



**Consultative Meeting with OECD-DAC members on the 2016 UN Secretary-General's
report on
"The Review of Implementation of Commitments made
towards Africa's Development"**

Co-organized by OSAA & OECD

CONCEPT NOTE

23-24 November 2015

Paris, France

I. BACKGROUND

On various occasions, the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Secretary-General have stressed the need for bolder steps to strengthen the global partnership for development in Africa, calling for improved monitoring and stronger efforts for mutual accountability. In 2008, Heads of State and Government, Ministers and representatives of Member States of the United Nations adopted a political declaration on “Africa’s Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward” (General Assembly Resolution 63/1), which reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to address the development needs of Africa. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its 64th session, a comprehensive report with recommendations on the implementation of these commitments with a view to formulate a mechanism to review the full and timely implementation of all commitments related to Africa’s development. Following its consideration of the Secretary-General’s report entitled “A Monitoring Mechanism to Review Commitments Towards Africa’s Development Needs¹”, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/293 establishing the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism (UNMM) to review commitments made towards Africa’s development. The resolution designated the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) to serve as the Secretariat for the review in coordination with relevant entities of the UN system, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

As mandated by the General Assembly, OSAA, in coordination with relevant entities of the United Nations system, within the institutional framework of the Interdepartmental Taskforce on African Affairs, operationalised the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism (UNMM) in March 2014. The first interim report² of the UNMM was submitted to the 69th session of the General Assembly in September 2014.

Based on its mandate as spelled out in Resolution 66/293, the UNMM is anchored on the principles of mutual accountability and partnership, and focuses exclusively on reviewing implementation of multilateral commitments by development partners and African countries arising from, *inter alia*, major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields and from cooperation summits with Africa’s partners either as groups such as the G20, G8, and European Union or as country-sponsored summits. The key UN events include the 2002 United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development and its outcome: the Monterrey Consensus; the 2005 World Summit; the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, and its outcome: the 2008 Doha Declaration on Financing for Development; the 2009 Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development; the 2010 UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries of 2011 and its outcome: the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2011-2020; the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) of 2012 and its outcome: “The Future We Want”; the Third United Nations International Conference on Small Island Developing States and its outcome: the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway; the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries of 2014 and its outcome: the Vienna Programme of Action; the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015 in Addis Ababa and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The timely implementation of commitments becomes critically important to support Africa’s efforts towards its shared strategic framework for economic and structural transformation while maintaining the Pan-African drive for self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity as encapsulated in the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and its first ten-year implementation plan covering the period 2013-2023 – the first of a series of five decennial plans to guide the implementation of Agenda 2063.

The UNMM is intended to provide a comprehensive coverage of a broad range of development commitments, covering all development partners that support Africa’s development (African countries and

¹ See A/65/165.

² See A/69/163.

institutions, and Africa's Development Partners, including Members of OECD/DAC as well as new and emerging development partners), with a focus on themes which vary in each biennial report and are aligned with major issues on the global development agenda. At the same time, the UNMM avoids duplicating the work of existing monitoring mechanisms on Africa's development by synthesizing existing processes and building upon them to track progress towards commitments and charting a comprehensive and coherent way forward.

The second biennial review report will focus on the following four thematic areas which were endorsed by the Interdepartmental Task-force on African Affairs at its meeting of 30 June 2015 at principal level: (i) Infrastructure Development; (ii) Gender and Women's Empowerment; (iii) Trade; and (iv) Achieving a Conflict-Free Africa. The present concept note is intended to prepare the ground for the consultation process as part of the preparations for the second biennial report of the Secretary-General of the UNMM to be submitted to the 71st session of the General Assembly in September 2016.

The General Assembly has also underscored in its resolution 66/293, the importance of engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the UNMM, including Member States, parliamentarians, academia, private sector, foundations, CSOs and the media in both African countries and their development partners with the view of soliciting their inputs into the review process.

