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**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 [2022/6](#) 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 is written in the context of three major crises: the lingering coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the global effects of the conflict in Ukraine and climate change. It contains a review of the socioeconomic progress and challenges experienced by Africa since the pandemic. It also shows the corresponding efforts undertaken by African countries and their partners, including the United Nations system, to help the continent to emerge from the three crises. It showcases the progress made in ensuring coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, as well as the collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union to accelerate and expand the scale of implementation post-pandemic. The report concludes with recommendations for how African countries can move towards a sustainable recovery from these crises.

* [E/CN.5/2023/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted in 2001 by the African Union, provides a vision and policy framework for Africa's development and integration into the world economy. The goals of NEPAD have 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 Africa, where no one is left behind. Written in the context of three major crises – the lingering coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and climate change – the present report starts with a review of the socioeconomic progress and challenges experienced by Africa since the pandemic. The report continues with an account of actions taken by African countries and their partners, including the United Nations system, to emerge from the triple crisis, and ends with policy recommendations for a sustainable recovery in Africa.

II. Progress and challenges since the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

2. Africa was on a slow path to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic when the conflict in Ukraine erupted, compounding the impact of the global climate emergency and reversing some of the socioeconomic progress made up to 2021. Africa continues to face multidimensional challenges, which keep the continent fragile and vulnerable in key aspects of human development, and further delays the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

A. Health¹

3. The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa reported 9,358,829 confirmed cases of COVID-19 as at 28 October 2022, with 174,681 related deaths. The case fatality ratio – the proportion of infected people who die from COVID-19 – is 1.87 per cent, which is higher than the world average of 1.05 per cent. The reported deaths are concentrated in a few countries, with South Africa, Ethiopia, Algeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe registering almost three quarters of these deaths.

4. Africa's COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment capacities have improved with the support of WHO. The number of hospitalizations and deaths has decreased, with the case fatality ratio going from a high of 2.5 per cent during the first wave (mid-2020) to 0.8 per cent during the most recent wave (end 2021). Between June 2020 and March 2022, many international and national agencies, such as WHO, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the COVID-19 Action Fund for Africa and the Health Service Executive of Ireland, as well as private sector entities, donated over 100 million items of personal protective equipment to over 20 sub-Saharan African countries. The number of laboratories able to detect the new coronavirus increased from 2 to more than 900, and the number of oxygen production plants rose from 68 to 115 – representing a 60 per cent increase. Centres for genomic surveillance were set up, which increased the number of samples being sequenced sixfold in the period from

¹ See World Health Organization (WHO), WHO COVID-19 Dashboard, available at <https://covid19.who.int/> (accessed on 29 October 2022); <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/february-2022/africa-track-control-covid-19-pandemic-2022>; <https://www.afro.who.int/news/covid-19-vaccination-africa-increases-almost-three-quarters-june-2022>; <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1100192>; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-vaccinations-tracker.html>; and <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/361229/9789290234760-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; <https://data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/>.

mid-2021 to mid-2022 compared with the previous one-year period. More than 60,000 health-care workers were trained to manage critical and severe cases of COVID-19.

5. Notable progress in vaccination has also been made. As at 10 July 2022, more than 892 million vaccines had been delivered to Africa, 64 per cent of which were from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility; around 30 per cent through bilateral deals; and 6 per cent through the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust. The continent will also be able to respond better to public health threats with the establishment of the African Medicines Agency, a specialized agency of the African Union to improve access to quality, safe and efficacious medical products in Africa.

6. In 2022, the number of administered COVID-19 vaccine doses rose substantially, reducing the number of countries where less than 10 per cent of the population had completed their primary series of vaccine doses from 14 to 8. However, as at 10 July 2022, only 282 million people on the continent, representing 21.1 per cent of its population, had completed their primary series, compared with over 60 per cent in the rest of the world. Among African countries, only Mauritius and Seychelles met the WHO target of vaccinating 70 per cent of the population by mid-2022.

7. Vaccine inequity, which prevents all people from having equal access to a vaccine that offers protection against COVID-19 infection, combined with the existing fragility of national health systems, is preventing Africa from reaching the goal of vaccinating 70 per cent of its population. This inequity is linked mainly to the lack of financial means to gain access to the vaccines in low-income countries. While high-income countries have to increase their health-care spending by only 0.8 per cent to cover the cost of achieving the WHO goal, low-income countries would need to increase their health-care spending by nearly 57 per cent because their average annual per capita health expenditure amounts to only \$41. The COVID-19 crisis underscored the need for greater assistance to African countries in terms of access to vaccines and progress towards universal health care, including through investment in more resilient public health systems that can provide essential services (treatment of infectious diseases as well as non-communicable diseases, and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health care) even in times of crisis.

B. Economic growth, trade and energy²

8. The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected Africa's economic growth, the rate of which was -1.8 per cent in 2020. In 2021, Africa's economy started to recover, and the rate rebounded to 4.1 per cent. However, this growth is estimated to have slowed to 3.7 per cent in 2022 and is expected to be 3.8 per cent in 2023 owing to economic disruptions stemming from the conflict in Ukraine, which include, at the global level, the severe slowdown of economic growth, significant inflationary pressures and the tightening of financial conditions, accompanied, at the regional level, by rising food and fuel prices and high risks of debt distress.

