Delegates from across Africa discuss integration of volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals

In partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme co-organized the Regional Consultation on the Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda in Africa from 16\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} April 2019. The regional consultation brought together various stakeholders from across the region to discuss the integration of volunteerism for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The consultation facilitated substantive discussions and generated great interest from partners to further strengthen and leverage the role of volunteerism to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Key issues discussed during the event included leveraging volunteerism for inclusion; defining the relationship between volunteerism, youth development and employment challenges; measurement and impact of volunteer action; the social construct of
volunteering; and the strategic policy and structural alignment of volunteer resources for sustainable development.

“Volunteerism is an excellent tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if countries adopt appropriate frameworks to leverage and coordinate volunteer action’, Oumar Agbangba, General Manager at the National Volunteer Agency, Togo

Volunteer stakeholders stressed the need to further raise awareness on the SDGs within the volunteer sector and ensure volunteerism is integrated in national development frameworks for SDGs. Several participating government officials showed a keen interest in collecting nation-wide evidence on volunteerism in 2019. This will allow them to showcase volunteer activities in their respective countries and leverage the potential of volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda.

“We can no longer have top down, centralized. If we want to serve the people, we have to go to the people. We need to think how can volunteerism boost efforts to reach the furthest that are left behind, what partnerships we should adopt to ensure volunteerism co-exists and complements other development efforts and how use of technology can ensure inclusion rather than exclusion’ said Mr. Henry Nkhoma from the Zambian Government.

The recommendations from the consultations emphasized the role of volunteerism as an enabler for inclusive development; standardized volunteer measurement methodology to be developed for government and volunteer-involving organizations; scaling of policy frameworks on volunteerism across the region, and the importance of peer-to-peer knowledge exchange on volunteerism in the region.

The outcome and recommendations from the consultation will feed into the Global Technical Meeting in 2020 on reimagining volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda, which, in turn, aims to provide special impetus to volunteering during the High-Level Political Forum during the same year.

The Regional Consultation provided a multi-stakeholder platform where the UN Member States, private sector and volunteer-involving organizations demonstrated interest and commitment to build evidence around volunteerism. UNV reaffirmed its determination to
assist stakeholders in enhancing the integration of volunteerism in the implementation of the SDGs in Africa.

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals