling in Africa as a whole. The rate of extreme poverty – the proportion of the population that lives on less than \$1.90 a day – decreased from 35.5 to 34.4 per cent between 2015 and 2018, notwithstanding an increase from 1.1 to 2.2 per cent in North Africa, related to a decline in real income and consumption in Egypt, and violence and political instability in Libya. During the same period, extreme poverty decreased from 41.8 to 40.2 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa but it has been stagnating at high levels since 1990, and today the subregion has the highest level of extreme poverty in the world. Coupled with rapid population growth, the number of people who live in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 416 million to 433 million between 2015 and 2018.¹⁹ By the end of 2020, the contraction in per capita GDP growth caused by the pandemic could push an additional 26.2 million to 40 million people into extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁰

¹⁵ International Labour Organization (ILO), “ILO monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work”, 6th ed., 23 September 2020.

¹⁶ See www.statssa.gov.za/?p=13652.

¹⁷ ILO, “ILO monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work”, 3rd ed., 29 April 2020.

¹⁸ ILO, “COVID-19 crisis in Africa: building back better”, background note for the Africa regional event, July 2020.

¹⁹ See <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/home.aspx>.

²⁰ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune* (Washington, D.C., 2020).

16. Through a multidimensional lens, which looks at people's deprivations in indicators of health, education and standard of living, the extent of poverty is also high in sub-Saharan Africa. Although decreasing, the incidence of multidimensional poverty, which represents the proportion of people who are multidimensionally poor, remains at a high level: 55.0 per cent in 2020. The incidence is much higher in rural areas (71.9 per cent, or 466 million people) than in urban areas (25.2 per cent, or 92 million people). Almost half (approximately 43 per cent) of the world's 1.3 billion multidimensionally poor people live in sub-Saharan Africa (558 million).²¹ The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to jeopardize progress in reducing multidimensional poverty in Africa through its severe impact on two of its indicators: nutrition and school attendance.

17. In Africa, the pandemic is happening amid rising levels of hunger and food insecurity. The prevalence of undernourishment increased to 19.1 per cent of the population in 2019, or 250 million undernourished people, from 18.3 per cent in 2015. Africa's prevalence is more than twice the world average (8.9 per cent) and is the highest among all regions. The great majority (94 per cent) of undernourished people of Africa live in sub-Saharan Africa, where the prevalence increased from 21.2 to 22.0 per cent.

18. Food insecurity, which looks beyond hunger and measures how many people do not have access to nutritious and sufficient food, is also increasing. Between 2015 and 2019, the prevalence of severe food insecurity²² in Africa rose from 16.8 to 19 per cent. Right before the pandemic, 228 million people were already severely food-insecure in sub-Saharan Africa, including 79 million who were acutely food-insecure, that is, exposed to a severe food insecurity that threatened their lives or livelihoods.

19. The majority (at least 60 per cent) of Africa's population depends on agriculture for their livelihood and access to food. Africa has to import the great majority (more than 80 per cent in 2018) of its food because its agricultural production is insufficient to meet its food security needs. Economic shocks, along with conflicts, extreme weather such as droughts and cyclones and pests such as the desert locust upsurge in Eastern Africa, are the main drivers of acute food insecurity in Africa. Therefore, the border closures, lockdowns, disruption in supply chains and economic recession brought about by the pandemic have negatively affected the supply of food and agricultural production and are projected to double Africa's acute food insecurity figures in 2020.²³

20. The lockdown and lower economic growth have also led to a shortfall in government revenue, accompanied by an increase in expenditure owing to necessary socioeconomic emergency policies. The resulting budget deficits have forced Governments to plan to cut expenditure significantly over the coming fiscal years. This will not only increase inequality, but also disproportionately affect women and children negatively because they are among the main recipients of social expenditure.²⁴

21. As with any crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the most vulnerable harder and exacerbated existing inequalities, including in the world of work. Lockdowns have disproportionately affected informal sectors and small companies in the service sector. Their workers are more likely to experience reduced hours, income loss and job

²¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020: Charting Pathways Out of Multidimensional Poverty – Achieving the SDGs* (2020).

²² People facing severe food insecurity have experienced hunger and, at the most extreme, gone for days without eating.

²³ Global Network against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network, *Global Report on Food Crises 2020: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions* (2020).

²⁴ ILO, "A gender-responsive employment recovery: building back fairer", policy brief, July 2020.

losses because they cannot conduct their activities from home, have lower skills and usually lack social protection. In Africa, women and young people are more likely to be in this category of worker and have therefore been disproportionately affected, suffering rapid increases in unemployment and income loss since the pandemic's onset. In addition, young people, especially girls, are at risk of being left behind in education, health and well-being at an important stage of their life development.

22. Rooted gender inequalities have also been laid bare by the crisis. In sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of women work in the informal sector (74 per cent of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment) and women are overrepresented in specific service sectors that have been particularly hit. For example, domestic workers, the majority of whom are female and in informal employment, have been highly vulnerable, with 72 per cent of them being at significant risk of losing their jobs and incomes owing to containment measures and the lack of social security coverage. Retail and informal market activities – another economic sector hit hard by COVID-19 – also provide employment to many women. Government relief grants for the unemployed are usually reserved for workers in the formal sector whose employers are unable to pay their wages, thus disfavoured female workers. Some Governments have additional but smaller packages to support micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and informal business. They are encouraged to take into account the often invisible or residential nature of female informality work when identifying qualifying beneficiaries.²⁵

23. African countries have also registered a surge in cases of gender-based violence, including rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and child marriage during the lockdowns, as the substantial increase in calls to national helpline centres shows. The calls had, for example, doubled in South Africa and increased by more than 10-fold in Kenya, prompting the countries' Presidents to order investigations into and the prosecution of all violators. In Mali, gender-based violence increased by 35 per cent, with 484 cases reported in April 2020, compared with 317 in April 2019.²⁶

24. Notwithstanding challenges, African countries have significantly expanded social protection. The number of non-contributory social protection programmes, which have played a substantial role in reducing poverty and vulnerabilities, tripled between 2000 and 2015.²⁷ In response to the pandemic, many sub-Saharan African countries have instituted new programmes or adjusted the existing schemes to cover a wider section of the population and, in some cases, increased the benefits paid. Some of the payments are directed at informal sector workers, vulnerable groups such as older persons and persons living with a disability, and payments to women who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, given that many of them work in the informal economy and are primary caregivers.

25. Support measures include in-kind grants, mostly in terms of food assistance; utility support such as water and electricity bill postponement or payments covered by Governments; and several initiatives organized by non-governmental and international organizations targeting the most vulnerable, including migrants, refugees and informal sector workers. Some community-based organizations are finding innovative ways to provide social assistance by encouraging incentives for behavioural change to support public health objectives.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ United Nations Population Fund, "Impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence in West and Central Africa", 9 July 2020.

²⁷ International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and UNDP, *Social Protection in Africa: Inventory of Non-Contributory Programmes* (2016).

²⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Social protection: ensuring effective response and inclusive recovery in the context of COVID-19 in Africa", 12 April 2020.

26. Countries have adapted existing social protection programmes to meet the growing needs brought about by COVID-19. South Africa has provided early payments of social grants to older persons and persons with disabilities, while Kenya has allocated resources to provide additional support to older persons, orphans and other vulnerable people. Angola, Cabo Verde and Egypt have expanded existing social assistance programmes to include new recipients. Ethiopia and Kenya have prioritized livestock insurance, including for pastoralist communities, and Ethiopia also increased social transfers in urban areas. Lesotho established a “CASH+” social transfer system in 2019 to mitigate the impacts of drought, which is now being extended as part of its COVID-19 response.²⁹

D. Education and the digital divide

27. The pandemic is having a devastating impact on the education sector in Africa. Education plays a key role in building up human capital and therefore has a direct bearing on future economic growth and long-term competitiveness. Africa already suffers from a skills gap that can only worsen with the prolonged closure of schools. There is widespread concern that many school-age children and young people, especially girls, will not return to school after the pandemic, which is worrisome for a continent that has the highest rates of education exclusion.³⁰

28. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, barriers to gaining access to quality education in Africa were high, with one in five children, adolescents and young people entirely excluded from education owing to prohibitive costs of school fees and other requirements, as well as widespread discrimination against vulnerable groups such as girls and persons with disabilities. Owing to the pandemic, many schools have been closed for months and some have resorted to distance learning, which is very challenging for many African students, given that access to the Internet and computers is limited. In sub-Saharan Africa, 89 per cent of learners do not have access to household computers and 82 per cent lack Internet access.³¹ Social and digital divides have put the most disadvantaged at risk of learning losses and dropping out. Lessons from the past, such as with the Ebola virus disease, have shown that health crises can lead to the dropping out of school among many, in particular the poorest girls, many of whom may never return to school.³²

29. The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the importance of digital technologies and infrastructure, given that many aspects of day-to-day life, including education, work and commerce, have migrated to digital platforms. Digital technologies offer the possibility of improving household welfare, increasing productivity for firms and creating better jobs for a larger number of people. For example, Internet access facilitated by submarine cables has stimulated job growth in skills-intensive occupations in 12 African countries.³³ However, access to high-speed Internet remains rather low among individuals and businesses in sub-Saharan Africa.

30. African countries need to invest more in digital technologies and infrastructure development in order to improve the affordability of devices and services and provide more education on modern technologies to improve digital literacy. These measures

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa>.

³¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “Startling digital divides in distance learning emerge”, 21 April 2020.

³² UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All* (Paris, 2020).

³³ *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2020* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.I.4).

are critical to expand access to digital technologies and reduce the digital divide across gender, firm size, and urban versus rural areas.³⁴

31. The regulatory environment needs to provide incentives for the adoption of fast digital technologies, to promote competition among mobile operators and to provide critical service providers, such as hospitals, emergency services and key government departments, with universal affordable access to high-quality communications services. During the current pandemic, digital campaigns have played a big role in raising awareness and mobilizing people to take protective measures against the spread of COVID-19. Many social security payments have also been made using digital platforms, including payments through mobile phones.

E. Basic services, infrastructure and governance

32. Low access to water, sanitation and hygiene makes Africa particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 61 per cent and 25 per cent of the population had access to basic drinking water services and hygiene services, respectively, in 2019. In total, 767 million people lacked a basic hygiene facility (handwashing facility with soap and water) at home.³⁵ At school, 56 per cent of children, or 225 million, lacked a basic drinking water service and 74 per cent, or 295 million, lacked a basic hygiene service.³⁶

33. Because hand hygiene is essential to stop the spread of COVID-19, the Hand Hygiene for All initiative has been launched to make universal access to hand hygiene a reality for everyone, in all settings. The initiative is co-led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO, which are committing human and financial resources towards coordinating the global efforts and channelling resources towards supporting regional and country implementation efforts. A select group of core partners, including the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Bank, plays a supporting role, while national Governments, public and private sectors, and civil society are brought in to ensure that affordable products and services are available, especially in disadvantaged areas, and to enable a culture of hygiene.

34. Africa's infrastructure deficit results in increased production and transaction costs and reduced competitiveness and has a negative impact on FDI, ultimately stunting economic and social development. In sub-Saharan Africa, poor infrastructure reduces national GDP growth by 2 per cent annually and reduces productivity by as much as 40 per cent. Only 38 per cent of the African population has access to electricity and only 25 per cent of Africa's road network is paved.³⁷ Africa is the least connected region, with just 28 per cent of the population using the Internet and 34 mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2019.³⁸ If Internet access reaches the same level as mobile penetration, Africa's GDP could get a boost of up to \$300 billion. It is estimated that Africa needs \$130 billion to \$170 billion annually to

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ WHO and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Hygiene baselines pre-COVID-19: global snapshot" (2020).

³⁶ WHO and UNICEF, *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Special Focus on COVID-19* (2020).

³⁷ African Union, *The Integrated Corridor Approach: A Holistic Infrastructure Planning Framework to Establish PIDA-PAP 2* (2020).

³⁸ International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2019* (Geneva, 2019).

provide these outstanding infrastructure services, but a financing gap of \$68 billion to \$108 billion annually currently exists.³⁹

35. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the African Union’s strategic framework for regional and continental infrastructure, was adopted by the African Heads of State and Government in 2012 to address those challenges. The Programme was set to run until 2040 to develop priority infrastructure in transport, energy, transboundary water resources and information and communications technology. The Programme is divided into 10-year plans, and the second priority action plan will be implemented from 2021 to 2030. It will set the priorities for continental infrastructure development for the coming decade and be submitted for adoption by the Heads of State and Government at the African Union Summit to be held in January 2021.

