



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



URBANIZATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN AFRICA



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Foreword

Urbanization is one of the defining features of the twenty-first century and is a determining factor for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is particularly true within the context of Africa, which, in a matter of a few years, will become the fastest urbanizing region in the world. It is estimated that by 2035, more than half of the continent's population will be living in cities, thereby upending the millennia-old trend of rural predominance in the continent. So profound a transformation presents significant opportunities for African countries to leverage the agglomeration benefits that cities generate to nurture inclusive and sustainable economies and accelerate structural transformation.

Until now, however, the rapid population growth in Africa's urban regions has not been matched by concomitant increases in productivity. If not well planned and managed in a proactive manner, urban growth can exacerbate the continent's economic, social and environmental challenges. Furthermore, the fact that rapid population growth is taking place simultaneously with a transition towards a more youthful population profile renders the urban transition in Africa of extreme importance. It is thus critical to harness the enormous potential of cities to generate employment at scale in order to optimize the demographic dividend in Africa.

environmental degradation and social services. A compartmentalized approach of that kind, of delinking urbanization from broader and strategic macroeconomic issues, renders it difficult if not impossible to harness the economic potential of urbanization. In the light of that, and considering the immense importance that cities hold for Africa's inclusive economic growth, it is critical to accord urbanization a pivotal and strategic role in national development planning by linking it to broader economic targets and the structural transformation agenda.

It is against that backdrop that the Economic Commission for Africa has undertaken a regional review of the Integration of Urbanization in National Development Planning in Africa. The present report makes available findings drawn from national-level reports in five countries of the continent, namely, Cameroon, Chad, Morocco, Uganda and Zambia. The report is informed by facts on the ground, complexities and dynamics associated with urbanization, and national development planning in the continent, and for those reasons is able to offer a unique and unprecedented perspective. In doing so, the report presents ways to strategically integrate urbanization in national development planning that can leverage the potential of African cities for inclusive economic growth and development. Specific entry points

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