514 million Africans risk falling below extreme poverty line in 2021 due to COVID-19

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Can African countries still achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030? African growth trajectories and the impact of COVID19 are currently shedding doubts on countries’ ability to reach this objective, unless the region achieves faster growth than before the pandemic in the upcoming years.

Day two of the 7th African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (ARFSD) kicked off Tuesday under the chairmanship of the Zimbabwe Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Paul Mavima, with an opportunity for African delegates to take stock of the implementation of Agenda 2030 and 2063 in the context of the fight against COVID19.

According to the ECA Africa Sustainable Development Report, SDG and Agenda 2063 implementation in Africa faced several challenges even prior to the onset of the COVID19 crisis:

Before the pandemic, income disparities were on the rise across the region; and while extreme poverty had almost vanished in North Africa, more than 50% of the population in Central Africa lived below the extreme poverty line. About nine out of ten extremely poor people in the world currently live in Africa. The ECA warns that COVID19 will push an additional 5 to 29 million below the extreme poverty line. If the impact of the pandemic is not limited by 2021. An additional 59 million people could suffer the same fate, which would bring the total number of extremely poor Africans to 514 million people.

Africa continues to experience disparities in universal access to energy, electricity and even clean fuels and technologies for cooking.

While African countries have made progress towards the emission reduction target and have managed to increase the proportion of key biodiversity areas by 4.5% between 2010 and 2020, the region has remained vulnerable to climate change with limited response capability. In addition, Africa has lost an average of 3.9 million hectares of forest per year between 2010 and 2020 due to population growth, poverty and agricultural expansion.

Faced with these difficulties, ECA experts have suggested several strategies to speed up the African recovery such as:

• Establishing and strengthening of social protection systems for sustainable poverty reduction, and investment in key enablers such as reproductive health, mental health, access to primary health care and education,

• Improved environment through sustainable extraction policies and use of natural resources;

• Investing in modern and digital technologies to increase productivity and encourage innovation;

• Adopting a people-centered approach when addressing issues related to governance, peace and security;

In order to finance these efforts, the ECA experts recommended the use of a coordinated multilateral approach to debt relief, debt restructuring and development financing as well as domestic resource mobilization.

The ECA team presented the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT), designed to help African countries facilitate the integration of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 into their national development plans and the monitoring of their implementation.

This meeting took place within the framework of the 7th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) currently taking place online and physically in in Brazzaville (Republic of Congo) from March 1 to 4, 2021. ARFSD is being held this year under the theme: “Building forward better: Towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063” and aims to take stock of progress made towards the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063, facilitate the exchange of information and experience between countries and promote solutions and transformative actions that will speed up their implementation.