



AFRICA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A THEMATIC REVIEW OF CURRENT TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

Since 2015, Africa has scored lower on many indexes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) than other regions of the world. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic was sure to clog whatever wheel of progress Africa seemed to be riding. This paper thus reviewed various themes on Africa and its internalization and localization of the SDG. The relevance of the SDGs in Africa was highlighted as well as its symbiotic relationship with the AU's 2063 agenda. Also, its progress in terms of her successes, failures, and struggles taking into account the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was discussed. While being optimistic about Africa's chances of achieving the SDGs by 2030, the author argued that policy reforms, political will, and huge capital investment is needed and urgently so, for any possibility of the reversal of the current trend to be actualized.

INTRODUCTION

Politically, the divide amongst nations of the world on policies and agenda is significant; foreign relations are usually based on national interests and these interests do not always align. However, international organisations such as the UN, EU, AU, NATO, and ECOWAS, are platforms for unifying policy or agenda decisions of member-states. When member-states of an international organisation – such as the UN – ratify a policy agreement, it gives member-states a common purpose, aspirations, and ideation to an extent. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations (UN) and adopted by its member states in 2015 is one of such agendas. Conflicts, increasing population, socio-cultural changes, urbanization, and nonviable forms of producing and consuming goods and services have increasingly mounted constraints on the world system thus creating several complications for governments around the world (Andreoni & Miola, 2016). Global challenges – climate change and renewable/green energy, poverty and inequality, economic, food, and water crisis, health crisis due to infectious disease outbreak/pandemics, and political turmoil leading to an increasing number of migration and refugees – persist even though concerns of government vary (Karaduman, 2014). And while the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) which ended in 2015 recorded a remarkable improvement in this regard, the issues it set out to tackle are still existent, new threats have surfaced, and more are anticipated as competition for politico-economic power and natural resources intensify (Andreoni & Miola, 2016).

The above quagmire thus made it necessary for governments and international organisations to formulate and enact an agenda that will combat these challenges and usher in sustainable development in the wake of the expiration of the MDGs. The SDGs thus represent the concerted efforts and ideas postulated to address the aforementioned. The SDGs are one of the ideas of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), the third on sustainable development with the objectives of harmonizing the goals related to the economy and environment of member states. The conference was



meant to chart a course to sustainable development after 2015 when the MDGs timeline must have elapsed (Nhema & Zinyama, 2016). Chief amongst the agenda which centres around the well-being of humans and their socio-political, economic and natural environment, is the elimination of poverty in all its existential reality. There are 17 SDGs with 169 to build on the success of the MDGs as well as their shortcomings in critical and significant aspects of life, living, and the environment. Though 17, the SDGs are unified and correspond with the socioeconomic and environmental facets of sustainable development (United Nations, 2015a).

Six years after, it is imperative to track the progress or lack thereof of the member states to the goals particularly African member-states taking into account the challenges and impediments particularly the COVID-19 pandemic which has rocked the world. Every year, the UN releases a report documenting country-by-country the progress of each African state on each goal. This paper aims at uncovering the meaning and implications of each key statistic in the 2020 report and integrating the same with the commentary and opinions of other policy analysts and writers as well as the personal opinion and commentary of the authors. While there are reports and publications examining Africa's relationship with the SDGs, this paper differs and it is significant by going beyond numbers and figures to discuss the implications of key statistics and projections taking into account and context the peculiarities and challenges plaguing Africa and its relationship with the SDGs. Also, this paper attempts to map out a framework that will aid Africa in attaining the goals.

