Keynote Address by Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Dr NC Dlamini-Zuma, MP
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Aspirations for Africa: The role of evaluation and learning from results

Director of the Programme;
The Leadership of the African Development Bank,
Representatives from various Ministries and Government Departments;
Executive Directors, CEOs and Leaders of Institutions an Associations;
Fellow Africans and Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Introductory Remarks

Aspirations for Africa
Participants; Let me express my profound gratitude to the African Development Bank, and to its President, my brother Akinwumi Adesina, for the invitation to address this gathering. The Theme: Aspirations for Africa: The Role of Evaluation and Learning from Results is more fitting than ever.

This gathering is also taking place whilst we mourn the departure of one of the finest sons of this continent, the former General Secretary of the United Nation, Kofi Annan; whilst we also celebrate his illustrious life as the citizen of the globe.

Africa has emerged out of colonisation with more peculiar circumstances than any other continent on earth. Our continent emerged with the remnants of nation-states that had been the bedrock of a divide-and-rule approach by the then colonisers. The evolutionary process of state formation of most African nations was disrupted by external interference that did not adhere to the discourse of the African culture, thus ushering political systems that have been so difficult to take forward beyond colonialism. Our forbearers had yearned for a day when their children would speak with one voice as a people, thus, putting our continent on a course for sustainable development.
Just After the 2nd World War in 1945 in Manchester City in the United Kingdom, the 5th Pan African Congress, which was attended by African Americans, Caribbean African, including W.E Dubois, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere and others, made important observations and took some significant decisions about the future of Africa. Among the decisions they took was that resources of the continent should be used for the benefit of its people. It was this conference that took a firm resolution that Africa must be decolonized within fifty years. Indeed in 1957 we saw Ghana take the lead in attaining freedom and of course the Pan Africanist Kwame Nkrumah that the freedom was meaningless when the rest of continent was not free. Africa began to be a hive of activity around the liberation struggle.

All these activities culminated with the establishment and launch of our premier continental organisation – The Organisation of African Unity in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1963.

At that stage 36 countries were independent and they prioritised the decolonisation of the rest of continent. They did everything to ensure that it indeed happened. They evaluated progress at every Summit and on the 49th year in 1994 South Africa got its freedom. They achieved what they set out to do in 1945, the continent was 99% independent, with the exception Western Sahara and other islands in the Indian Ocean. For decolonisation to succeed, there was a plan against which they evaluated progress and they put human, financial and other resources to the plan. They got partners in other continents, and more importantly they were united. As one of the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity, the late and former President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania said:

“Unity will not end our weakness, but until we unite, we cannot even begin to end that weakness. So this is my plea to the new generation of African leaders and African peoples: work for unity with the firm conviction that without unity, there is no future for Africa. That is, of course, assuming that we still want to have a place under the sun.”

They had other economic and development plans like the Lagos plan of action and many others.
On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the OAU which spearheaded the decolonization process, the continent rededicated herself to the attainment of the Pan African vision of ‘an integrated prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena’

Having celebrated the 50th anniversary and taking into account the declaration that was adopted, we began to envisage what Africa would look like when future generations celebrate the next 50 years of our organisation. Hence the Agenda 2063, because that is the year we will be celebrating the centenary of our organisation.

Besides breaking Agenda 2063 into 10 year plans, we should also evaluate it at regular intervals. The requisite for a successful evaluation, is not the evaluation itself, but it’s a sound plan with clear targets, that is specific, realistic and time bound - which we tried to do with Agenda 2063 and especially the 10 year implementation plan.

And of course, Agenda 2063 is not an AU plan, it is a continental plan, whose first draft came from a number of citizens from different sectors including Women, youth faith-based organisations, business, workers and academics. This was very important. After we got the first draft from the stakeholder consultation, it was then given to governments and regional economic communities (RECs).

Before this, the AU Commission had been making 4 year plan for the AU commission, and not AU wide plans. Of course there were lots of questions at the time about why a fifty year plan, and not a four year plan as normal, or even a five year plan. But the fifty year plan allowed us to be bold, ambitious and dream big without being constrained by our immediate circumstance. Just as our forbearers, the Pan African Congress wanted Africa to be decolonised in 50 year, we want an Africa free of ignorance, hunger, poverty, racial and gender discrimination, inequality and unemployment.

We want an Africa where Africans cross the Mediterranean and the Atlantic as a matter of choice, as professionals, tourists and entrepreneurs, not driven by desperation, which is a challenge we are faced with now.
We want an industrialised Africa with world-class infrastructure, Africa that trades with itself and the world, an Africa that is at peace with itself. That is why we are encouraged by the fact that 6 out of the 49 countries that signed the Africa Free Trade Agreement have already ratified it. This is progress indeed, but we must urge the other countries to ratify.

We should also draw our hope in the fact the African Union has deemed it fit to raise the matter of young people through the directive by the Heads of State and Government. The theme: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth, continues to echo through the hills, the valleys, the rainforests, the savannahs, and the deserts of our beautiful continent. We should continue to give hope to our young people through the evaluation of our programs and learning through the results thereof, for, the youth are our future.

