Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders
ARMMGoS
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Policy Statement
High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2026

SUMMARY

1. Africa enters the 2025 review of the Sustainable Development Goals at a pivotal moment shaped by converging crises and transformative opportunities. Climate change, water and energy insecurity, rapid urbanisation, fiscal constraints with the heavy burden of debt, and persistent inequalities continue to slow progress, compounded by fragmented implementation and weak policy coordination. Yet Africa also holds significant assets, including a youthful population, vast renewable resources, expanding regional markets under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), growing innovation ecosystems, and robust continental frameworks, notably Agenda 2063 and its Ten-Year Implementation Plans as well as specifically designed financial Institutions likely, if well operationalised, to provide good alternatives against the ever weakening relevant global multilateralism.

2. Against this backdrop, The African Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholder (ARMMGoS) emphasises that "Turning the Tide" requires a decisive shift from incremental action to transformative, coordinated, and people-centred implementation. Progress on Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17 is deeply interconnected and must be pursued as an integrated development agenda. We thus call on Governments, the African Union and United Nations entities to commit to urgent actions to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in review this year.

3. Providing Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6) is an emergency as water insecurity, intensified by climate change and governance gaps, poses severe risks to human rights, livelihoods, and the stability of people of all ages, particularly for women, children, older people, and displaced populations. We call for cooperative and climate-resilient water governance, strengthened early-warning systems, inclusive policymaking, and scaled partnerships for finance, technology, and capacity development to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation.

4. Universal access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy (Goal 7) is equally fundamental. Despite Africa's renewable potential, energy poverty remains widespread, undermining health, education, gender equality, and economic transformation. We stress the urgency of accelerating decentralised, renewable, and community-led energy solutions, supported by concessional finance, technology transfer, and coherent policies aligned with the African Union Agenda 2063 and climate commitments.

5. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (Goal 9) constitute a cornerstone of Africa's structural transformation. We call for integrated, green, and inclusive industrialisation strategies that align infrastructure, innovation, and industrial policies with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)'s ambitions and climate goals, while supporting Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs), expanding equitable digital infrastructure, and strengthening home-grown innovation ecosystems.

6. Rapid urbanisation places the necessity for sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11) at the centre of Africa's development pathway. Sustainable, inclusive, and resilient cities require integrated urban-rural planning, innovative and coordinated financing, community-led resilience, and institutionalised participation of local stakeholders.

7. Partnerships for the SDGs (Goal 17) underpin all progress. We call for renewed, accountable partnerships aligned with the AU Agenda 2063, mobilisation of diverse financing sources, strengthened regional cooperation, expanded South-South and triangular cooperation, and investment in data and digital public infrastructure. Central to these efforts is elevating Agenda 2063's First Ten-Year Implementation Plan as Africa's primary, actionable blueprint, ensuring coordinated implementation and popular ownership during the Decade of Action and beyond.

FULL PAPER

Introduction

1. Africa enters the 2025 review of the Sustainable Development Goals at a pivotal moment shaped by converging crises and transformative opportunities. Climate change, water and energy insecurity, rapid urbanisation, fiscal constraints with the heavy burden of debt, and persistent inequalities continue to slow progress, compounded by fragmented implementation and weak policy coordination. Yet Africa also holds significant assets, including a youthful population, vast renewable resources, expanding regional markets under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), growing innovation ecosystems, and robust continental frameworks, notably Agenda 2063 and its Ten-Year Implementation Plans, as well as specifically designed financial Institutions likely, if well operationalised, to provide good alternatives against the ever weakening relevant global multilateralism.

2. "Turning the Tide" requires a decisive shift from incremental action to transformative, coordinated, and people-centred implementation of development agendas. Progress on Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17 is deeply interconnected and must be pursued as an integrated development agenda. Thus, the African Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholder (ARMMGoS) calls on Governments, the African Union and United Nations entities to commit to urgent actions to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in review this year. This position statement reflects their perspective, through a presentation of contextual factors for each SDG in review, followed by key recommendations.

Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)

Context

3. The reality of Africa reveals a significant gap between the aims of SDG 6 and its actual implementation. The Continent is experiencing a multitude of crises, including the climate crisis, with drought and desertification, as well as weak infrastructure, preventing Africans from having safe and sustainable access to water sources. This is compounded by the slow pace of adopting plans and policies to address water crises across the continent. These crises are further exacerbated by the challenge posed by some African countries with the adoption of an inequitable development approach that disregards the integrated nature of the sustainable development agenda. In fact, some countries are abusing the right to development to bolster their national development plans at the expense of others, exploiting water as a sovereign resource to serve their own agendas while completely ignoring the equal right of all African peoples to safe and sustainable access to water in a fair and equitable manner.

4. Figures reveal the danger resulting from the expansion of this perspective on a continent where up to 116 million of its citizens already suffer from acute water crises and severe shortages of drinking water, while 83% of the population of North Africa and the Middle East suffers from water scarcity. The negative repercussions of the water crisis in Africa are exacerbated for marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and displaced persons. However, in this challenging context, Africa has the opportunity to view water governance as an entry point for resolving a wide range of water crises, by creating a fair and sustainable system that recognises the equal right of Africans to water resources within the Continent and works to monitor the extent to which countries adhere to this commitment.

Recommendation

5. African actors should develop an African advocacy plan to push for: the recognition of the right to safe drinking water and accessibility to sanitation services as a human right; investment in the provision of public services; and the strengthening of regional good governance of shared water resources. These actions should align with national policies that treat water as a sovereign resource, ensuring equitable access across all African countries and promoting sustainable sanitation management.

6. Social protection should be extended to disadvantaged people and those exposed to water insecurity, in particular women, while duty bearers in charge of providing safe drinking water are held accountable, within an inclusive and community-led water governance system, based on social dialogue. Policymakers should also address water pollution and leverage international support, particularly from countries with proven experience in managing water crises.

7. Considering that groups such as children, women, displaced persons, people with disabilities and older people are the most affected by the water and sanitation crisis in Africa, involving them in policymaking and planning processes is essential, to mitigate water insecurity.

Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)

Context

8. Expanding access to electricity and clean cooking solutions remains a critical development priority, particularly for rural and underserved communities, where energy poverty continues to undermine human development outcomes. UN Member States thus reaffirmed their commitment to achieving universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services, recognising energy as a fundamental enabler of poverty eradication, inclusive economic growth, gender equality, health, education and digital inclusion.

9. But despite the significant renewable energy potential across the African Continent, energy poverty remains widespread, with millions lacking electricity and clean cooking solutions. Addressing high connection costs, reliance on biomass fuels, weak policy coordination and limited access to financing for decentralised systems is essential to ensure a just, resilient and sustainable energy transition that leaves no one behind.

Recommendation

10. Governments and partners should prioritise universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services, including electricity and clean cooking, as a key driver of poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality and inclusive economic development, ensuring that no one is left behind.

11. UN Member States should create incentives to scale up renewable, affordable and decentralised energy systems, including mini-grids, off-grid solar and clean cooking technologies, particularly in rural and underserved communities, to expand access while supporting climate and development goals.

12. The international community should scale up concessional finance, technology transfer and capacity-building support to accelerate Africa's clean energy transition.
13. All stakeholders should make sure that energy policies and investments promote people-centred, inclusive and gender-responsive approaches, ensuring the meaningful participation of women, youth and marginalised groups while promoting job creation, through strengthened local manufacturing and sustainable industrialisation based on stronger Micro, Small and Medium size Enterprises (MSME).

Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)

Context

14. Africa stands at a critical juncture with fragmented efforts that must give way to coherent, integrated action. The Continent faces infrastructure deficits and economic vulnerabilities rooted in historical resource flight and secular inequities, making reparatory justice as a fundamental pillar of development strategies and demanding a reformed international financial architectures, as well as meaningful African decision-making in partnerships, and stronger collaboration with the global African diaspora.

15. By embedding accountability through inclusive governance and data-driven monitoring, and by mobilising innovative finance aligned with SDG principles, Africa can transform its economic landscape—building a resilient, self-reliant future that leaves no community behind. However, technical solutions alone cannot address the structural barriers that have long impeded Africa's progress toward realising the transformative vision of Agenda 2063 and the effective implementation of the AfCFTA. A better economic governance is needed.

Recommendation

16. African nations, with the purpose of moving from raw material exports toward value addition, must: align industrial policies with climate commitments; break down silos between infrastructure development and social goals; treat digital connectivity as a public good; ensure that resilient low-carbon infrastructure reaches marginalised communities; and empower MSMEs - particularly those led by women and youth - to drive inclusive growth., while strengthening local innovation ecosystems through equitable technology transfer and accessible finance.

17. Governments and international partners must institutionalise the meaningful engagement of civil society (establish appropriate platforms or leverage existing ones), local communities, women, youth, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups in the design, implementation, and monitoring of all infrastructure and industrialisation projects, ensuring that no one is left behind and the outcomes of industrialisation at all levels are equitably shared.