Africa was reported to have made encouraging progress on the MDGs as several African countries improved their lot on at least one goal thus leading to optimism on Africa's prospects in the context of sustainable development (Economic Commission for Africa [ECA], 2015). Despite these signs of progress, Africa is still home to 490 million poor people making up 36% of its total population, and its supposed "giant" – Nigeria – currently languishing as the poverty capital of the world after overtaking India even though the latter has over five times the population of the former (Human, 2021; Uzoho, 2021). Notwithstanding her giant strides in gender equality as seen in the 15% increase in women's inclusion in national parliaments between the year 2000-2014 thus leading the world in this regard (ECA, 2015), gender inequality persists as do income inequality. Women are underprivileged in many aspects: they have a higher prospect of living in World poverty and lower chances of finding a way out; they are mostly involved in unpaid or low-paid labour and are grossly underrepresented in business and politics as there are fewer women as members of the board of directors and parliament (Oxfam, 2019). The income inequality in Africa is humongous as seen in the continent's infamous standing as the second most unequal in the world with the top 10% capturing half of the national income and the continent playing host to seven of the most unequal countries with South Africa leading the way (Oxfam, 2019; Robilliard, 2020). To paint a clearer picture, "the richest 0.0001% own 40% of the wealth of the entire continent, and Africa's three richest billionaire men have more wealth than the bottom 50% of the population of Africa, approximately 650 million people" (Oxfam, 2019, p.3).

It is thus vivid that the SDGs arguably matter more and could do more for Africa than the rest of the world. However, what is even more vivid is the regretful fact that what matters most to the African people does not matter to many of her leaders. The political history of Africa has been fraught with bad leadership and politicians governed by



“stomach infrastructure” whose god is their belly. Such has been the fate of the continent so much so it is largely spoken in certain quarters that Africa’s only natural disaster is poor leadership. And while a part of the SDGs concerns people and private organisations in terms of implementation, a larger part of it is in the hands of the government and its institution and this includes showing commitment and charting a course that will bring together NGOs and private organisations into the fold in implementing the SDGs. Thus, it is pertinent to evaluate the response of the various governments of the nations in Africa to the goals directly related to economic growth and how far Africa has come in the attainment of the same taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic as well as its congruence with other African foreign policy.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): An Overview

The SDGs are a result of years of work by committees under the auspices of the United Nations when it became apparent the timeline of the MDGs would elapse without its goals attained despite meaningful progress (Barakat, et al. 2016). The goals were officially agreed on at the 70th anniversary of the UN where world leaders met in New York from September 25-27. And as 2015 ended alongside the MDGs, the 17 SDGs and their 169 accompanying targets came into force on January 1st, 2016. Scholars while lauding the significance of the goals to humanity’s wellbeing and future, have also described the goals as quite ambitious and remain sceptical of their success considering the outcome of the MDGs and their manner of implementation (Scott & Lucci, 2015; Nhema & Zinyama, 2016; Willis, 2019). The SDGs envisage a sustainable future and detail the journey to the same as well as the means to its attainment rather than focusing on the deficiencies of the global population thus giving the former a wider perspective of development than the latter (Willis, 2019). However, the SDGs incorporate some of the goals of the MDGs that were not met because though the timeline had passed, the situation that necessitates the MDGs in the first place was very much present as did the significance of such goals to a sustainable future. Thus, the SDGs did not merely replace the MDGs; they built on them and attempts to succeed where the MDGs failed (United Nations, 2015a). The goals and their accompanying target are outlined in the table below.

Goal	Description
SDG 1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
SDG 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable
SDG 3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
SDG 4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
SDG 5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
SDG 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
SDG 7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
SDG 8	Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
SDG 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation
SDG 10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
SDG 11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
SDG 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
SDG 13	Take urgent action to combat climate and its impacts
SDG 14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development
SDG 15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
SDG 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, and inclusive institutions at all levels
SDG 17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Africa and the SDG: The COVID-19 Pandemic Effect

