

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

The Role of the Regional Commissions



**THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), inclusive of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the supportive means of implementation reflected, among others, in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), categorically and repeatedly recognizes the significance of the regional dimension of development. The United Nations Regional Commissions (RCs) have been assigned explicit and implicit mandates to assist Member States in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, provide technical support for SDG implementation through effective leveraging of the means of implementation, and facilitate effective follow-up and review. The RCs were entrusted with these mandates given their universal coverage, convening power, inter-governmental nature and strength, broad-based cross-sectoral mandate, and experience in mobilizing regional consensus on key intergovernmental agreements.

In response, the RCs are collectively articulating new strategies and action plans to prioritize support to Member States in cooperation with the UN Development system. Among others, the key areas highlighted below provide perspectives on the shared emphases and harmonized approach of the RCs.



1. Integrating SDGs into national development planning and fiscal frameworksⁱ

The RCs will continue to help Member States translate global commitments into regional transformative strategies and agendas by driving the integration of sustainability and inclusivity considerations in national policies, plans and programmes as well as budgets, and by piloting the implementation of better integrated governance and delivery models.

Member states and governing bodies of RCs have mandated their secretariats to support the implementation of sustainable development by promoting integration of the SDGs into plans, models and fiscal frameworks, assisting in the understanding and analysis of cross-cutting and emerging issues, as well as providing support to integrate

the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The RCs have already been at the forefront of regional formulation of ideas to steer the new development thinking paradigm and progressive policymaking. They have generated new knowledge and ideas, as well as promoted policy advocacy geared towards inclusive development in key macro-thematic areas, including: equality, inclusion and social justice; financial stability and financing for development; structural change towards more knowledge-based sectors, economic diversification and the development of value chains, sustainable patterns of production and consumption, industrialization through trade, sustainable energy systems; the relevance of institutions in renewed multi-stakeholder social compacts; data and statistics challenges, including new metrics and indicators, as well as multi-dimensional measurement methodologies.

As inherently interdisciplinary structures, most of the RCs have developed in-house-macro and sector research and analytical capacities, wide-ranging expert and multi-stakeholder networks and long experience in developing methodologies and operationalizing models to drive integrated implementation

and delivery of development with Member States, in collaboration with the United Nations country teams. Most RCs are also specifically mandated by Member States to offer capacity building for, inter alia, the development of macroeconomic frameworks to mainstream the development agenda.

Going forward, within their current mandates, the RCs will work collectively to standardize integrated models, identify best practices and share methodologies and knowledge – both among the commissions and with the wider United Nations Development System. This will facilitate harmonization of approaches to integration, enable inter-regional comparability and foster the exchange of best practices and lessons learned, including through South-South Cooperation.



2. Promoting policy coherence, consistency and coordinationⁱⁱ

The functional structures of the RCs are well-suited to provide countries with “one-stop shops” for policy advice to facilitate integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, offering technical cooperation to implement the SDGs and operationalizing their means of implementation at the regional, sub-regional and country levels.

Two iterations of Regional Forums for Sustainable Development (RFSDs) in 2014 and 2015 have helped to institutionalize these intergovernmental mechanisms, which will serve as the primary regional platforms for cohesive and coordinated implementation of Agenda 2030. By means of the Forums, the RCs facilitate Member State consensus on regional road maps for implementation of the SDGs, production of regional annual reports, peer review mechanisms, the setting of norms, and examination of opportunities to strengthen national institutional frameworks for coordinated implementation of the SDGs. To supplement and reinforce the RFSDs, RCs, as mandated, will also convene financing forums and workshops to harness alternative sources of financing, as well as science, technology and innovation (STI).

Supporting the RFSDs will be the RCs’ multi-sector committees, which will also focus on nurturing policy coherence and consistency between the global and regional levels, looking to exploit the interdependence and linkages across subject areas. The RCs’ knowledge products and expert networks will reinforce these linkages, through exchange of best practices, including through South-South and triangular cooperation between regions or different country groupings, the data revolution/statistics, the interface between science and policy, domestic resource mobilization, tax cooperation as mandated, and technology and innovation.

Collaboration and a number of formal partnership agree-

ments are already underway for the RCs to work together with other United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes; regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the African Union (AU), Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), ASEAN, the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union; as well as development banks, such as the African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and Asian Development Bank to prepare annual regional SDG reports, as well as other follow-up and review mechanisms. The Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM) will continue to forge a shared and more integrated development framework to coordinate the policy and analytical work of the entire United Nations system across each region, as well as to ensure improved coordination with the United Nations

Development Group (UNDG), including in the implementation and follow up and review of the SDGs in the regions.



3. Enhancement of data and statistical capacities of Member States for implementation of the 2030 Agendaⁱⁱⁱ

The Statistics Committees of the RCs, led by the heads of statistical offices across each

region and backed by dedicated Statistics Divisions in each Commission, offer a holistic institutional framework to steer the regional statistical development agenda. The RCs are mandated to support Member States in developing statistical data and capacities, as well as to collect, analyze, disseminate and communicate this data for SDG implementation. Part of this mandate entails leveraging the Statistics Committees, regional subsidiary bodies, and training institutes of the RCs to ensure that the programmes developed are demand-driven – backed by strong country ownership through national statistical offices.