It is against this backdrop that the first consultative meeting with African Stakeholders was organised on 5-6 October 2015 in Addis Ababa. Subsequent to that meeting, a consultation with Africa's development partners that are members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is being organized in Paris on 23-24 November 2015, which will be followed by another consultation with new and emerging development partners in Bangkok on 8-9 December 2015. These consultations are meant to draw on inputs from African stakeholders and Africa's development partners, including selected representatives of governmental and regional institutions, civil society organisations, the private sector, academia and think tanks as well as individual experts in the selected areas.

Africa and the European Union - which together with its member states is the largest provider of development assistance to Africa - adopted the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) in 2007 which has served as the framework for the Africa-EU Partnership. The JAES embodies a new forward-looking vision for relations between Europe and Africa and sets out the overarching political framework defining relations between Europe and Africa. In 2014, leaders of both sides further agreed on a roadmap to frame EU-Africa relations for 2014-2017 for joint action covering five strategic areas: i) Peace and security; ii) Democracy, good governance and human rights; iii) Human development; iv) Sustainable and inclusive development and growth; v) Continental integration; and vi) Global and emerging issues.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATIONS

The overall objective of these consultative meetings is to engage experts from a broad spectrum of stakeholders in government, academia and civil society organisations on the 2016 report of the Secretary-General on "The review of the implementation of commitments made towards Africa's development". More specifically, the meetings aim to (i) identify key commitments in the four thematic areas the report focuses on; (ii) highlight major achievements and challenges in the implementation of commitments to Africa's development and; (iii) generate consensus on measures to advance national, regional and international actions in the proposed thematic areas.

The first consultation took place in Addis Ababa at the ECA Headquarters on 5-6 October 2015 with the participation of the representatives of African governments and institutions, regional economic communities (RECs), civil society organizations, the private sector, academia as well as independent experts to engage in the discussions of the above. The second consultation which will take place in Paris at the OECD Headquarters on 23-24 November 2015 will provide the opportunity for representatives of the OECD DAC Members as well as other relevant stakeholders, including from academia, civil society organisations and independent experts, to:

- (i) Reflect on the experiences of the Members of the OECD/DAC in implementing their commitments to support African countries in the selected thematic areas;
- (ii) Highlight the ways and means to overcome the challenges encountered by the Members of the OECD/DAC in promoting support to the achievement of key priority objectives in each of these thematic areas;
- (iii) Explore the specific ways to accelerate progress in the implementation of commitments in the four areas from both the international community and African countries themselves.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATIONS

Based on the objectives indicated in the preceding section, the expected results will:

- (i) Generate consensus on key commitments in the four thematic areas;
- (ii) Develop a greater understanding of the scale and scope of the challenges to making progress in the thematic areas; and
- (iii) Gain understanding of the types of measures needed (at national, regional and international levels) to support the implementation of relevant policies and accelerate progress towards the full and timely implementation of relevant commitments.

IV. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

(1) ACHIEVING A CONFLICT-FREE AFRICA

Key priority issues and commitments

African countries proclaimed the goal of a conflict-free continent by 2010 in their Declaration on the Review of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals adopted in Sirte, Libya in July 2005. In light of persistent conflict, African leaders reaffirmed the goal to silence all guns, by 2020, in the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of the African Union in 2013 and in the AU's Agenda 2063, which was adopted in January 2015. Over the last decade and a half, the African Union has sought to prevent and resolve conflicts by carrying out a host of measures, including establishing the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). African Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), which are the building blocks of the African Union, have also carried out numerous conflict prevention, peace-making and peace consolidation efforts in their respective regions.

Africa's partners have made several commitments to support African countries in fostering peace, security and stability. The UN has provided assistance to the African Union through the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union (2006-2016) which is to be replaced by the UN/AU Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda (PAIDA). The UN is also strengthening its partnership with the African Union through the development of a Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. In addition to strengthening Africa's regional and sub-regional instruments to tackle conflicts, the UN and its agencies and programmes have undertaken a host of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts as well as carried out activities to address poverty and youth unemployment; political, social and economic exclusion; weak institutions and governance deficits; proliferation of illicit weapons and other causes and drivers of conflicts.