As it is with many foreign policies, many African countries have latched onto the SDG and this is expected considering the endemic poverty and rising unemployment the continent is faced with. Some African countries have incorporated the SDGs into their national visions and plans by way of legislation and budgeting as a way of translating the ambitious goals into material gains for their citizenry (UNDP, n.d). However, many African countries are still a long shot away from the successful attainment of the goals as the continent still lags behind the rest of the world in terms of socio-economic development (Begashaw, 2019). Drawing from a 2019 report by the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa – “Africa 2030: Sustainable Development Goals Three-Year Reality Check”, Begashaw observed that Africa has made little progress on many of the goals, stagnated on some others, and shows signs of progress on SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 13 (climate actions), and SDG 15 (life on land). Similar progress was made on the MDGs as the UNDP (n.d) reported that Africa’s noteworthy progress included reducing the out-of-school children, particularly the girl child, increasing women’s representation in national parliaments, reducing child and maternal death, and improving the lives of the number of people living with HIV as well as seeing infection rates dropped. While the report calls for sober reflection and urgent action from the governments in Africa in light of the continent’s socio-economic reality and prospects, it is unlikely that much will be done soon with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has grave socio-economic implications for Africa presenting her with novel and huge economic challenges and sustained health crises, heightening the intensity and diversifying the dimensions of existing ones. At the onset of the pandemic, it was estimated that the living conditions of a significant number of Africans could worsen as the continent might experience an increase in food insecurity and more people falling below the poverty line. Nonetheless, the pandemic was not wholly responsible for the economic downturns of the continent; in 2019, the year before the pandemic, Africa had slow growth and not much happened in the area of poverty alleviation with various indices showing that the continent’s growth rate was

too weak to drive the wheels of socio-economic prosperity and poverty eradication (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). Commentators and policy analysts opined that the continent would find the SDGs an Augean task to accomplish right from its adoption. Despite the significant steps and successes Africa made with the MDGs, her economic and political standings, as well as prospects, don't offer much guarantee that it has enough or can do enough to achieve the SDGs within the timeline. However, not all countries in Africa had such gloomy realities and forecasts as in-depth comparative analysis showed that the various countries in the continents had different prospects – North Africa was by far the best of the lots in terms of the region while West, South and Central Africa did relatively poorly economically and East Africa experiencing mixed fortunes (Begashaw, 2019; OECD, 2020).

According to Gondwe, the measures instituted by various African governments to check the spread of the virus such as partial or total lockdown and border closure have caused major drawbacks primarily regarding productivity loss and local and foreign trade Gondwe further stressed the specificity of the impact noting that the containment measures have greatly weakened nearly all vital sector of many economies contributing to their growth and Africa is most vulnerable to the adverse effects of the pandemic owing to her lack of economic resilience and diversification. Also, these measures which were also implemented across Africa's trade partners such as China, the EU, and the US had an indirect effect on the continent's trade and economy – the lockdown and border closure led to decreased productivity and reduced economic activities in these countries and regions thus leading to low demands of African export goods. Additionally, Gondwe observed that these measures to check the spread of the infections led to a substantial decrease in Africa's revenue gain through tourism, foreign direct investment, and foreign aid (Gondwe, 2020). It is thus apparent that the pandemic only inflicted more damages and further crippled a frail and staggering economy thereby frustrating any effort to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of the African populace.

Concerning the SDGs, COVID-19 has made an arduous task of generating and deploying the funds critical to the attainment of the goals within the set date so much so it has been echoed in some quarters that Africa might be unable to meet the accompanying targets when her current snail's speed regarding the goals are considered (Nwuke, 2021). In light of the impediments and strenuous demands placed on the path of socio-economic growth of African countries by the pandemic, Nwuke (2021) recommended from a point of concern that Africa should modify the goals and its targets by cutting down the 17 goals to a much smaller number that reflects the needs and perceptible plight of the continent. He alternatively suggested that the attention of African governments should be fixed on achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063 as it incorporates the essential themes of the SDGs thus sharing in its similarities and having a longer and more realistic timeframe for achievement. He believed that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which kicked off on January 1st, 2021 could spur the growth of the continent whose prospects for growth had been restricted by persistent poor export performance caused by high trade costs and restrictive laws and bureaucracies. Ighobor (2021) echoed the same beliefs when he remarked that the AfCFTA is critical to achieving Africa's dream of unification and her post-pandemic recovery.

