



Remarks by LI Yong, UNIDO Director General
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE
AFRICA DAY UNDER THE THEME:

**SILENCING THE GUNS: CREATING CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS
FOR AFRICA’S DEVELOPMENT**

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you in the celebration of Africa Day today, at a time as we witness an unprecedented crisis — a crisis that affects all parts of the world but that also highlights the varied challenges that Africa is facing.

The Agenda 2063, the African Union’s 50-year master plan for “The Africa We Want”, highlights the need for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Through its flagship campaign “Silencing the Guns in Africa”, the African Union *also* recognizes that violent conflict remains one of the foremost impediments to sustainable development. This reflects the notion of the 2030 Agenda that “there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”.

Significant advances have been made since the adoption of the AU's "Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020". Other efforts to advance the well-being of people on the continent have also showed major progress, notably in terms of economic growth.

Indeed, Africa's economic outlook for 2020 and 2021 looked promising at the beginning of the year, with predictions that the continent's GDP would reach almost 4 per cent.

Today however, we are confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic that threatens to erode the progress made and that adds to the challenges of Africa.

Excellencies,

UNIDO fully supports the Agenda 2063 and stands in solidarity with the Secretary-General's appeal on 23 March for a global ceasefire, silencing the guns in times of COVID-19.

Africa is a high priority for UNIDO. Almost half of the Organization's development activities in volume and value are deployed in the continent.

Inclusive and sustainable industrial development also plays a critical part in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. While African countries have responded quickly and decisively to the pandemic, and while the numbers of COVID cases are for now relatively low, the impact on economies and societies will be hard.

The industrial sector, small- and medium sized enterprises, and the working population are not only heavily affected by the crisis and need our urgent attention and support — they also play a major role in the response to the crisis.

UNIDO is part of the United Nation system-wide response to the socio-economic impact of COVID. As such, we are tailoring integrated service packages to the specific needs of our Member States, leading to the recovery and transformation towards stronger, inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies.

We should see the crisis as an opportunity to build a better future for Africa.

We need to ensure that the continent, which is suffering from a lack of investment in critical health systems, poverty, inequalities, and climate change is put on a stronger footing for transformative change.

We need a stronger and more resilient Africa, if we want to avoid future humanitarian, socio-economic, and political crises that may have destabilizing effects.

Food security and access to affordable quality medicine will remain to be of vital importance. Diversification of global manufacturing and supply chains offer new opportunities. Trade under the AfCFTA free trade agreement, even if postponed beyond July, will provide opportunities for new exports, jobs, investments in infrastructure and financing for Africa's development.

Solidarity and cooperation are of the essence. Action is required *now*. Action that matches the complexity of the challenge we face.

Building a better future for Africa, ensuring peace and sustainable development, will not only require resources and political will, but most importantly global solidarity.

Please be assured that UNIDO, as part of a strong UN system, stands by your side, ready to help you respond to the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19.

Thank you.