36. Similarly, the African Union established the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2003 as an instrument for monitoring governance performance among member States and applying lessons learned. Its mandate has been extended to monitor the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as lead the preparation of the *Africa Governance Report*, which contains an assessment of the state of governance in Africa. By February 2020, 40 African Union member States had joined the Mechanism, of which 24 have undergone reviews.⁴⁰

37. In the preliminary 2020 report entitled *Africa’s Governance’s Response to COVID-19*, the African Peer Review Mechanism found that the quality of governance as understood in normal times might have diminished and the risk of further marginalizing underrepresented groups might be heightened in Africa as Governments implemented containment measures. For example, the majority (62 per cent) of African citizens did not consider the quarantine and lockdown measures imposed by their Governments to be legitimate. The Mechanism further highlighted the implications of such immediate measures on elections, parliamentary processes and public accountability institutions. It set women’s inclusivity in governance, the efforts to combat gender-based violence and the provision of skills and resources for women as some of the urgent prerequisites to curb the pandemic and build back better. The report contains recommendations that member States: (a) establish inclusive national response governance and institutional and legislative mechanisms for disaster management; (b) decentralize responsibilities and capacities for disaster management while implementing containment measures within a framework that respects the rule of law and the human rights of citizens; (c) incorporate disaster planning in national and local development planning frameworks; and (e) establish mechanisms for ensuring that Governments are accountable for disaster decision-making, including in the use of public finances devoted to the emergencies that disasters create.⁴¹

III. Financing for development

A. Domestic resources

38. Even prior to the pandemic, levels of domestic resources were insufficient to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. African countries faced severe challenges in raising tax revenue, the major form of domestic public resources, owing to the

³⁹ David Stiggers and Cledean Mandri-Perrott, “Africa’s infrastructure: great potential but little impact on inclusive growth”, in African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2018* (2018).

⁴⁰ African Union, *Decisions, Declarations, Resolution and Motion of the Thirty-Third Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union* (Addis Ababa, 2020).

⁴¹ African Union, *Africa’s Governance Response to COVID-19* (Johannesburg, African Peer Review Mechanism Secretariat, 2020).

weakness of tax systems and a narrow tax base. The average tax-to-GDP ratio in Africa during the period 2008–2016 was approximately 23 per cent, compared with approximately 40 per cent for European Union countries. Moreover, average growth in tax revenue to GDP had decelerated in recent years. Average tax-to-GDP ratios had remained stagnant at 17.2 percent between 2015 and 2017 for a sample of 26 African countries.⁴² The pandemic is expected to reduce government revenue further, especially in commodity-reliant countries that obtain most of their revenue through taxing exports. Nevertheless, countries responded quickly from their national budgets by offering safety net packages that averaged 0.5 per cent of their GDP.⁴³

39. Of greater concern is the level of illicit financial flows, which is estimated to cost African countries some \$50 billion annually, exceeding the annual amount of official development assistance (ODA) that the continent receives. This loss is equivalent to three quarters of the estimated health financing gap that Africa needs to make significant progress on Sustainable Development Goal 3, on good health and well-being. African countries have made efforts to establish dedicated institutional frameworks for combating illicit financial flows in the main channels of trade, investment, financial systems and corruption. However, trade misinvoicing, tax fraud and money-laundering continue to flourish. Curbing illicit financial flows and capital flight can significantly boost domestic resource mobilization in Africa. To combat illicit financial flows, a whole-of-government approach, greater interagency collaboration, coordinated reporting, the removal of duplicated and competing mandates, and consistent political support for institutional reforms are required.⁴⁴

B. Private flows

40. Prior to the pandemic, FDI had already declined. In 2019, it decreased by 10 per cent, to \$32 billion. The trend is forecasted to continue in 2020 with a decrease of 25 to 40 per cent. If private financial inflows remain below their pre-crisis levels, sub-Saharan Africa could face a financial resource gap in the order of \$290 billion, which could force countries to adopt a more abrupt fiscal adjustment, resulting in a prolonged recession and a weaker recovery.

41. Remittances are the main source of foreign private revenue for sub-Saharan Africa and their amount is much higher than FDI and ODA. Sub-Saharan Africa is highly vulnerable to the shocks brought on by the pandemic in countries that host a large share of African migrants, including China, France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, as well as the countries of the Middle East. These large economies are a source of close to one quarter of total remittances sent to the subregion. Between 2019 and 2020, remittances to sub-Saharan Africa are expected to decrease by 23 per cent, from \$48 billion to \$37 billion, owing to the COVID-19 crisis. The sharpest declines are expected for Cabo Verde, the Comoros, the Gambia, Lesotho, Senegal, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, where remittances account for more than 10 per cent of GDP.⁴⁵

42. The loss of remittances due to the crisis will certainly lead to further poverty and deprivation, given that remittances cover essential aspects such as food, medical expenses, school fees and housing expenses for recipient families. The Economic

⁴² Amadou Boly, Martin Wafula Nandelenga and Jacob Oduor, “Mobilizing domestic resource in Africa for inclusive growth”, *Africa Economic Brief*, vol. 11, No. 3 (2020).

⁴³ Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), “COVID19: G20-public debt service support initiative – questions and answers and how to accelerate access”, May 2020.

⁴⁴ ECA, “Institutional architecture to address illicit financial flows from Africa”, 2018.

⁴⁵ Dilip Ratha and others, “COVID-19 crisis through a migration lens”, Migration and Development Brief, No. 32 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2020).

Commission for Africa (ECA), recognizing the importance of remittances in supporting families and their overall impact on poverty reduction in Africa, is recommending Governments to reduce the costs of sending and receiving remittances in the continent, which are the highest in the world. Sending \$200 in remittances to sub-Saharan Africa cost, on average, 9.25 per cent in 2019, compared with 6.8 per cent for the world. Costs decreased slightly to 8.9 per cent, on average, in the first quarter of 2020.⁴⁶ The international community has made a major commitment to reducing transaction costs, with the Group of 20 countries collectively committing themselves to keeping costs at 5 per cent, at most.⁴⁷ The Secretary-General has also called for remittance costs to be brought below 3 per cent, as laid out in Sustainable Development Goal 10, and as close to zero as possible, as reiterated in the menu of options that emanated from the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond.

C. Official development assistance

43. ODA is an essential source of financing for development for Africa, in particular to support national responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Preliminary data in 2019 show that net bilateral aid flows from Development Assistance Committee members to Africa were \$37 billion, including \$31 billion for sub-Saharan Africa. These amounts represent a slight increase of 1.3 per cent and 1.1 per cent, respectively, in real terms compared with 2018. Bilateral aid flows from Development Assistance Committee members to the least developed countries also rose to \$33 billion in 2019 after a drop in 2018, representing an increase of 2.6 per cent in real terms.⁴⁸

44. With the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, development stakeholders agreed to leverage the strengths of the multilateral system to support the Sustainable Development Goals. There continues to be a broad consensus that the multilateral development system has a crucial role to play in addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. While the global commitment of 0.7 per cent of gross national income to ODA is still not met, a few developed countries have exceeded that threshold. Development Assistance Committee members have also increased slightly their multilateral funding levels, which allowed multilateral organizations (World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), mainly) to contribute to the immediate response to the crisis with unprecedented scale and speed.

D. Debt relief

45. Before the pandemic, public debt had increased in the majority of African countries, putting a growing number of them under debt distress. In 2019, debt reached 61.3 per cent of GDP, on average, compared with 39.5 per cent in 2011. To fund the continent's large infrastructure financing gap, countries increasingly borrowed from non-concessional lenders at higher interest rates and servicing costs. Many countries are now incapable of supporting their debt burdens, with high dependency on commodity prices, volatile currencies, low capacity for domestic revenue mobilization, high illicit financial outflows, plunging external finance and

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ ECA, "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and migrant remittances: protecting an economic lifeline", 2020.

⁴⁸ OECD, "Aid by DAC members increases in 2019 with more aid to the poorest countries", 16 April 2020.

remittances, capital flight, and stagnating ODA and FDI flows adding to their challenges in servicing their debts.⁴⁹

46. COVID-19 is worsening African countries' debt situation by imposing an increase in government spending to face the impacts of the disease, while greatly decreasing revenue. Many countries have resorted to further borrowing to fund their interventions and deficits. Sub-Saharan Africa's public debt is projected to increase to 65 per cent of GDP by the end of 2020. Higher debt and revenue losses are shrinking fiscal space in many African countries, which compels them to reduce investment in essential areas of long-term development, thus severely undermining their prospects of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.⁵⁰

47. African finance ministers announced that the continent needed \$100 billion to face the effects of COVID-19 and called for the immediate release of that economic stimulus, which includes a waiver of all interest payments on public debt and on sovereign bonds, estimated at \$44 billion for 2020, to provide immediate fiscal space and liquidity to Governments. Group of 20 countries agreed to suspend official debt obligations of low-income countries until June 2020. This concession will cover only a quarter of the debt service payments that Africa is due to make in 2020 and excludes many lower middle-income countries and small island developing States that have been hit hard by the crisis. The Secretary-General has called for more than \$200 billion for Africa as part of a comprehensive global response package. He also called for an across-the-board debt postponement of debt service repayment that includes middle-income countries, options towards debt sustainability, solutions for structural issues in the international debt architecture and the issuance of special drawing rights. The multilateral response for Africa totals more than \$20 billion, including debt relief from IMF to 19 countries and special drawing rights availability for other countries over the coming two to three years to provide front-line health services, support the poor and vulnerable, and keep economies afloat. The commercial response amounts to \$16 billion in 2020. In addition, China, the United States and European Union member States, for example, have offered support to individual countries or to the continent. This support is crucial, but considerable additional measures are required.⁵¹

IV. Enhancing the coordinated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

48. This section highlights ongoing activities and specific interventions executed (usually jointly) by United Nations entities and the African Union on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The focus is on three cross-cutting thematic areas critical to a better recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

A. Strengthening national capacity in public health

49. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, as the African Union technical agency in charge of continental health security, mobilized a continent-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 22 February 2020, African ministers of health adopted the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak in order

⁴⁹ United Nations, "Policy brief: impact of COVID-19 in Africa".

⁵⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Public finances after COVID-19: is a high-debt, low-growth trap looming for developing countries?", World Economic Situation and Prospects: Briefing, No. 142 (1 October 2020).

⁵¹ United Nations, "Policy brief: impact of COVID-19 in Africa".

to coordinate efforts of African countries and international partners, including WHO and African Union agencies, to ensure synergy and minimize duplication and to promote evidence-based public health practices for surveillance, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and control of COVID-19.⁵² The strategy will be implemented through the Africa Task Force for Coronavirus and the incident management system of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Other initiatives at the continental level include the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing, which was established by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and the African Medical Supplies Platform to facilitate national procurement of critical medical and laboratory supplies from certified suppliers.

50. Early efforts have concentrated on enabling African countries to undertake case detection and containment. Synergies among the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, WHO and the West African Health Organization led to the increase in COVID-19 testing laboratories in Africa from 2 to 43 between February and mid-March 2020. Regional workshops were conducted to strengthen the capacity of countries for enhanced surveillance at points of entry, infection prevention and control, risk communication and clinical case management, with face-to-face workshops making the transition to webinars early in March as borders were closed and lockdowns were implemented. Testing and contact tracing are increasing in Africa. As of September 2020, South Africa had conducted some 4 million tests (more than 67,000 tests per 1 million people) and Ethiopia nearly 1.2 million tests (more than 10,000 tests per 1 million people). With a population estimated at 207 million, Nigeria had conducted 2,328 tests per 1 million people.⁵³ African countries had prevention and control experiences from dealing with the Ebola outbreak a few years ago that were applied to manage the COVID-19 outbreak. These measures include improving diagnostics, contact tracing and public health information campaigns.⁵⁴

51. African countries, international health agencies and partners have rallied to support the implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak, with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation committing \$20 million and the Government of Ethiopia and Jack Ma Foundation providing medical supplies, including diagnostics, and equipment to each of the 54 African Union member States.

52. These actions not only improve Africa's response to COVID-19, but also help to strengthen national capacity in public health that relates to many Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty eradication and inequality reduction.

B. Research, innovation and data

53. Many countries have combined existing emergency health-care protocols with research and innovation to improve response effectiveness. By 15 May 2020, 33 clinical trials had been registered in Africa to evaluate a range of medical, supportive and behavioural interventions for COVID-19. Nigeria was able to sequence the SARS-CoV-2 genome in March 2020. In Senegal, researchers developed a diagnostic test that costs only \$1 and can produce results in 10 minutes. In Ghana, Zipline drones are used to take samples to testing sites. Many countries, following Kenya, converted existing factories to mass produce masks. Rwanda generalized mobile payments to reinforce barrier and distancing measures.⁵⁵

⁵² African Union, "Africa Joint continental strategy for COVID-19 outbreak", 5 March 2020.