18. Effective capitalisation on the transformative potential of Africa's development must be based on recognising local communities and grassroots innovators not as passive beneficiaries, but as essential co-drivers of change, particularly in bridging the digital divide and scaling sustainable solutions that address racial, gender, disability, and age disparities, as well as create decent jobs in all sectors particularly in agriculture and fishery.

19. Major Groups and other stakeholders must be directly empowered through targeted financial mechanisms and technical training, prioritising women and youth-led MSMEs to ensure they

are well integrated into regional value chains and benefit equitably from the continent's economic transformation.

Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Context

20. More than 600 million people in Africa live in slums. The issue of Sustainable Cities and Communities thus stands at the heart of the Africa We Want, serving as the crucial intersection where climate action, economic growth, and social inclusion converge. Yet urban planning generally remains fragmented, imposing the need for a shift toward integrated, participatory development at national level, in alignment with Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

Recommendation

21. Governments must develop policies rooted in human rights, justice and dignity for free mobility for all citizens throughout Africa and institutionalise Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement. Urban governance needs transformation in terms of ensuring the active participation of youth, women, grassroots organisations, and persons with disabilities into every stage of SDG 11 implementation, across planning, monitoring and Voluntary Local Reviews.

22. Strengthening community-led resilience should strengthen Major Groups to lead local action. Grassroots communities - especially those led by women and youth – by enabling access to funding for disaster risk management, and be empowered to co-design slum upgrading projects that ensure inclusive slum upgrading.

23. Advancing Equitable Digital Governance for All is essential for leveraging digitalisation to advance rights-based governance, by: investing in open-data platforms that highlight inequalities; implementing digital participatory budgeting: enabling marginalised groups to propose and prioritise local development projects; and making education the foundation of sustainable communities.

24. Protecting urban ecosystems and heritage will foster social cohesion. Urban-rural linkages need to be strengthened through planning instruments that enable the flow of goods, services, and economic opportunities between cities and their surrounding regions, as well as promote community-led housing and people-centred mobility for safe, affordable services.

Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

Context

25. The current international financial architecture is not fit for purpose, particularly for Africa, constraining the Continent’s path to sustainable development. Africa faces a huge infrastructure financing gap while international cooperation for development and the state of multilateralism fail to provide effective solutions. The OECD’s data on official development assistance (ODA) for 2025 recently revealed a dramatic 23.1 percent decline in a single year, the largest drop ever.

26. Even though the “Pact for the Future” and the outcome of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) committed for a reform of the international financial architecture, resistance from developed countries is still very strong and Africa needs to also look inwards for alternate solutions to achieve effective partnerships for sustainable development. This must be grounded in inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance systems that ensure meaningful participation of all stakeholders.

Recommendation

27. Following up on the UN “Compromiso de Sevilla”, Governments should implement robust financing strategies that include: the scaling up of Official Development Assistance (ODA); a permanent multilateral debt resolution mechanism under UN leadership; the adoption of an ambitious UN Tax Framework Convention; integrating ILO core labour standards into global trade rules; and business accountability in development.

28. Inclusive and accountable multi-stakeholder and inter-stakeholder partnerships that are transparent, and policy-coherent, ensuring broad stakeholder participations. Establishing formal multi-stakeholder platforms at national and regional levels is essential to support integrated planning, monitoring, and accountability, while supporting bottom-up approaches that enhance resilience.

29. Financing, policies, and continental priorities for sustainable development need to be aligned, with a view to accelerating progress through integrated financing frameworks that mobilise diverse resources - including domestic revenue, development assistance, climate finance, impact investment, and diaspora financing, while addressing illicit financial flows. Partnerships should also align development actions with both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, with a view to strengthening Africa’s collective voice and ensuring that investments support shared priorities such as industrialisation, climate resilience, and sustainable growth.

30. Cooperation, knowledge exchange, and data systems should be strengthened to drive implementation. Through enhanced regional and global partnerships, harmonised policies, shared technology, and robust innovation ecosystems will be achieved. This includes scaling up South-South, North-South, and triangular cooperation, alongside investments in data systems, digital infrastructure, and national statistical capacities, with the goal to enable evidence-based decision-making and accelerate progress, through enhanced regional and global partnerships.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges facing Africa in a context of failing multilateralism, solutions exist for the Continent to really achieve full transformation and emerge stronger than ever. For that to happen, African countries must operate collectively, in solidarity, and looking inward with total reliance on their own forces and resources. It is about time Africa partnered differently on the global scene, with clarity on the Continent’s interests and expectations. Better solutions for the real transformation of Africa are nowhere to be found but in Africa.