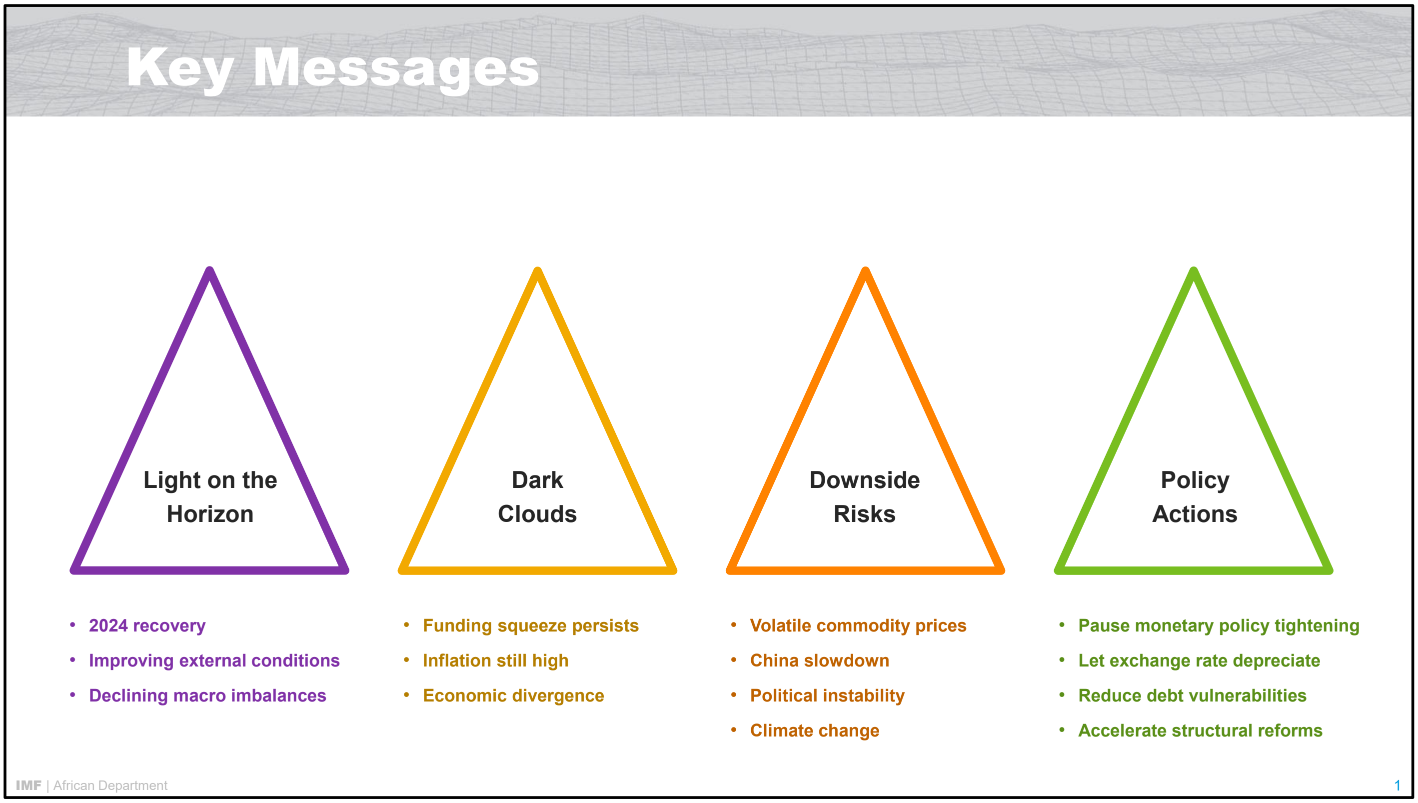
AFRICAN DEPARTMENT

Light on the Horizon?