The European Union, under the umbrella of the Africa-EU Partnership, is providing crucial support to Africa's goal to achieve peace and security. The Africa-EU Partnership is based on the Joint Africa-Europe

Strategy, which was adopted in 2007, and guided by a 2014-2017 roadmap that set out concrete targets within five priority areas of cooperation, including peace and security, and democracy, good governance and human rights. Under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the EU and African partners have committed to undertake a formal dialogue on human rights and democratic governance, in order to strengthen cooperation in this field and to promote these values on a global level. The EU provides assistance to the African Court on Human and People's Rights (AfCHPR), the Pan-African Parliament and the African Peer Review Mechanism. In addition, the EU is also engaged in helping Africa enhance continental and regional capabilities to prevent and resolve conflicts, having provided funding to AU-led peace operations in Somalia, Central African Republic, Mali as well as to the African Stand-By Force and other APSA tools and instruments.

To better support countries to transition away from conflict and fragility, and to build peaceful societies, a number of mostly African fragile and conflict-affected states, international development partners, and civil society organizations agreed to a New Deal to improve the current development policy and practice in fragile and conflict-affected states. The New Deal, which calls for five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) to be at the heart of all international efforts in these countries, was signed by more than 40 countries and organizations at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 in Busan, Korea.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly on the 25th of September 2015 recognised peace and justice as well as institution building for governance as enablers for sustainable development by assigning a dedicated goal (SDG #16) to this pursuit. Achieving that goal will require a composite of measures at the national and regional levels. At the national level, special emphasis will have to be placed on building relevant institutions that are able to anticipate and prevent political crises, adjudicate disputes, and mediate conflicts. At the regional level, strengthening the relevant institutional structures for AU Instruments on Peace and Security, in particular, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is a key priority action envisaged to achieve this goal under Agenda 2063 and its First 10 Year Implementation Plan.

The main components of that effort include: i) developing an African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis (ACIRC) by 2015; ii) establishing national peace councils by each African country by 2016; iii) completing the review of Africa Peace and Security Protocol by 2017; iv) contributing to the AU Peace Fund during 2014/2023; and v) ensuring that national stand-by contingents are well-equipped to participate in the African Stand-by Force.

Progress and challenges

Over the last decade, the number of African countries experiencing conflicts has declined sharply from 14 in 2005/06 to 9 in 2014/2015. However, there is a daunting array of challenges to achieving the new goal of "Silence All Guns by 2020". Foremost among these challenges is the absence of well-functioning national institutions to manage conflicts when they erupt. At the same time, while many of the institutional components of the APSA have been formally created; they are seriously under-funded. Moreover, though the overall number of civil conflicts in Africa has declined, a few countries have become endemic or prone to conflicts with very adverse consequences for their stability and development prospects. Equally troubling, terrorism and, to a lesser extent, maritime piracy, human, drugs, and small weapons trafficking have emerged as new major threats to both national stability and regional security. The asymmetric nature of the operations of terrorist organizations has made it difficult for African countries to effectively combat terrorist activities.

African development partners have pledged to assist African countries, *inter alia*, in coping with the devastating consequences of terrorist attacks in various countries. ODA flows to Africa for peace, security, conflict prevention and resolution increased more than threefold between 2000-13 from USD455 million to USD1.33 billion in 2013 constant prices. Through its Common Security and Defence Policy, the EU participates and leads in nine missions and operations in Africa. Much of the funding of African-led peacekeeping operations comes from the EU's African Peace Facility (APF), which has €750 million for the period 2014 – 2016. This support was allocated in particular to peace support operations (e.g. AMISOM in Somalia and MISCA in the Central African Republic). Several other development partners have made contribution to Africa's peace and

security efforts by their participation in UN Security Council mandated missions and in offering financial support for peacebuilding initiatives in Africa.

Questions for discussion

- ✓ What are the 2-3 key commitments in this thematic area by Africa's development partners?
- ✓ What are the main achievements and challenges in the implementation of these commitments?
- ✓ What have been the impact/outcomes on the ground of these achievements?
- ✓ What specific measures should be pursued to accelerate progress and/or address challenges in the implementation of these commitments?

