Meeting of the Strategy and Policy Group (SPG) of the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC)

African cities: New development interfaces

Opening remarks by OECD Deputy Secretary-General Jeffrey Schlagenhauf

9:30-9:45 19 June 2019

Minister Keita,

Dr. Mayaki, SWAC Honorary President and CEO of NEPAD,

Dear Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Introduction]

I am honoured to open the *Meeting of the Strategy and Policy Group of the Sahel and West Africa Club*. Allow me to congratulate Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki for his designation as SWAC's Honorary President.

The OECD is proud to host the Club's Secretariat. Through its regional expertise and networks, the Secretariat greatly contributes to enrich our strategic thinking. I look forward to continuing this privileged relationship in the framework of the OECD Development Cluster.

I wish to commend the Club's members and partners for the generous support and efforts made towards improving well being in West Africa, especially with the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. The G7, under the French Presidency, decided to make a special effort in favour of the countries of this important region.

[Africa has a resolutely urban future]

Today, Africa holds the promise of tremendous potential. The continent recorded a 3.4% economic growth in 2018[1]. With the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area on May 30th, Africa is about to become the world's largest single market. That encompasses a population of 1.2 billion people and over 2 trillion US dollars in combined GDP. The dynamics at play are fascinating.

Africa also has the fastest urbanisation growth in the world. From 15% in 1960 and 40% in 2010, it is projected to reach 60% in 2050[2]. By that time, Africa's cities will be home to an additional 950 million people[3]. These projections offer many opportunities for innovation, policy change and structural transformation of African economies. Yet at the same time they create challenges for African citizens, businesses and governments. As an example, concentration of city-dwellers allows for easier access to public services, but it is hampered by the lack of adequate infrastructure. Urban planning is therefore critical.

The Sahel and West Africa Club produced Africapolis with the objective of better understanding urbanisation patterns across the continent. The project was born out of decade-long analysis combining census data with satellite imagery. Africapolis provides new data that can feed into governance processes.

In the context of a growing consensus that cities are on the frontline of development, Africapolis is relevant to several domains. The specificities of informal agglomerations and border-, mega-, small and secondary cities should inform policymaking on population, migration, food economy, peace and security, water and energy access or education.

[1] AUC/OECD (2018), *Africa's Development Dynamics 2018: Growth, Jobs and Inequalities*
[2] UN Habitat, Africa Urban Agenda Programme
[3] SWAC/OECD, Africapolis.org

[Africapolis redefines urban boundaries]

The OECD is convinced that know-how can help design evidence-based public policies for economic transformation. Last month, the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting on "Harnessing Digital Transition for Sustainable Development" stressed that the efficient diffusion of innovation is key for digitalisation to be beneficial to all.

In the contexts of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the OECD is committed to measuring complex phenomena with innovative data, focusing on multi-sectoral interlinkages and engaging in multi-level policy dialogue.

Africapolis does precisely that. It grants open access to its full dataset for users to exploit and contribute. It shows that beyond rural transformation, rural-urban linkages have repercussions not just on agriculture but also on food systems. It uses technology to improve the opportunity to build policy consensus at local, national and regional levels.

[Let us think together for adapted public action]

Africapolis is more than a web-based interface. It is a tool to assist in measuring urbanisation dynamics and thereby design appropriate policy responses to this unprecedented development challenge.

Africapolis is more than a report providing thought-provoking decryption. It is a narrative that puts cities at the core of development considerations.

Finally, Africapolis offers a unique platform for multi-stakeholder engagement. It is creating a network to share knowledge, expertise and best practices. I am hereby inviting all interested parties to join this effort and pool their capabilities to develop a new generation of urban policies fit for the future.

The OECD will continue facilitating the design of platforms for co-operation and the dissemination of state-of-the-art research. It will do so with the goal of advancing the innovative, sustainable and inclusive cities of tomorrow to foster better lives in the Sahel, in West Africa, on the continent and elsewhere.