⁵³ World Bank, *Africa's Pulse*, vol. 22, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Patricia Geli, "Africa centres for disease control and prevention's COVID-19 response: a united, continental strategy", World Bank blog, 25 August 2020.

⁵⁵ Youssef Travaly and Aretha Mare, "Learning from the best: evaluating Africa's COVID-19 responses", 8 July 2020.

54. Young Africans have shown their ability to innovate in the face of a crisis. In Ghana, two brothers built a solar-powered handwashing basin from local materials, timed with a sensor, in accordance with the 20-second handwashing guidance issued by WHO. In Senegal, engineering students built a multifunctional and remote-controlled robot that is used by health professionals to safely deliver care to quarantined patients. In Tunisia, engineering teachers and students developed a web-based platform that can evaluate whether patients are likely to have the COVID-19 virus using only a scanned image of their lung X-rays, making it particularly useful in areas that lack major hospitals and specialist doctors. African young people are also responding to the crisis through public health promotion and volunteering. Many have emerged as leaders and front-line responders in their communities by, for example, disseminating correct and useful information, conducting hand hygiene campaigns and hosting discussions through social media and public awareness campaigns, thus saving lives.

55. To capitalize on this surge of creativity from young people, the African Youth Front on Coronavirus was established in May 2020 as an African Union framework to engage young people in decision-making to contribute youth-led solutions and co-lead Africa's response to the pandemic, as well as support the implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak.⁵⁶

56. The Africa UN Knowledge Hub for COVID-19, hosted by ECA, is a platform for sharing information and data and a tool for advocacy on COVID-19 responses. The hub is a useful tool for the United Nations family and the public with its wealth of data, information and knowledge on the COVID-19 situation in Africa and the United Nations response. It strengthens the ability of the United Nations to deliver as one. Addressing the COVID-19 crisis effectively is central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the decade of action for the Goals. The hub can be an important instrument for the acceleration efforts regarding the Goals, including through stronger cooperation and communication within the United Nations and with its partners.

C. Advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

1. Coordination and coherence within the United Nations system

57. The United Nations plays a leading role in facilitating the international community's coordination to respond effectively to the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, engaging all stakeholders and fostering partnerships to build African countries' social sectors.

58. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group is a group of 40 United Nations entities working on development at the global, regional and country levels. Resident coordinators are the designated representatives of the Secretary-General in countries. Under their leadership, United Nations country teams have mobilized to support Governments and partners in ensuring a decisive and coherent response to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on national priority areas such as health and socioeconomic protection to save livelihoods and lift economies.

59. The interdepartmental task force on African affairs, chaired by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, is a General Assembly-mandated mechanism for United Nations system-wide consultation and coordination at the strategic level on United Nations support for Africa. As an impact- and results-oriented mechanism, the task

⁵⁶ Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, "Youth and creativity: the African response to COVID-19", 2020.

force has provided a platform for United Nations entities to coordinate communication and advocacy and to identify gaps and challenges in United Nations support to Member States in the response to the COVID-19 crisis.

60. The annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development is the core United Nations platform for follow-up on and review of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The most recent meeting was held from 7 to 16 July 2020, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The theme of the meeting was “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. During the meeting, participants debated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Goals. They reflected on how to put the world back on track to achieve the Goals and accelerate progress during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, with the help of the international community.

61. The meeting was also an opportunity for countries to present voluntary national reviews, in which they discussed the approaches and actions that they had taken to implement the 2030 Agenda. Since 2016, 45 African countries have conducted voluntary national reviews, including 16 that presented in 2020 and 11 that had conducted one more than once, providing a clearer picture of these countries, as well as other countries in special situations, including the least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing States. In their 2020 voluntary national reviews, 10 countries noted that national plans and strategies were being aligned with regional frameworks. For example, Agenda 2063 shaped their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries also noted the importance of partnerships and other types of support to strengthen their national efforts on the Goals. For example, in Liberia, a series of national statistical strengthening initiatives were supported by key development partners, including UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the African Development Bank and the World Bank.⁵⁷

2. Coordination and coherence between the United Nations system and the agencies of the African Union

62. Coordination between the United Nations and the African Union is guided by the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the field, United Nations entities working in Africa collaborate on sustainable development and coordinate their support to the African Union through the regional collaborative platform for Africa, which absorbed the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (Africa). The platform will bring all funds, programmes and specialized agencies working in Africa, together with the African Union, for an annual plenary gathering to be held back-to-back with the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. In February 2020, the Mechanism held a special session back-to-back with the sixth session of the Regional Forum, to deliberate on the theme “Leveraging the decade of action for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 in Africa: the role of the United Nations System and the African Union organs and agencies” and to generate rich exchanges on the 2020 African Union theme, “Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development”.⁵⁸

63. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was established to follow up on and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

⁵⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “2020 voluntary national reviews: synthesis report”, 2020.

⁵⁸ See www.uneca.org/rcmspecialsession2020.

and to provide input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. It is convened annually by ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, other regional organizations and the United Nations system. The Regional Forum strengthens multi-stakeholder engagement and synergies and promotes concerted efforts to implement and achieve the development goals of the two mutually reinforcing agendas. The sixth session of the Regional Forum was convened in February 2020 under the theme “2020–2030: a decade to deliver transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”. Discussions held during the forum explored accelerators to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa, including through leveraging science, technology and innovation, with a focus on countries taking transformative action during the remaining decade to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵⁹

64. At the sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, there were calls for the African Union and the United Nations system to collaborate in developing a common monitoring and reporting framework for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, to minimize the reporting burden on member States. The African Union has been working on its 2020 theme to underscore the fact that conflicts hinder the successful implementation of Agenda 2063. There were also calls at the sixth session of the Regional Forum for the establishment of African Union-United Nations teams to coordinate joint initiatives on the theme.

65. The African Union Development Agency, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and other entities, organized a multi-stakeholder knowledge series on the theme, “The critical role of digital transformation in Africa in the post-COVID-19 era: how to accelerate practical digital solutions at scale with impact on jobs and livelihoods”. The first gathering in the knowledge series was held on the margins of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. Key policy recommendations, including ensuring an enabling environment and a strong regulatory framework, and scaling up indigenous innovation and technologies, emerged from the discussions to frame Africa’s digital transformation agenda and harness the potential of digital technology.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

66. The 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 have accelerated progress and shifted the way in which African Governments and their development partners address the gaps and challenges related to social, economic and political transformation in Africa. The COVID-19 crisis has reversed hard-won development gains, such as a reduction in poverty and gender inequality, but it also offers an opportunity to promote a paradigm shift and reset socioeconomic policies, for greater inclusion and to ensure a better recovery for all. The United Nations is calling for global solidarity for Africa, focusing on women, young people, low-wage workers, small and medium-sized enterprises, informal workers and vulnerable groups who are already at risk.

67. To further promote social progress in Africa and improve the effectiveness of the work of United Nations bodies with regard to the social dimensions of Africa’s development agenda, the Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) To recover better from the COVID-19 crisis and to accelerate inclusive growth during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, African countries should continue to prioritize policies and strategies that improve

⁵⁹ See www.uneca.org/arfsd2020/pages/about-forum.

the health sector, eradicate extreme poverty, combat inequality, in particular gender inequality, and provide quality education and decent jobs for all;

(b) Such policies should include investment in universal health care; universal access to basic services; strengthened social protection; human capital development; agricultural sector development; micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, the main providers of jobs; and structural transformation, to develop more value-adding, knowledge-intensive and industrialized economies, thereby reducing the dependence on external financial flows and the export of natural resources;

(c) African countries and development partners should invest in digital infrastructure to improve access to and the quality of adequate data and digital technologies for faster economic growth and inclusive social development;

(d) The United Nations system should turn the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity to galvanize efforts towards the accelerated and coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, by leveraging the United Nations global network of regional, subregional and United Nations country teams working on African sustainable development, and by promoting global coordination through the interdepartmental task force on African affairs and the joint African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(e) The United Nations and the African Union should continue to deepen their strategic partnership towards achieving development priorities as set out in the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 through a more integrated approach;

(f) The Commission should continue to assess, during its sixtieth session, progress made in the implementation of these recommendations under an item on the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in Africa.