9. Exogenous shocks linked to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic reduced economic activities, which resulted in job losses and substantial income declines in African households, particularly those with children. In a study of 35 countries, the majority of which were in sub-Saharan Africa, households with three or more children were more likely than households with no children to report a decline in total income (76 per cent of households versus 55 per cent) and more likely to

² See E/2022/60; AfDB, *African Economic Outlook 2022* (Abidjan, 2022); World Bank and United Nations Children's Fund, *The Impact of COVID-19 on the Welfare of Households with Children* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2022); <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/37623>; <https://www.un.org/ohrls/sites/www.un.org.ohrls/files/eca-2022.pdf>; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS?locations=ZG>; and https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2022/Jan/IRENA_Market_Africa_2022_Summary.pdf.

report an adult who did not eat for a full day (24 per cent versus 14 per cent), at the onset of the pandemic.

10. While the COVID-19 pandemic reduced government revenues, demand for public health spending and social interventions increased. This has further constrained Africa's fiscal space, amid increasing debt levels due to existing debt, rising government expenditure, diminishing tax revenues and rising prices. Africa's debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio reached an average of 71.9 per cent in 2020. While this ratio is estimated to decline to 67.6 per cent in 2022, it is still much higher than the pre-pandemic level of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increased number of African countries being at high risk of or already in debt distress – from 4 in 2014 to 21 in 2022. This situation further decreased foreign direct investment, remittances and tax revenue, worsening fiscal deficits and heightening inflation, exchange rate depreciation, borrowing costs and social discontent, especially among young people. Inflation in Africa has remained elevated at above 10 per cent since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is estimated to have reached 12.3 per cent in 2022, much higher than the world average of 6.7 per cent. This has prompted central banks to tighten their monetary policies.

11. A structural transformation of African economies, including higher productivity and value addition, is needed to accelerate inclusive prosperity for all. The implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area,³ an intra-African trade agreement that aims to harmonize trade across 55 African countries and 1.3 billion citizens, with a total \$3 trillion in GDP, should help African countries to achieve such a transformation. The Area could boost real income by 9 per cent and lift 50 million Africans out of extreme poverty by 2035 if its goals are fully realized.

12. The full realization of the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area requires adequate transport infrastructure and services, as well as digital tools for trade (e-commerce). Therefore, African countries need to make substantial investments in infrastructure related to transport, information and communications technology (ICT), and data for the post-COVID-19 era. Countries should also prioritize the harmonization of laws related to taxation, consumer protection, electronic trade, and data standards and privacy.

13. Sustainable and reliable energy is also key to Africa's future. In 2020, half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa had no access to electricity. The continent is rich in untapped renewable energy sources (solar, wind and hydropower) that can benefit the environment and climate and can lead to wider socioeconomic benefits. Renewables are often more cost-effective than importing oil and natural gas, and an International Renewable Energy Agency report suggests that, if accompanied by appropriate policies, a shift away from fossil fuels could lead to 6.4 per cent higher GDP, 3.5 per cent more economy-wide jobs and a 25.4 per cent higher welfare index throughout the 2020–2050 period in Africa.

³ By May 2022, the Agreement had 54 signatories, of which 43 (80 per cent) had ratified it.

C. Poverty and inequality⁴

14. Before 2020, extreme poverty (the proportion of people living with less than \$1.90 a day) in Africa was projected to decline from 34 per cent in 2019 to 33.5 per cent in 2020 and 33.0 per cent in 2021. Instead, the rate is estimated to have increased to 35.2 per cent in 2020 and remained at that level in 2021 owing to the economic disruptions and lockdowns brought about by the pandemic. As a result, 23 million more people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020 and 30 million more people in 2021.⁵ In other words, Africa would have seen 23 million and 30 million fewer extremely poor people in 2020 and 2021, respectively, had the pandemic not happened, and the trend of increased extreme poverty is expected to continue through 2022 and 2023.

15. The economic disruptions and rising food and fuel prices caused by the conflict in Ukraine could push a further 1.8 million Africans into extreme poverty in 2022 and another 2.1 million in 2023.

16. Poverty in Africa is highly dynamic and marked by poor households moving in and out of poverty owing to uninsured, exogenous shocks, which they are unable to manage, increasing their vulnerability. Any consumption volatility associated with shocks such as droughts and health-related out-of-pocket expenditures could easily push the non-poor living right above the international poverty line (with consumption level between \$1.90 and \$2.01 a day) into poverty while further miring those already in poverty. Western and Eastern Africa have the largest proportions of people most vulnerable to falling into poverty – 6.6 per cent and 5.6 per cent, respectively.

17. Countries such as Egypt, Mauritius and Seychelles, which had low initial poverty, the capacity to generate enough jobs, low dependency ratios, an educated labour force, a good health system and a good Internet infrastructure to support a digital economy and education, were more likely to withstand the shocks brought by the pandemic, as they possessed a strong ability to manage risks. The group of countries without these critical attributes is the source of most of the so-called “new poor” created by the pandemic.

18. To eradicate extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030, poverty would have to be reduced at four times the rate of its reduction during the period between 2013 and 2019; this rate of reduction can be achieved only by a structural transformation of the economies of sub-Saharan African countries. Social assistance programmes are appropriate for alleviating poverty, but supporting people’s main livelihoods will be a more sustainable strategy in preventing households from falling into poverty in the future. In short, emergency measures to mitigate the impacts of shocks (such as providing public assistance in health care, education and social protection, and intervening in the labour market) need to be accompanied by long-term government policies to keep people out of poverty before shocks.

⁴ See Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), *Economic Report on Africa 2021* (Addis Ababa, 2022); United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2022*; Kibrom A. Abay and others, “Revisiting poverty trends and the role of social protection systems in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic”, Policy Research Working Paper, No. 10172 (World Bank, 2022); Cesar Calderon and others, *Food System Opportunities in a Turbulent Time*, Africa’s Pulse, No. 26 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2022); <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/2020-africa-sustainable-development-report>; African Union Commission Women, Gender and Development Directorate and others “Gender-based violence in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic”, policy paper, Addis Ababa, December 2020; <https://www.afro.who.int/news/covid-19-vaccination-africa-increases-almost-three-quarters-june-2022>; and <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-vaccinations-tracker.html>.

⁵ These new estimates by the World Bank, based on national accounts data and high-frequency phone surveys, are relatively smaller than earlier estimates and projections.

19. In addition to increasing poverty and vulnerability, the pandemic has also exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, both within and across countries. Within countries, people relying on the informal economy, particularly women, workers in vulnerable employment, people owning few assets, persons with disabilities, and refugees and displaced persons, have suffered the most from the economic shocks of the pandemic, further widening the gap between rich and poor people in Africa. Roughly 58 million non-poor Africans living just above the international extreme poverty line have very little ability, if any, to manage or cope with uninsured risks, which easily pushes them into poverty. Inequality within African countries has further increased with rising fuel and food prices exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine.

20. Gender inequalities increased during the pandemic, disproportionately affecting women and girls in education, health, employment and empowerment. Gender-based violence and early marriages increased by 68 per cent in Ethiopia, 70 per cent in South Africa and 81 per cent in Uganda, according to survey data.

D. Employment, quality education and digital technologies⁶

21. About 22 million jobs were lost in Africa in 2021 because of the pandemic. Job losses hit women and young people (15–24 years of age) the hardest, with the unemployment rate undercounting many young people who have dropped out of the labour market. In Northern Africa, youth unemployment increased from 26.3 per cent in 2019 to 29.3 per cent in 2020 and 29.8 per cent in 2021. In sub-Saharan Africa, the youth unemployment rate rose from 10.1 per cent in 2019 to 11.0 per cent in 2020 and 11.3 per cent in 2021. The trend in the rate of young people not in employment, education or training increased from 28.0 per cent in 2019 to 29.1 per cent in 2020 in Northern Africa and from 20.8 per cent in 2019 to 21.8 per cent in 2020 in sub-Saharan Africa.

22. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 20 per cent of workers have jobs in the formal economy. Most people find work in agriculture (50 per cent) and the service sector (35 per cent), with only 15 per cent of all jobs being provided by industry. Between 35 and 38 per cent of African workers are classified as extremely poor. With high population growth and a lack of formal sector employment, African countries need to develop alternatives such as cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy organizations to provide decent work to the growing populations. The International Labour Organization has identified several countries, including Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia, as having strong social and solidarity economy organizations. Many countries have also revived cooperatives, including financial cooperatives, or savings and credit organizations. For the sector to thrive, more interventions are required to understand the entrepreneurial ecosystem in which such social organizations operate and to identify appropriate interventions that can accelerate their growth and contribution to decent work and sustainable development.

23. The pandemic's adverse impact on gender equality continues as the burden of unpaid work disproportionately falls on women and as women are more likely to hold

⁶ See International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022* (Geneva, 2022); <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/18299.pdf>; https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---coop/documents/publication/wcms_856431.pdf; ECA, *Economic Report on Africa 2021*; <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/learning-loss-and-student-dropouts-during-covid-19-pandemic-review-evidence-two-years>; <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/learning-loss-covid-sub-saharan-africa-evidence-malawi>; <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/technological-innovations-creating-and-harnessing-tools-for-improved-livelihoods/>; and https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/ind/D-IND-DIG_TRENDS_AFR.01-2021-PDF-E.pdf.

more vulnerable positions (temporary or part-time) and often in the sectors hardest hit by lockdowns and restrictions.

24. Prolonged school closures had a negative impact on education and learning. For instance, in three provinces of South Africa that were performing poorly at the outset of the pandemic, students who were in second and fourth grades in 2021 learned less than half of what their pre-pandemic peers were learning. In Uganda, where schools were closed for two full years, the share of young students who could not read letters of the alphabet doubled between 2018 and 2021. In Malawi, where public schools were closed for seven months, students lost the equivalent of around two years of learning in total compared with pre-pandemic levels. In other countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Zambia), however, there was generally no evidence of learning loss among fifth- and sixth-grade students.

25. Although there is high variation in dropout rates across African countries, higher rates were usually observed among older children. Girls in sub-Saharan Africa were also particularly vulnerable to negative outcomes such as adolescent pregnancies and early marriage, which are associated with school dropout, during school disruptions. In Kenya, for instance, the dropout rate among secondary-school-aged girls in the COVID-19 cohort was three times that in the pre-COVID-19 cohort (9.4 per cent against 3.2 per cent), and the pregnancy rate in the COVID-19 cohort was twice that in the pre-COVID-19 cohort.

26. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governments in sub-Saharan African countries enacted 60 digital infrastructure measures aimed at boosting technological innovation. Examples of the digital infrastructure measures include the establishment of partnerships with private institutions and universities to modernize education and learning, and the integration of emerging technologies into education to equip current and future workers and entrepreneurs with diverse, relevant skills such as digital literacy, preparing them for the rapidly changing global economy. These policies, which focused on increasing access to digital tools, contributed to accelerating the adoption and regulation of new technologies in Africa. Governments are encouraged to continue the momentum of these supportive policies to further enable and harness technology to achieve inclusive growth and prosperity in Africa.

27. However, the continent's digital infrastructure is still facing challenges in terms of access to ICT, research and development, and high-productivity and labour-intensive industries. For instance, many African countries invest only 0.42 per cent of their GDP in research and development, well short of the global average of 1.7 per cent.

28. Young Africans have responded to COVID-19 by taking leadership roles and pivoting towards online income-generating opportunities. As agriculture is the backbone of Africa's economy, young people could be shown that they can have successful agriculture-related career paths with the use of ICTs. This will provide not only employment for African youth but also digital solutions for transforming the agrifood sector in Africa.

29. Given Africa's youthful population, future resilience to shocks will depend on expanding youth access to basic services, digital infrastructure and financial capital. Although Internet access in Africa increased during the pandemic, the proportion of individuals that use the Internet is still below 30 per cent, compared with the world average of over 51 per cent. Labour-intensive technological industries are important for ensuring employment among Africa's growing youth population. The networks of innovators in Morocco, the science parks and technology hubs in Mauritius and Rwanda and the Smart Africa Alliance in Kenya, established by their Governments, can serve as models for other African countries exploring ways to invest productively in new technologies and encourage innovation. The African Continental Free Trade

Area offers an opportunity to build a robust, competitive market for goods and services across Africa, which can stimulate employment growth and investments in technological innovation, helping to address the high youth unemployment in Africa.

E. Access to social protection⁷

30. Within their limited means, African Governments quickly adopted over 200 targeted social protection measures or stimulus packages to protect poor and vulnerable people and offset the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. In general, they extended coverage to previously unprotected groups such as workers in the informal economy, or introduced new benefits, the majority of which involved social assistance in the form of cash and in-kind transfers. Based on data from 30 African countries, average per capita spending on social protection increased to \$10, although this amount is much lower than the \$442 spent in North America and the \$300 spent in Europe.

31. Despite the new measures, many African Governments could not provide a proportionate social protection and stimulus response to contain the pandemic's adverse impacts, owing largely to significant coverage and financing gaps. Only 17 per cent of the African population was covered effectively by at least one social protection benefit in 2020 for two reasons. First, the high prevalence of the informal economy, the principal source of employment in Africa, affected coverage. Second, African countries significantly underinvest in social protection, with an average expenditure of less than 5 per cent of a country's GDP, compared with the global average of 12.9 per cent of GDP.

32. In addition, the pandemic revealed the weaknesses of social protection programming in Africa. First, the very limited scale and coverage of social protection programmes as well as their focus on rural areas left many of the poor households unreached, especially those of urban workers in the informal economy, who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic and associated lockdown measures. Second, the low level of digital connectivity made delivering safety net transfers very challenging. Finally, reliance on development assistance for the funding of social protection programmes and safety nets in Africa limited the expansion of social protection programmes in order to reach more people, because richer countries were also affected by the negative effects of the pandemic and thus curtailed their aid. Encouragingly, African Governments have shown that at the policy level there is strong political will to increase social protection financed by domestic sources.

33. Despite these weaknesses, social protection programmes have protected the welfare of vulnerable households in many African countries. Countries with strong social protection systems were able to respond faster and better to the COVID-19 pandemic. The examples of Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa show that their social protection systems were key stabilizers for the economy, contributing to higher resilience. In Ethiopia, for instance, the adverse effects of the pandemic were felt less among the beneficiaries of the national productive safety net programme. Given the continued regional and emerging global challenges, which delay the recovery of African economies, social protection and safety net programmes need to be reinforced to protect vulnerable households from these multiple crises.

34. The gap in financing for the provision of four social protection benefits (maternity, children, disability and old age) and health care in Africa is estimated to amount to 8.5 per cent of GDP. There is a need for greater national ownership in the

⁷ See ECA, *Economic Report on Africa 2021*; and International Labour Organization, *Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy, 2021–2025* (Geneva, 2021).

development of coherent social protection strategies and policies, as bilateral and multilateral donors are currently the main funders of non-contributory social protection in many countries, which does not allow national stakeholders to have significant input on the type of social protection programmes provided, including their design and implementation.

III. Conflicts, climate change and food security

35. The theme of the African Union for 2022 is “Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent”, and the present section is dedicated to discussing the persistence and burden of food insecurity and malnutrition in Africa, which continue to hamper its development.

A. Nutrition and food security⁸

36. Hunger and food insecurity are rising in Africa, disproportionately affecting people living in poverty. Since 2015, Africa has had the highest prevalence of undernourishment in the world. The prevalence continues to rise, from 17.4 per cent in 2019 to 19.6 per cent in 2020 and 20.2 per cent in 2021. In 2021, hunger affected one in five people in Africa or a total of 278 million people. The prevalence of undernourishment was much higher in sub-Saharan Africa (23.2 per cent) than in Northern Africa (6.9 per cent). Within sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence was highest in Middle Africa, where one in three people were affected by hunger in 2021.