(2) INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Key priority issues and commitments

To close the infrastructure deficit, African governments have made commitments to strengthen national planning frameworks, reform and harmonize national regulatory environments and mobilize increased public resources. Development partners have committed to increase financial support, help mobilise private sector participation and enhance implementation capacity, with specific commitments to promote clean energy and energy efficiency. The Group of 20 (G20) countries reiterated as priority areas the strengthening of the upstream environment for infrastructure investment, maximizing the effectiveness of project preparation facilities and promoting better understanding of risk and return in infrastructure investment in Low-Income Countries (LICs). Ambitious quantitative targets have been set to increase access to electricity, safe drinking water, basic sanitation, all-season transport access for the rural populations, and information communication technology. Although still inadequate, budget allocations for infrastructure in domestic spending plans have increased by 8% in 2011-13 in 21 African countries where information is available. Many countries now have strategic plans but some still lack resources and know-how for preparation and implementation of bankable projects.

Similarly, while national regulatory agencies have been established, many are facing weak implementation capacity with most progress experienced in telecommunications. Reforms are underway in the power sector to address electricity shortages and to promote renewable energy. In transport there are efforts to improve logistics and trade facilitation. Regional projects and programmes have been developed across all sub-regions of Africa. Most Regional Economic Communities have developed regional infrastructure development strategies and have promoted cross-border initiatives including through power pools in all sub-regions and cross-border trading of power in Southern and Western Africa. In the road sector, African leaders have endorsed an intergovernmental agreement for the Trans-African Highways network in 2014. At the continental level, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), a multi-sector programme, was formally endorsed by the African Union in 2012. To fast-track the implementation of PIDA Priority Projects, African leaders launched the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICl) in 2012 in order to provide strategic leadership at the political level to infrastructure development. This was followed by the adoption of the Dakar Agenda for Action in June 2014 to foster public-private partnerships to implement 16 PIDA priority projects. Development partners have committed to increase financial support, help mobilise private sector participation in infrastructure, strengthen the capacity for project preparation and implementation in Africa, and promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. The EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure, which constitutes a cornerstone of the JAES has to date awarded, through the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF), grants to infrastructure projects that represent a total value of over €6.5 billion in investment in infrastructure and related services in Africa. Total funding leveraged through these grants are estimated to be much larger. Furthermore, Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusses on "ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" and Goal 9 addresses "building resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and innovation".

Progress and challenges

National budget expenditures for infrastructure have increased to some USD 50 billion in recent years. Total commitments for infrastructure from external sources have also reached USD 47 billion in 2012 but private participation in infrastructure in Africa has remained stagnant in the past several years. Investments in renewable energy (mostly in hydropower, wind and solar) have shown a remarkable increase in the recent past. There has been progress in the implementation of regional projects in the context of PICI. For instance, under the PICI, progress was made in closing the missing link of the trans-Saharan highway project through the recent securing of USD 40 million. 60% of the optic fibre component is completed and the project is expected to be complete by 2016.

But despite increased investments, weak infrastructure remains a major constraint to growth and social progress. On several basic infrastructure indicators, African countries trail their developing country peers. For instance, despite many efforts, the electricity access rate for Sub-Saharan Africa only reached 33% in 2013, a moderate increase from 23% in 2000. Furthermore, the reliance on expensive oil-based systems makes African electricity tariffs among the highest in the world and, outside South Africa, losses in poorly maintained transmission and distribution networks are double the world average. Only 34% of the rural population is within 2 km of an all-season road, compared with two-thirds in other developing regions, and transport costs are much higher than in other developing regions.

In water and sanitation, although Sub-Saharan Africa has made impressive progress in access to an improved water source, with the access rate rising from 49% to 64% over 1990-2012, 325 million Africans still do not have access to improved drinking water and only 30% of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities. Mobile telephony has been a success and cellular subscription has risen from 18 to 69.3 per 100 inhabitants over 2006-2014. The number of Internet users is estimated to have grown from 3.3 % in 2006 to 19% in 2014. However, Africa not only has the lowest regional average in 2013, but has also experienced the least improvement compared to other regions. Key remaining challenges include problems of mobilizing resources, lack of funding and capacity for project preparation and implementation, and continuing challenges in the business environment and legal enforcement.

Questions for discussion

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(3) TRADE

Key priority issues and commitments

African governments continue to emphasise the importance of trade, with commitments to reduce supply-side constraints and trade barriers and to strive to further regional integration through the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to intra-African trade and the modernization of domestic and regional trading systems. The AU's 2012 Declaration to boost intra-African trade and fast-track the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017 was reaffirmed in Addis Ababa in January 2015, with CFTA negotiations launched in June 2015. There has been significant progress with the launch of the tripartite Free Trade Area involving the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community in June 2015 in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt. Furthermore, the launch of

the Common External Tariff by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which became effective in January 2015 is an important step to achieve the free movement of goods and services within the group and represents another key step towards the CFTA and the enhancement of intra-African trade. Furthermore, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015 also commits to strengthening regional cooperation and regional trade agreements for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

At the global level, Africa has been involved in multilateral trade negotiations within the context of the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this regard, there has been some progress notably in the area of trade facilitation and development issues such as food security, cotton, provisions for LDCs, and commitments by developed countries to reduce export subsidies in agriculture with the adoption of the Bali Package in December 2013. Development partners have reiterated commitments to: (a) keep markets open and roll back new protectionist measures; (b) bring the Doha Development Round to an ambitious conclusion; (c) make progress towards duty-free and quota-free (DFQF) market access for LDC products; and (d) support enhanced trade capacity. There are expectations of positive outcomes at the 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to take place in Nairobi in December 2015 particularly as related to development issues with a specific focus on LDCs.

Various initiatives have been set up to support trade capacity of African countries, notably for the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, the Aid for Trade Initiative³, the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the Standards and Trade Development Facility and many other trade related technical assistance and capacity building programmes provided by development partners. According to the WTO and OECD, a total of USD 246.5 billion has been disbursed for financing aid-for-trade programmes and projects since the Initiative was launched in 2006. Aid-for-trade disbursements to Africa reached USD 15.8 billion in 2013, accounting for 38 per cent of total worldwide volume in 2013. However, in spite of the rising aid-for-trade support, Africa has been less successful in integrating into global value chains which have proven to be effective in strengthening domestic supply-side capabilities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies trade as one of the important means of implementation for the sustainable development, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, re-affirms the Istanbul Programme of Action commitment to double the share of least developed countries' exports by 2020.

Progress and challenges

Africa's exports reached USD 602.5 billion in 2013 accounting for 3.3% of world exports, a small decline from 2012 due to weaker commodity prices. As the result of the sharp decline in commodity prices in the recent past, Africa has suffered further terms-of-trade deterioration estimated at 18.3% in 2014. Further deterioration can be expected as African merchandise exports are heavily concentrated with the share of fuels and natural resource-based products rising and accounting for about two-thirds of Africa's exports in 2013. Africa's merchandise export markets have diversified geographically with the share of emerging countries increasing dramatically, from 28% to 49% between 2005 and 2013. But although Africa's exports to China have contributed to the continent's economic growth, most of the exports were in resource-based sectors with little value addition. African firms are increasingly connected to global value chains although these links mostly reflect exports of primary commodities and natural resources. Together with the lack of diversification, this issue raises important questions as to how the continent can develop its exports of manufacturing goods and services. Intra-African trade remains low, representing 16.3% of total trade in 2013 compared with other regions such as Asia and South and Central America. On trade facilitation, while according to the World Bank's 2015 Doing Business report, Africa (excluding North Africa) accounted for the largest number of regulatory reforms globally that reduced the cost of doing business, progress on efficiency of trade supply chain has been slower in Africa and

³ The Aid for Trade initiative was launched at the 6th WTO Ministerial Summit in Hong Kong with the objective of facilitating the integration of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries into the global trading system through strengthening their supply capacity and trade related infrastructure.

the lack of trade finance also remains a significant impediment.

Questions for discussion

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(4) GENDER AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Key priority issues and commitments

African governments have repeatedly reiterated their support to gender equality; enacted legislations to protect and promote women's rights and enhancement of women's empowerment; pursuing the end of discriminatory practices and implementing international norms and standards (e.g. Beijing and Dakar Platforms of Action, currently being reviewed), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004). The African Union launched the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) and designated 2015 the "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063", in order to focus national and international attention on the challenges that still stand in the way of achieving gender equality. To further mobilise political commitment to this objective, the AU has designated the year 2016 as the year of human rights with a special focus on the rights of women.