The RCs are assessing data and statistical gaps in measurement of the SDGs, strengthening data ecosystems, offering policy advice, assisting in modernization of statistics, advancing better use of Big Data and open government initiatives, promoting environmental accounting through mainstreaming and integration, as well as



managing technical cooperation programs for building capacities in data and indicators. Data and statistical enhancement will be critical to the regional follow-up and review mandates for Agenda 2030.

In all of these efforts, the Statistics Divisions of the RCs and the regional Statistical Committees work closely with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) of DESA, and with the United Nations Statistical Commission, as well as leading regional statistical organizations (e.g. Eurostat, OECD, PARIS21, AfriStat, AfDB, AITRS, SESRIC, GCC-Stat, etc.). The Commissions are also members of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and together with Eurostat and EFTA, PARIS21 and regional development banks, support global assessments of national statistical

systems, working with other specialized United Nations agencies such as FAO, UNICEF, UN-FPA and ILO to develop sector-specific data. The RCs are positioned to address emerging challenges and needs, to support data requirements for early warning systems, examine ways to reduce the costs of statistical production, and generate higher frequency data. In all the areas, the RCs are promoting cooperation between the United Nations Statistical System and initiatives such as the United Nations Global Pulse.

4. Identify and promote alternative and innovative sources of financing for development^v

In addition to convening regional consultations on financing for development, with support from ministries of finance, central banks, the private sector, civil society, regional development institutions and regional think tanks, the RCs have produced reports, analyses and policy advice for Member States on alternative and innovative sources of financing, and perspectives on the necessary regional architecture for financing for development.

Under the mandates received, the RCs will go beyond research and peer-learning to experience-sharing and capacity building to promote domestic resource mobiliza-

tion, including tax reforms and capital market development, as well as international tax cooperation. They will also engage with countries to improve enabling environments for trade and finance flows, work with providers on SME finance and financial inclusion, develop approaches to the challenges of middle income countries, promote public-private partnerships, address the challenges of illicit financial flows, and strengthen regional financing arrangements.

5. Leverage science, technology and innovation in support of Agenda 2030^v

The RCs have promoted STI regional platforms and initiatives and are now mainstreaming STI into their work

programmes, customized to suit the realities and mandates of their respective regions. Intergovernmental committees on STI, as well as regional ministerial conferences and expert workshops, and dedicated sessions of the Commissions engage Member States and promote concrete STI initiatives.



The Commissions will also work to leverage advanced regional STI hubs to offer best practices and share their experience in STI policymaking, standard-setting and in the creation of legislation to nurture knowledge-sharing on sustainable technologies and promote ICT connectivity, cutting-edge digital technology, etc.

Under the 2030 Agenda, and within their mandates, RCs will continue to hold regional ministerial conferences on STI, and to ensure the inclusion of national and regional expert communities of relevant ministries, service providers, national innovation centers, research institutions, universities, civil society and other key actors. Regional centers for STI are well-placed to offer appropriate capacity building.

Furthermore, recognizing that the most severe impacts of climate variability and change are expected to be felt in the decades ahead, the RCs will continue supporting Member States in building resilience to the impacts of



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Broad-based partnerships in STI research and capacity building will be harnessed involving, among others, DESA, WIPO, UNIDO, UNCTAD, the World Bank, UNESCO and ITU. These partnerships will provide valuable regional inputs and support the mandates in terms of the new Technology Facilitation Mechanism and its interagency working group.

6. Tapping South-South and regional partnerships^{vi}

The RCs have proactively harnessed South-South Cooperation (SSC) both within and beyond their respective regions. Going forward, existing initiatives and new proposals will be further deliberated at the intergovernmental and sectoral committee levels. This will involve building on established relationships and evolving partnerships for further research, identification of policy tools and incentive frameworks, best practice and knowledge sharing, as well as gearing regional institutes to further reinforce the work of the Commissions. RFSDs and the SDG annual regional reports will detail regional progress in these areas.

7. Translating regional models into global public goods

The RCs have produced many SDG-related outputs, such as legally binding intergovernmental agreements, norms and standards, good practice guidelines including for transport, trade facilitation, environment, sustainable energy, housing and statistics. These products have strong political credibility as they have already been endorsed through intergovernmental processes, ensuring ownership of the agendas by Member States. Such products respond well to the development needs of their respective regions but they can act as models for similar approaches in other regions and in many cases they have become global public goods available for all UN Member States and used increasingly all over the world.

Endnotes:

ⁱ See A/RES/66/288 paras 68, 100, 185 and 251. See also A/RES/67/226 para 150

ⁱⁱ Ibid para 100. See also A/RES/67/290 para 13, A/RES/67/226 paras 144-150 and ECOSOC resolution 1998/46

ⁱⁱⁱ See A/RES/70/1, paragraphs 80 and 81.

^{iv} See A/RES/66/288 paragraph 102. See also A/RES/69/313, paragraph 130. The resolution contains other references to regional mandates in paragraphs 27, 28, 39, 43, 44, 48, 71 and 87, and recognizes regional cooperation and action at the regional level in paragraphs 13, 24, 25, 34, 45, 75, 89, 107, 112, 131 and 133.

^v See A/RES/70/1, paragraph 70.

^{vi} See A/RES/64/222, paragraph 21(d).

Websites

Regional Commissions New York Office (RCNYO)
<http://www.regionalcommissions.org>

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
<http://www.uneca.org>

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
<http://www.eclac.org>

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
<http://www.unescap.org>

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
<http://www.escwa.un.org>

Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
<http://www.unece.org>



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