37. Beyond hunger, an estimated 322 million Africans were facing severe food insecurity (food stress, crisis or emergency, or famine) in 2021 – 21.5 million more than in 2020 and 58 million more than in 2019. More than one third of the total number of people facing severe food insecurity in 2021 lived in Africa, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2022, about 140 million people are estimated to be facing acute food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa, up from 120 million in 2021. Within sub-Saharan Africa, Middle Africa is facing the highest levels of food insecurity and is also where the largest increases in food insecurity occurred from 2020 to 2021.

38. Extreme climate events (marked by water scarcity or flooding), pest outbreaks (including the desert locust in Eastern Africa), political and market instability, and national and regional conflicts, which are becoming more frequent and severe, are the drivers of the increasing hunger and food insecurity in Africa. The conflict in Ukraine is another major shock that has exacerbated these effects by disrupting the global food, fuel and fertilizer supply chains, resulting in significant price hikes for these and other agricultural products worldwide in the first half of 2022. All African countries stand to be hurt, as all except Djibouti are net importers of wheat. The Russian Federation and Ukraine accounted for 27.4 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively, of all wheat imports on the continent in 2019. The climate emergency is leading to other severe economic, social and environmental challenges (such as droughts and floods leading to poverty and population displacements), further worsening food insecurity.

39. Although 17 per cent of the world’s population lives in Africa, the continent accounted for a negligible 3 per cent of cumulative carbon dioxide emissions between

⁸ See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022* (Rome, 2022); <https://www.state.gov/u-s-food-security-assistance-to-sub-saharan-africa/>; and <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact/cop26-outcomes-finance-for-climate-adaptation#What-are-the-next-steps-in-ensuring-that-more-supply>.

1850 and 2020, and it is the least climate-resilient region in the world, with high vulnerability to climate change and low readiness for adaptation to climatic shocks. In other words, Africa bears the brunt of the climate change crisis despite being the least responsible for it. Yet it has some of the lowest per capita climate finance inflows in the world.

40. High-income countries are urged to honour the pledge made in 2009 to channel a total of \$100 billion annually to fund climate adaptation and mitigation projects in low-income countries. In particular, more financial support for adaptation is needed because, so far, most of the share of global climate financing has gone to projects that reduce and support mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. In this regard, the new financial pledges made by high-income countries at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in 2021, to the Adaptation Fund (totalling over \$350 million) and to the Least Developed Countries Fund (totalling over \$600 million) to help vulnerable people to bolster resilience to the worsening impacts of climate change, if honoured, will benefit Africa.

41. High levels of poverty, dependence on rain-fed agriculture, and lack of infrastructure and support systems such as social safety nets combine to make Africa the continent most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. African Governments, in partnership with the international community, should commit to sustained action to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, in particular the effects on the most vulnerable within their countries. These include investing in agroecological food systems practices and climate-friendly agriculture, such as efficient, clean energy and microirrigation; providing easy access to weather and climate information, especially to women, who make up a large percentage of the agricultural workforce and are the most vulnerable, yet can apply nature-based solutions to strengthen resilience to natural disasters; substantially increasing investment in agricultural research, as Africa only receives 4 per cent of investment in agricultural research from all sources; and expanding access to social protection and health care. Africa would also benefit from joining the global efforts to transition towards net-zero emissions by 2050, driven by a clear and transparent mutual accountability framework.

B. International emergency support⁹

42. International cooperation is essential to tackling the climate emergency, which poses an existential threat to the whole planet. Currently, some high-income countries and heavy carbon emitters are providing direct bilateral emergency food security assistance to African countries and contributing to international efforts that support livelihoods and nutrition and that help vulnerable countries to build resilience to shocks, including food price volatility, supply chain issues, climate impacts and other long-term threats. These international efforts include the work of the African Emergency Food Production Facility of AfDB to increase the production of climate-adapted wheat, corn, rice and soybeans.

43. In addition, the Crisis Response Initiative was established by the International Fund for Agricultural Development to help protect livelihoods and build resilience in rural communities. African Heads of State and Government launched the Africa Adaptation Initiative at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in 2015, to develop a pipeline of bankable projects in Africa for adaptation to climate change, while the Africa Disaster Risk Financing Programme of the African Risk Capacity is assisting African Governments in responding to food system shocks by increasing access to

⁹ See <https://www.state.gov/u-s-food-security-assistance-to-sub-saharan-africa/>.

risk insurance products. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is conducting a soil mapping exercise spanning multiple countries to provide information allowing for wiser water usage, greater fertilizer conservation, and improved climate resilience.

IV. Policies for enabling an inclusive and resilient recovery

44. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges it is currently facing, Africa urgently needs inclusive policies at the national level to build forward better, as well as a coordinated response by the international community, which will be presented in the section below. The response of the United Nations system will be elaborated in the following section.