Agenda 2063 is an approach on how the continent should effectively learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and strategically exploit all possible opportunities available in the immediate and medium term, so as to ensure Africa’s positive socioeconomic transformation within the next 50 years. In particular, Agenda 2063 is transformative as it harnesses the continent’s comparative advantage such as its people, history, cultures, natural resources. It seeks to develop Africa’s human capital; build social assets, infrastructure and public goods; empower women and youth; promote lasting peace and security; build effective developmental and capable states through participatory and accountable institutions and governance.

Amongst other important objectives Agenda 2063 is a call to action to all Africans and people of African descent, to take personal responsibility for the destiny of the continent as the primary agents of change and transformation. This call is central to the notion on leaving no one behind articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

The difference between Agenda 2063 and the plans that preceded it is that many countries have incorporated in to their national plans, this means that the budgets and other resources of the member countries are being used to implement it.
One of Africa’s greatest sons, Nelson Mandela, on the occasion of receiving the historic Census ’96 results of South Africa on 20 October 1998, said:

“In deciding to hold a national census in 1996, five years earlier than might have been expected, we were acting upon our urgent need for accurate information, so that our plans should be based on the real situation. But the scale of inherited social inequality and deprivation, confirmed by the results, makes our task one of many years and one in which reconstruction and reconciliation; nation-building and development, are all of critical importance.”

Evidence-based decision-making is increasingly becoming a space through which the world initiates program design and policy choices, monitor policy implementation and evaluate policy impact. Those with scientific knowledge have to step out to solve world problems. Science thus becomes useless unless it can be shared universally, illuminate issues and precisely forecast the future. In planning, particularly, knowledge will be lost unless it can produce results and lessons can be learnt from such results.

The statisticians should ensure that the knots of the indicators for the first ten years of Agenda 2063 are tied. We should not – when all eyes beaming with hope are cast on us – afford to abandon sentry. We cannot abdicate on a responsibility that no one else, other than ourselves, can do. So we call upon our pan-African institutions – AUC, AfDB, UNECA and our statisticians - as they worked together in drawing the plan, to work together in evaluating its progress.

Tracking progress of SDGs and Agenda 2063 requires quality, timely, open and disaggregated data and statistics at all levels of geography, from global to regional to national and subnational. These data are needed not only for policy making and to understand how well we are doing, but also serve to guide future investments in data and statistics to fully support the follow up and review of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

The UN World Data Forum Plan calls for a commitment by governments, policy makers and the international community to undertake key actions under strategic
areas which including, among other things: (i) coordination and leadership; (ii) innovation and modernisation of national statistical systems; (iii) dissemination of data on sustainable development; (vi) building partnerships; and (v) mobilizing resources.

It is going to very important that we regularly evaluate Agenda 2063 and the SDGs and we should be able to do just one evaluation on both. In order to sharpen our focus on the first ten years of implementation, we have also aligned the SDGs to Agenda 2063. This has also enabled us to align the inherent indicator framework to succinctly respond to the long haul of Agenda 2063. Once the indicators were developed they were then aligned to the SDG indicators and this exercise yielded what is now referred to as a Continental Indicator Framework.

In South Africa, like many other countries, we are making progress towards such linking SDGs Agenda 2063 into its national development plan. Agenda 2063 and the SDGs can be directly linked to South African Government’s priority areas and also the National Development Plan (NDP); Vision 2030 which presents a long-term strategy to attend to the triple scourge of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

The synergies in the policy frameworks at global, continental and national level require nations to develop integrated indicator frameworks. This will enable us as countries to track development and create room for lessons that can be learnt through monitoring and evaluation.

At the 2015 world evaluation conference in Nepal, which was also declared as world evaluation year, the conference recommended that we should create a conducive environment for evaluation, and simultaneously capacitate individuals and institutions to undertake evaluations. Of course we can add to that by making sure to involve the people evaluation process, because it is them who will experience development.

The Asia Development bank held a forum on evaluation of SGD with a gender responsive lens the following year. This conference resolved to prioritise gender equality as essential to ensure the realisation of sustainable development. Investing in women yields the biggest impact on development.
Women and youth should be empowered to be the drivers of Agenda 2063!

In Conclusion
Let me end by paying tribute to African Development Bank for bringing us under one roof to reflect and share lessons on the progress we are making towards achieving the Agenda 2063. The African Development Bank’s Development Evaluation Week is a relevant forum to discuss how we are going to measure attainment of Agenda 2063 objectives. We need collaborative efforts and coordination mechanisms beyond our individual countries and regions to achieve and realise the strategic objectives set up in Agenda 2063.

African countries and institutions have the capacity to implement and evaluate Agenda 20163 and SDGs. Africa will succeed to be an integrated prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

We have a dream and a plan embedded in the history, culture, heritage and aspirations of our people. Together, united we will achieve Agenda 2063; The Africa we want.

I thank you.