African governments recognized the need to include these objectives as key areas for structural transformation within an inclusive and people-centred approach to development as part of the Common African Position on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference. They have translated these commitments into actions in all areas, including health (e.g. through the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa, CARMMA), food security and education, making gender equality a cornerstone of the AU's Agenda 2063.

Africa's development partners are committed to support these efforts and have subscribed to a number of international agreements, including through: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the adoption of MDG3 (on gender equality) and MDG5 (on maternal health), now superseded by the SDGs in the framework of the 2030 New Sustainable Development Agenda; the G20 multi-year plan of action (2010); focusing on gender equality in the 2005 Paris Declaration and its 2008 Accra Agenda for Action; the 2011 Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan; the adoption of the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker; and the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action for Financing for Development in July 2015. They have translated these objectives into key priorities of their development assistance, increasing significantly bilateral aid for gender equality and women's empowerment.

In 2015, the OECD-DAC adopted a new tracking code to support action to end violence against women and girls, genital mutilation and early and forced marriage. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms the vitally indispensable role of gender and women's empowerment in achieving sustainable development and adopted a universal goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, namely SDG 5 of the Agenda 2030 which was launched in September 2015. On 26 October 2015, the Council of the European Union adopted the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, which identifies measures summarized in the document on "*Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020*", which may significantly contribute to the effectiveness of EU gender mainstreaming initiatives in EU partner countries, in particular in the African region. Lastly, the

Security Council commemorated the anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 with a High-level Review to assess progress and accelerate action, which took place during the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security on 13 October 2015. Resolution 1325 was the first Resolution to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, and its review will continue to focus the international community on the women, peace and security agenda.

Progress and challenges

Problems faced by women in Africa cover a broad range of issues covering education, health, economic participation, political representation, and domestic and conflict-related violence against women. Important advances have been made, including bridging the gender gap in primary education, improving maternal health, fighting HIV/AIDS, and enacting new laws to fight discrimination and harmful cultural practices. In education, nearly half of all African countries have achieved gender parity in primary school and some headway has been made at the secondary level. In health, maternal mortality rates fell by 47% over 1990-2013 but this achievement hides large sub-regional differences. In the political domain, African national parliaments have seen a significant increase in the proportion of seats held by women. Moreover, in spite of the progress made in the past 20 years -since the Beijing Conference on Women- in establishing national institutional machineries for advancement of women; such institutions remain highly under-resourced. Women account for more than half of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, progress in women's economic participation and women's empowerment in general is modest and much remains to be achieved in order to allow most African countries to benefit from the full potential of women's capacities. Women have gained greater legal rights to access employment but further efforts are required as regards property rights for women in marriage and inheritance rights. Violence against women remains widespread with one in every three women in Africa experiencing some form of violence in her lifetime. Furthermore, conflict-related violence against women severely undermines their conditions. Hence, further efforts on linking gender and peace and security issues, including support by development partners, are required.

Questions for discussion

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V. FORMAT OF THE CONSULTATIONS

The consultation meetings will consist of an introductory plenary session, two separate thematic discussions (on Day 1), and a plenary session (on Day 2). The two thematic discussions – regrouping Infrastructure Development and Trade in Group 1 and Gender and Women Empowerment and Achieving a Conflict-free Africa in Group 2 will allow participants and experts to go for more in-depth discussions. The meeting will reconvene on Day 2 at a plenary session to review the reports on the discussions and recommendations of the thematic discussions. This will give an opportunity for all participants to further contribute to the discussions and recommendations.

Participating countries/organizations will be represented at a senior level and representatives will speak on behalf of their government/institution. Contributions by experts will be based on their professional expertise. OSAA will be responsible for coordinating the meetings. In addition to stakeholder consultative meetings, broader based consultations at the country-level will be conducted through the use of questionnaires to solicit the views of national officials and other actors so that country-based priority concerns will be carefully

considered. OSAA will also emphasize synergies with other monitoring processes that cover specific aspects of international support to Africa's development.