A. Global and regional levels: international development cooperation efforts, including financing for development¹⁰

45. Official development assistance (ODA) reached an all-time high in 2021. Preliminary data show that net bilateral ODA flows from Development Assistance Committee member countries to Africa rose to \$35 billion in 2021, representing an increase of 3.4 per cent in real terms compared with 2020. Within this total, net ODA to sub-Saharan Africa was \$33 billion in 2021, an increase of 2.0 per cent in real terms. However, ODA is still insufficient to meet the mid- and long-term challenges ahead of 2030 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, in relative terms, ODA remained far from the international commitment of 0.7 per cent of GDP.

46. African countries are in urgent need of improved liquidity and better fiscal space as they try to recover from multiple global crises. The Group of 20 countries established the Debt Service Suspension Initiative to help low-income countries to concentrate their resources on fighting the pandemic and safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of millions of the most vulnerable people. By the time the Initiative ended in December 2021, 32 out of the 38 eligible African countries were participating in the Initiative, the implementation of which was supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although the Initiative provided much-needed liquidity to African countries, it was not designed to address structural debt issues or protracted financing challenges.

47. IMF has offered concessional lending and debt service relief to augment liquidity and alleviate debt vulnerabilities heightened by the pandemic. In August 2021, IMF approved a general allocation of special drawing rights equivalent to \$650 billion to its members, of which just \$33 billion in total is expected to be received by African countries. Higher-income countries such as the United States of America, Japan, China and Germany have individually received larger allocations than Africa as a whole.

48. Debt financing enables countries to respond to emergencies such as the pandemic and to fund long-term investments, including in climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it can also reduce policy space and jeopardize fiscal sustainability and financial stability. Sovereign borrowing allows

¹⁰ See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/debt/brief/covid-19-debt-service-suspension-initiative>; <https://www.uneca.org/stories/com-2022-calls-for-extension-of-debt-service-suspension-and-issuance-of-new-sdrs-to-finance>; <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/ODA-2021-summary.pdf>; and *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022* (United Nations publication, 2022).

Governments to ramp up spending and provide assistance during a crisis. It allows countries to invest in the future when productive investment opportunities, which support the public good sustainably, arise. Such investments can help to achieve public policy objectives and increase the tax base and capacity to service debt over time. However, risks need to be managed carefully and resources used effectively for benefits to be sustained and adapted to the changes caused by climate change. Debt financing is most appropriate for investments, such as those in infrastructure, that generate direct returns and/or enhance a country's fiscal capacity over relevant time horizons.

49. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly for a report with recommendations to respond to current and future challenges, the Secretary-General, in his report on Our Common Agenda (A/75/982), made relevant recommendations on jobs, social protection, youth and women's participation and economic inclusion, and the green and digital economies. The Assembly, in its resolution 76/307, decided to hold, in 2024, the Summit of the Future, which will provide the opportunity to discuss relevant issues such as financing for development and meaningful youth engagement.

B. National level¹¹

1. Investments in comprehensive social protection systems, universal health coverage and human capacities development (education and training, including digital skills)

50. Recovering from the current crises provides a unique opportunity to enhance the resilience of vulnerable households against future shocks as part of overall poverty eradication efforts. It is important to implement integrated policy measures to strengthen human capacities, including risk management and digital skills, and to reduce their vulnerabilities by investing in comprehensive social protection systems, quality education and universal health coverage.

51. In this context, the cornerstone of any inclusive recovery strategy is a combination of State provision of public goods (such as access to essential health-care services, quality education, and safe drinking water and sanitation), social protection and labour market interventions, complemented by government actions to stimulate economic growth.

52. Of particular importance are universal social protection systems, which directly affect poverty and inequality while creating an infrastructure that can be used both for emergency and crisis response and for long-term prosperity and inclusion. These systems need to be funded primarily by domestic resources (national budgets and contributory schemes) to ensure their long-term sustainability. They can also be designed to provide incentives for business formalization and a reduction in tax avoidance and evasion. Thus, systems for mobilizing domestic resources should be strengthened.

53. Financing social protection must also be linked to overall financing in social sectors, including the creation of decent jobs in the green, care and digital economies. Furthermore, the link of human assets to labour market demand and job creation, which would enable people to exit poverty and informal employment, is vital. It is

¹¹ See <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2021-148-mitigating-role-tax-benefit-rescue-packages-poverty-inequality-Africa-COVID-19.pdf>; Katja Juvonen and others, "Unleashing the potential of institutional investors in Africa", AfDB Working Paper, No. 325 (Abidjan, 2019); and *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022*.

important to also leverage the private sector in the provision of public goods, including health and education, to build resilience.

2. Mobilization of domestic resources

54. Africa's development is financed to a large extent by its domestic resources, with public revenues excluding grants amounting to \$483.6 billion in 2018, compared with \$55.3 billion in ODA. However, Africa still has a long way to go to maximize domestic revenue mobilization. For example, tax revenue in African countries as a share of GDP lags behind that of other developing regions. The low tax-to-GDP ratio means that African countries have little fiscal space to invest in social development, which is critical to leveraging Africa's human capital as a key component of the potential economic growth and development of African countries.

55. Other critical components of domestic resource mobilization, such as domestic savings, pension funds and remittances, are being underutilized, despite the fact that they have shown resilience to the impact of the pandemic. For example, domestic savings in Africa remained steady in 2020, with sub-Saharan Africa reporting total gross domestic savings of \$353 billion (20.1 per cent of GDP), while other regions experienced a sharp decline. African pension funds are estimated to have reached \$1.1 trillion in 2020. This amount is expected to continue to grow following current demographic trends, including a rising middle class and increased subscription to pension funds across the continent.