Since its adoption in 2015, ununiformed efforts have been dedicated to the various aspects of the goals (economic, social, and environmental) – on average, countries have relatively expended more effort in improving the economic lots of their nation and citizenry than in tackling social and environmental issues. While this is understandable considering the significant benefits of a blooming and large economy and the leverage and status it confers on one in the international community, it can be detrimental in the long run to sustainable development. The SDGs are the result of years of work and its "integration state" posits that the actions and inactions in one aspect will have consequences in others, thus, economic, social, and environmental aspects of development must be in equilibrium for the milestones to be sustainable (UNDP, n.d).

SDG and the Agenda 2063

The African Union Agenda 2063 is a vision and plan African countries have given themselves alongside the SDGs to a thriving and developed continent by 2063 (UNDP, n.d). Having realized the peculiar challenges facing the continent as well as her limitations to growth, unity, peace, and prosperity, a new approach to achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development in Africa was necessary and charted. The agenda amongst other things recognizes the urgent need for Africa's unity for her revival, reviewed AU's previous plans and commitment to a secure and prosperous Africa, and tasks member-states to the vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena" (African Union Commission, 2015, p.1). It represents Africa's stratagem and guides the continent's renaissance into a world heavyweight and delivers inclusive and sustainable development (Africa Union, n.da). The agenda was agreed to and signed by African heads of state and governments during the golden jubilee celebrations of the formation of the OAU/AU in May 2013 about two years before the formal beginnings of the SDGs in January 2015. Unlike the SDGs with a 15year timeline, the Agenda 2063 has a 50year timeline beginning from 2013 to 2063 capturing the continent's aspiration for the future as well as programmes critical to Africa's economic growth and development (African Union, n.db).

According to the Africa Union (n.db), the Agenda 2063 aims to live up to a set of seven aspirations each having a series of goals whose attainment will boost Africa's chances of achieving its vision for the year 2063. They further noted that the aspirations communicate the organisation's yearning for "shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want" (para. 1). The ambitiousness of the Agenda just like the SDG though with a much more realistic timeframe has attracted scepticism from observers and policy analysts. These scepticisms are due to concerns being raised on the political will of African leaders, the corruption-infested state of African governments which are at odds with sustainable economic development, and the capacity of Africa to free itself from the shackles of neo-colonialism and attain true independence and sovereignty due to its heavy external debts, technological dependence, and its reliance on official development assistance (ODA). Some optimists, however, have expressed some measure of enthusiasm and hope toward the lofty aspirations of Agenda 2063, constructively discussing its challenges and necessary conditions for achievement. Ndizera and Muzee (2018, p.143) observed that:

"The success of the Agenda necessitates mobilization of the people and their ownership of continental programmes at the core; the principle of self-reliance and African financing its development, the importance of capable inclusive and accountable states and institutions at all levels and in all spheres, the critical role of regional economic communities as building blocks for continental unity; taking into consideration challenges faced by both island and landlocked states and holding ourselves and our governments and institutions accountable for results."

Table 2.: AU's aspirations and goals for "The Africa we want" in the 2063 agenda		
S/N	Aspiration	Goals
1	A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high standard of living, quality of life, and well-being for all citizens • Well-educated citizens and a skills revolution underpinned by Science, Technology, and Innovation • Healthy and well-nourished citizens • Transformed economies • Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production • Blue/ ocean economy for accelerated economic growth • Environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities
2	An integrated continent politically united based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Africa (federal or confederate) • Continental financial and monetary institutions are established and functional • World-class infrastructure crisscrosses Africa
3	An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice, and the rule of law entrenched • Capable institutions and transformative leadership in place
4	A peaceful and secure Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace security and stability are preserved • A stable and peaceful Africa • A fully functional and operational APSA
5	An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values, and ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African cultural renaissance is pre-eminent
6	An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relies on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full gender equality in all spheres of life • Engaged and empowered youth and children
7	Africa as a strong, united, resilient, and influential global player and partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence • Africa takes full responsibility for financing its development