56. Illicit financial flows continue to drain large amounts of financial resources from the continent, estimated at \$88.6 billion annually, equivalent to 3.7 per cent of GDP, driven primarily by commercial practices related to trade and tax abuse. By reducing illicit outflows, the continent can increase the stock of capital available to local businesses; provide additional fiscal space for investment in infrastructure, health and education post-pandemic; and feed the development of local and regional capital markets.

57. Inefficiency in public expenditure in Africa, including in health, education and infrastructure investment, results in an annual loss to the continent of 2.87 per cent of its GDP – more than \$12 billion in education, \$30 billion in infrastructure, and \$28 billion in health. Therefore, African countries should carry out a comprehensive review of their government expenditure to identify wastage and potential savings for the budget along with potential gains from the reallocation of expenditure within and across sectors. This must be complemented by measures to strengthen the institutional governance of public management and administrations.

58. Effective domestic resource mobilization is essential for Africa to obtain the financing required to effectively drive the continent's economic growth and development in an inclusive and sustainable manner, and for it to reclaim its policy space over its development, channelling resources towards productive capacity development and structural transformation, and promoting industrialization. However, for such a mobilization to play an effective role in the continent's sustainable development agenda, fundamental changes in both policy and institutions will be required, including improving efficiency in public expenditures, strengthening revenue collection, harnessing private savings and the private financial sector for development, and stemming illicit financial flows.

V. Enhancing the coordinated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda

59. The present section highlights ongoing activities and specific interventions executed, usually jointly, by the United Nations system and the African Union to strengthen resilience to future shocks while accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

A. Strengthening national capacity, including in vaccination roll-outs¹²

60. The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator is a global collaboration to accelerate the development and production of and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines, especially to low- and lower-middle-income countries, such as those in Africa. The ACT-Accelerator is organized into four pillars of work: diagnostics, treatment, vaccines and strengthening of health systems. WHO is co-leading COVAX, the ACT-Accelerator vaccines pillar, with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and the Gavi Alliance, alongside the United Nations Children's Fund, a key delivery partner. COVAX is aimed at ensuring fair and equitable access to vaccines for all countries, particularly developing countries, based on need and not purchasing power. By July 2022, COVAX had provided 64 per cent of the more than 892 million vaccines delivered to Africa.

61. To curb the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance, the WHO Regional Office for Africa supported 38 countries in developing national action plans and implementing actions to address antimicrobial resistance in the context of the One Health approach. A total of 33 African region countries are conducting surveillance of antimicrobial resistance using the Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System.

62. The Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with United Nations entities, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Trade Centre, as well as the African Union Commission, has continued to offer support to African countries to develop national strategies to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, in order to reap the benefits of the Agreement.

63. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat has launched a United Nations-wide partnership, UN4NAPs, to support the most vulnerable countries in preparing and implementing their national adaptation plans. By the end of 2020, six African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Togo) had submitted their plans to the Convention secretariat. In 2021, 20 African least developed countries were developing and implementing their plans with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme.

¹² See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact/cop26-outcomes-finance-for-climate-adaptation#What-are-the-next-steps-in-ensuring-that-more-supply>; and <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/raising-adaptation-action-through-aligning-NAPs-NDCs-in-African>.

B. Advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063¹³

1. Coordination and coherence within the United Nations system

64. In the context of the United Nations reform and the transformation of the United Nations development system, which are aimed at improving the delivery of the ambitious development goals to the people at the national level, the United Nations enhanced collaboration across the Organization's development, peacebuilding and humanitarian operations. To that end, the United Nations reassessed its coordination arrangements and accountabilities at the global, regional and country levels. In addition, the Secretary-General has established the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance to help decision makers to mobilize solutions and develop strategies to help countries address the interlinked crisis with food, energy and finance.

65. At the global level, two significant coordination mechanisms bring the United Nations system together in its support to Africa: the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which serves as a high-level forum for joint policy formation and decision-making, to guide, support, track, and oversee the coordination of development operations for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; and the interdepartmental task force on African affairs, mandated to strengthen strategic coordination and coherence of the United Nations system support for Africa on issues straddling the peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian nexus and for which the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is the designated secretariat.

66. In 2022, the interdepartmental task force on African affairs focused on energy as an entry point to building forward better. It mobilized the United Nations system around the implementation of the road map for universal energy access and just energy transition in Africa. To that end, it organized four statutory meetings, one each on domestic resource mobilization as a catalyst to financing the acceleration of energy access and transition in Africa; energy technology to scale up clean energy production and access to clean energy in Africa; energy planning for universal access and just transition for Africa; and the annual review of the coherence and coordination of the United Nations system support for Africa.

67. At the regional level, United Nations entities working in Africa collaborate and coordinate their support to African countries through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, which includes resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. In 2022, the Platform continues to support Member State efforts to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its overarching focus is to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, setting annual milestones to monitor progress. Substantively, the Platform focuses its work on four key priorities, guided by requests from resident coordinators and country teams: data; macroeconomic frameworks, debt and the African Continental Free Trade Area; climate action; and digital transformation and energy.

68. At the country level, an independent and empowered resident coordinator function was established. The Development Coordination Office regional office for Africa is applying its expertise on multiple fronts to ensure that resident coordinators,

¹³ See the 2022 compendium report of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs; <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-development-coordination-office-regional-office-africa-annual-results-report-2020-2021>; and <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/eca-2022.pdf>.

resident coordinator offices and country teams across the continent are best positioned to not only deliver on United Nations reform but also support countries in recovering better from COVID-19 impacts and achieving transformation through the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

69. The Development Coordination Office regional office for Africa guided the first round of countries through the initial phase of developing their Cooperation Frameworks. This began with the design of a common country analysis, another signature instrument of the country teams, to flesh out the best of the collective analysis of the United Nations, which the regional office rigorously reviewed and assured for quality. Throughout the inclusive and participatory process, the regional office has demonstrated the importance of its strategic, technical, advisory and coordination roles. During the development phase of the Cooperation Framework following the completion of the common country analysis, the regional office offered a wide range of capacity development services to resident coordinators, resident coordinator offices and country teams. To accelerate the shift from the COVID-19 emergency response to long-term sustainable development priorities, the regional office supported 49 country teams in the development and integration of socioeconomic response plans into the common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks. Between August 2020 and July 2021, nine African countries completed a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, redefining, in the context of United Nations reform, engagement at the country level in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Coordination and collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union

70. Coordination efforts between the United Nations and the African Union towards Africa's development are guided by the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. At the fifth African Union-United Nations annual conference, held in December 2021, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission reviewed progress in the implementation of the Framework. The two leaders recognized the recent progress in vaccine supply and uptake but called upon the international community to scale up the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa and accelerate vaccine distribution. They also stressed the importance of strengthening the African Continental Free Trade Area to engender domestic economic recovery; affirmed that African countries were in urgent need of foreign direct investment, liquidity and debt relief to create jobs, expand social protection and reverse poverty trends; pointed to the role of climate change as a structural driver affecting peace, security and development; and agreed to enhance the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 by promoting a results-based approach focused on energy access, connectivity, climate action, financing for development and governance.

71. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat provides support to African countries and the African Union through both analytical work and capacity development projects. For instance, the Department issued a policy brief entitled "Why population growth matters for sustainable development", in which it indicated that rapid population growth was both a cause and a symptom of slow progress in development, yet sub-Saharan African countries had some of the fastest-growing populations in the world. It also co-organized a regional capacity-building workshop on strengthening national institutional capacities for the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and the African Union Agenda 2063 with the African Peer Review Mechanism in October 2022, in support of building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in Africa at all levels and

in pursuit of the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

72. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is an annual multi-stakeholder platform organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Africa and the host Government (Rwanda in 2022) in collaboration with the African Union Commission, AfDB and other entities of the United Nations system.

73. The eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum was convened in March 2022 on the theme “Building forward better: a green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”. The key messages comprise priorities, policy options and recommendations for Africa, to accelerate implementation at multiple levels, and the region’s collective input into the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Africa Regional Forum is one of the three mechanisms mandated to follow up, review and catalyse actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063. The other mechanisms are the voluntary national reviews and the high-level political forum on sustainable development at the global level. In 2022, 21 African countries presented their voluntary national reviews: 7 for the first time, 13 for the second time and 1 for the fourth time.

74. The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit offered opportunities for the world and Africa to examine and identify context-specific solutions to the challenges hindering the achievement of goals and targets related to food systems in various development frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, which recommitted to the principles and values of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme process. The Africa Common Position on Food Systems, which followed the Food Systems Summit, provides a synthesis of the expressed views, perspectives and priorities as well as ambitions of African States on key issues shaping Africa’s food system and the global food system.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

75. **The 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 have promoted progress and reoriented African Governments and their development partners towards addressing the gaps and challenges related to social, economic and political transformation in Africa. The shocks brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and climate change, while setting back the attainment of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the aspirations of Agenda 2063, offer an opportunity to promote a paradigm shift and reset socioeconomic policies, with a view to greater inclusion and to ensuring better recovery for all.**

76. **In order 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, I recommend that the United Nations system and the African Union Commission continue to strengthen their partnership and coordination and work in a collective and coordinated manner towards supporting the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. I also call upon African countries, in partnership with the international community, multilateral organizations and bilateral donors:**

(a) **To prioritize policies and actions to strengthen the health sector, making it more resilient and capable of tackling future health emergencies and able to provide quality, affordable health services and access to COVID-19 vaccines;**

(b) To accelerate actions to eradicate extreme poverty and provide decent jobs, and to tackle the climate emergency, by investing in a green, inclusive structural transformation. These efforts should include strategies to promote the social and solidarity economy, which can boost economic growth and create jobs, and strategies for adaptation and mitigation of climate change, notably clean energy transition;

(c) To protect livelihoods, support people in vulnerable situations and combat hunger, by investing in nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, and by reforming the agricultural food systems to make them more resilient to increased adversity caused by climate change and limited water resources, while maintaining emergency measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, funded mainly with domestic resources;

(d) To invest in hard and soft infrastructure resilient to climate change, including transport infrastructure, digital systems, ICT and data hardware, as well as skills to advance the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement and to build a more robust system against natural disasters and increasing weather adversity;

(e) To accelerate strategies to close the gender divide in the access to education, health care, decent jobs, digital ICTs, including the Internet, food and agricultural services.