Similarities and linkages have been observed between the SDGs and the Agenda 2063 thus prompting the hopeful optimism of Africa "killing two birds with one stone". Besides from the intent and expected end of both goals geared towards the actualization of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Africa in the aspect of socio-political and economic development, there is also some similitude to the route to such attainment. This is unsurprising when the birthing process of the agendas is considered and compared; both were born out of years of wide consultation, rigorous empirical research, deep inquest, and reflective thinking on the challenges of the African taking cognizance of its peculiarities, developmental trends, and capabilities. The Agenda 2063 goal to improve the standard of living and the quality of life of Africans correspond with the SDGs of ending poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, promoting economic growth and fair and decent employment, and supporting the safety and living of humans on the planet (African Union, n.dc). One need only take a cursory look at the two agendas to see the correspondence and the overlapping themes (see African Union, n.dc for a complete comparison). Thus, Africa committing effort and resources to the attainment of the Agenda 2063 translates significantly to her commitment of the same to the SDGs partly and vice versa. Success in one will also reflect as



success in another to a certain degree, however, whether Africa has made significant progress in one or both is in question and has been a subject of many research and discussion series.

Tracking Africa's Progress on the SDGs

It is an uneasy task grading how far Africa has come along on the SDGs primarily because her successes are unequal across national borders, goals, and targets (Begashaw, 2020). Not every country in the continent has internalized the goals and many do not have the resources to pursue the goals optimally. The meagre economic resources of Africa imply she has little capital with which to fund such lofty goals, and though she is blessed with mineral resources, her little politico-economic power puts her at a disadvantageous position to negotiate better trade deals for such. While bad leadership has a share of the blame, years of exploitation through firstly, the slave trade and then colonialism and neo-colonialism play a huge role in Africa's debacle. The Western world had a head start in terms of development by exploiting Africa, however, a detailed analysis of this remains outside of the scope of this paper. Notwithstanding her, so great an impediment and apparent disadvantage, some of her countries have ridden the bumps, fought tooth and nail, and broke the ice. Tunisia is seen as the leading country in Africa in terms of the SDGs and is joined by other high flyers such as Mauritius, Botswana, Ghana, and Rwanda (Begashaw, 2020; The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2020).

A recent report on Africa's progress on the SDGs is aptly detailed in the 2020 Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report published by The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network. It evaluates African countries' position and success regarding the SDGs. It assesses African countries' leaning and effect on each of the 17 goals, scoring them on some facets and composite index, and estimating their distance to attaining the SDGs. The report identified North Africa as the top performer in terms of region and Central Africa as the worst. To have it otherwise or any other way would be blindsiding; as earlier observed, much more than political commitment, the SDGs require huge capital inflow and while Northern Africa has been noted as being one of only two regions in the continent with a developed economy, Central Africa has been classified as having a subsistence or underdeveloped economy. Between the two ends are a majority of African countries that have been assessed to be overly underperforming as no African country seems to be on track to achieve 13 of the 17 SDGs and all find it an uneasy task to address all forms of inequalities (The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2020).

The report also noted Africa's struggle with goals relating to its citizenry's welfare and living such as health, infrastructure, stable and equitable political systems, and strong institutions. African countries seem to be struggling with promoting the health and wellbeing (SDG 3) of their population and insufficient human resources and budgetary allocation in and to the sector was identified by Oleribe et al. (2019) as a major determinant of the malady facing the African health sector. Uwaezuoke (2020) further reiterate the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in revealing inherent failings and frailties of the health system in Africa such as decrepit management and accountability, poor health insurance and coverage, negative social predictors of health, and discordance in health aid and healthcare delivery. Africa also appears to be doing badly in the area of infrastructure as on average, while little infrastructural development is ongoing, existing ones are collapsing or on the brink of collapse. Few countries such as those in North Africa, Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and others are doing quite well but a significant number of Sub-Saharan African countries are plagued by poor infrastructures which seem to be impeding economic growth (Holtz and Heitzig, 2021).

Coup and counter-coup, violent elections, institutionalized corruptions in many forms and spheres, and a system of governance conditional on the will of individuals thus weakening institutions of the state are still some current plagues in Africa indicating the continent poor performance in SDG 16. Since 2017, Africa has experienced 6 coups and uprising that has led to



change in governments, and elections are often marred by violence, malpractices, and silencing of the opposition so much so that it has been described as mere political theatre and a means for the incumbent to consolidate power and side-step term limits. (Ani, 2021; Siegle & Cook, 2021). However, not all is gloomy about Africa; while African countries are reported to have stagnated in many of the goals, a moderate improvement was also observed which is a step up from the 2019 analysis which was ingloriously all-round stagnation. Also, Africa was reported to be doing well on SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and well on track to achieve SDG 13 (climate actions) (The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2020).

The Way Forward

Aside from some very few countries that have bounced back from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and now have a positive economic outlook, many African countries are still reeling from the pandemic effect and current indices are not encouraging. Thus, what is true for one can be generalized to others. Almost 40 percent of Africans still live in extreme poverty and this is amidst a rising debt profile of the continent with an increase in “Africa’s average debt ratio as a proportion of Gross National Income by 22.2 percent from 2011-2018, and the debt service coverage ratio increasing to 183.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018” (ECA, 2022, para. 9-11). For instance, Nigeria’s recent spending on debt servicing has surpassed her revenue mooting the onset of a fiscal crisis (Nairametrics, 2022). In simple terms, the country doesn’t generate enough revenue to match its expenditure. It is important to reiterate that Africa’s inability to meet the SDGs with direct economic bearing can be attributed to a lack of funds hence her successes in goals that don’t require huge capital inflow. Thus, this paper posits that the solution that is, the way forward for Nigeria and Africa is money just like the biblical phrase “...money answers all things”.

In this regard, Nigeria and African countries can shore up their economy by increasing their revenue-generating capacity. According to Estavao (2019), low-income countries can boost their revenue through tax by being transparent and trustworthy to encourage the citizens, keeping the tax payment process and platform simple and digital, and finding new sources of revenue. Concerning finding new sources of revenue, Nigeria and Africa (especially sub-Saharan Africa) can move away from oil and other mineral exports to building a digital and technology-driven economy that will drive future growth. Also, Coulibaly (2016) provided six steps Africa can take to chart a new course for her development – fortunately, Africa is on course as the AfCTA sorts out three of the six. These concerns establishing economic and trade areas to knit the economic interests of African countries together and allow free movement of goods and services across the border. The remainder not covered by the AfCTA involved African countries with a shared interest in pooling their resources to increase effort in improving standards of living and enhancing human capital through the provision of social services and infrastructural development. Also included is channelling huge capital into infrastructure that directly supports economic growth and improving inter-Africa trade by addressing limiting rules guiding exports and imports between African countries. While at it, African countries need to seek debt relief.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a thematic review of Africa’s internalization and localization of the SDG. The relevance of the SDGs in Africa has been highlighted, its symbiotic relationship with the AU’s 2063 agenda discussed, and her progress in terms of her successes, failures, and struggles taking into account the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic analyzed. With just a few years off a decade to the expiration of the goal, Africa still has a lot of time to reflect on its performance and see how improvements can be made. It is doubtless the many benefits Africa and her people stand to gain from the achievement of the goals and its target no matter how lofty and ambitious they may seem. And while not denying the many socio-political and economic disadvantages bedevilling Africa, with the political will, the tide can be turned before 2030. However, cooperation



at the continental and sub-regional levels is desperately needed for some reforms that are needed to meet some of the goals. This thus calls for organisations such as the AU and ECOWAS to lead from the front by organising and integrating the various interest of African interests into a single developmental framework that will guide further pursuits. It also calls for various African countries to show commitments to implement already existing frameworks and policies such as the AfCTA. Finally, the authors suggest that an empirical investigation of the concerns of this study can be investigated by future studies so results can help frame solutions for the now and then.



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