OCTOBER 2023 REGIONAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

NAME + DATES + LOCATION



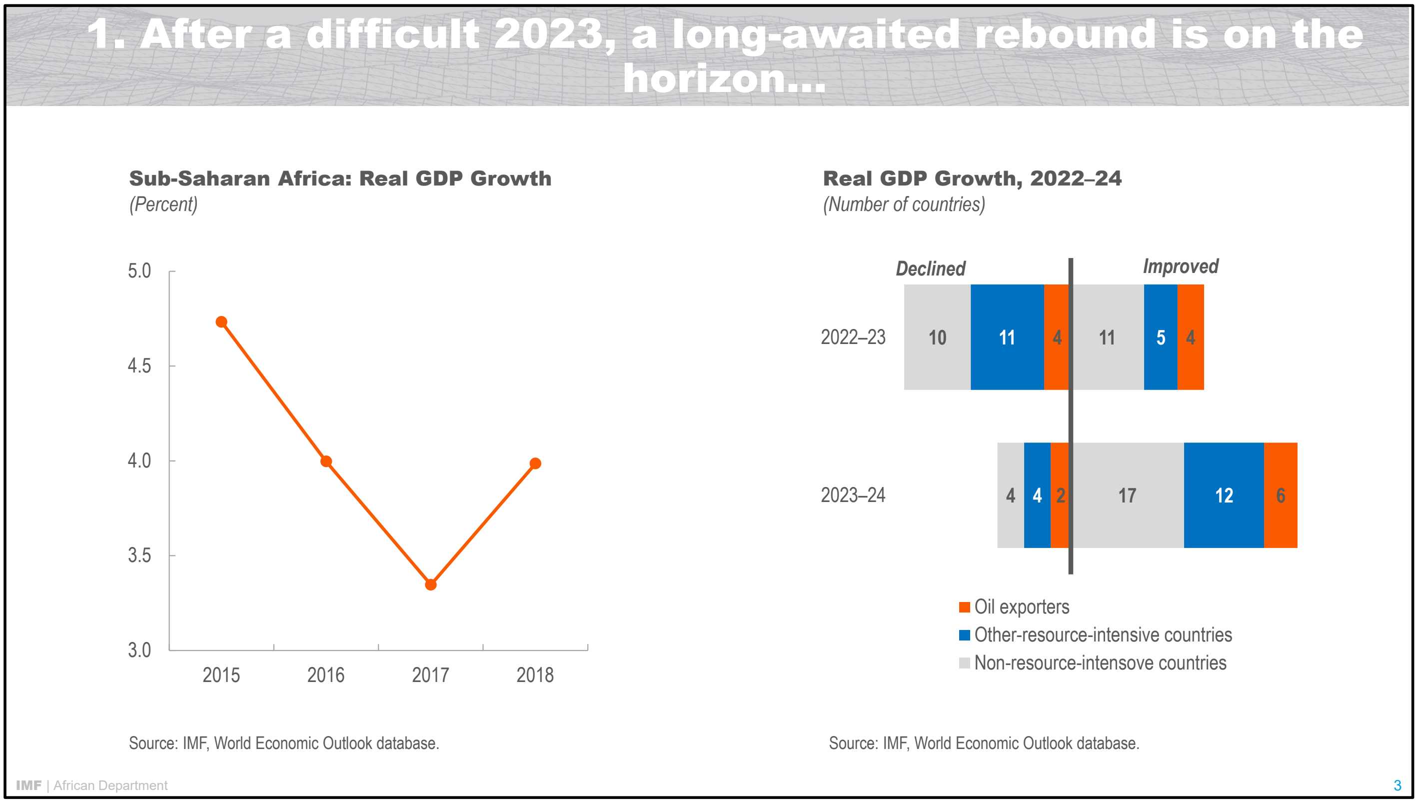
- This presentation will be structured around **4 main messages/blocs:**

- First, after a few very difficult years, **there seems to be light on the horizon**: (1) Many countries are showing signs of turning the corner; (2) external conditions are improving; and (3) macroeconomic imbalances have started declining.

- **Yet it is still too early to celebrate:** (1) the funding squeeze is not yet over; (2) inflation is still too high, and (3) and there is some economic divergence across countries in the region.

- **To ensure that the signs of improvements become more durable and tangible, we propose 4 policy priorities:**
  - *Pause monetary policy tightening* where inflation is falling and on the path to target.
  - *Allow the exchange rate to depreciate where needed.*
  - *Reduce debt vulnerabilities*, while creating space for development spending.
  - *Invest in the future to improve living standards* through structural reforms.

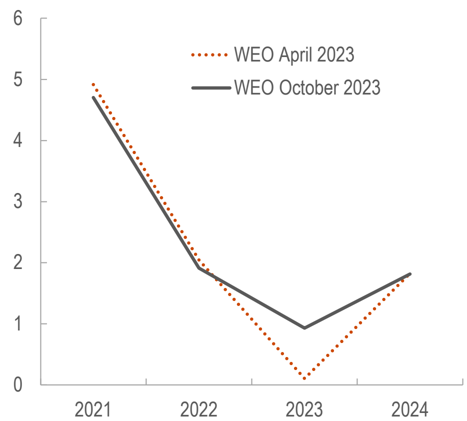
A glimpse of sunshine



- For sub-Saharan Africa, **2023 is a difficult year**, with growth declining for a second year in a row.
- However, there are early signs that **the region is turning the corner**
- Growth in sub-Saharan Africa is **set to rebound** to 4.0 percent in 2024.
- About four-fifth of countries in the region are projected to record higher growth in 2024 (relative to 2023).

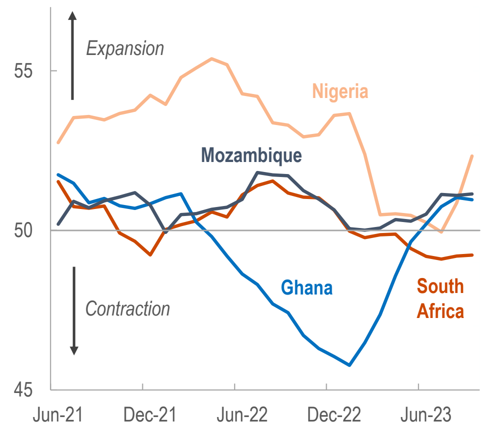
… with some economies showing already signs of improvement.

South Africa: Real GDP Growth Revisions
(Percent)



Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook database.

Selected Countries: Purchasing Managers Index
(Seasonally adjusted, 6-month moving average, index, 50+ = expansion)



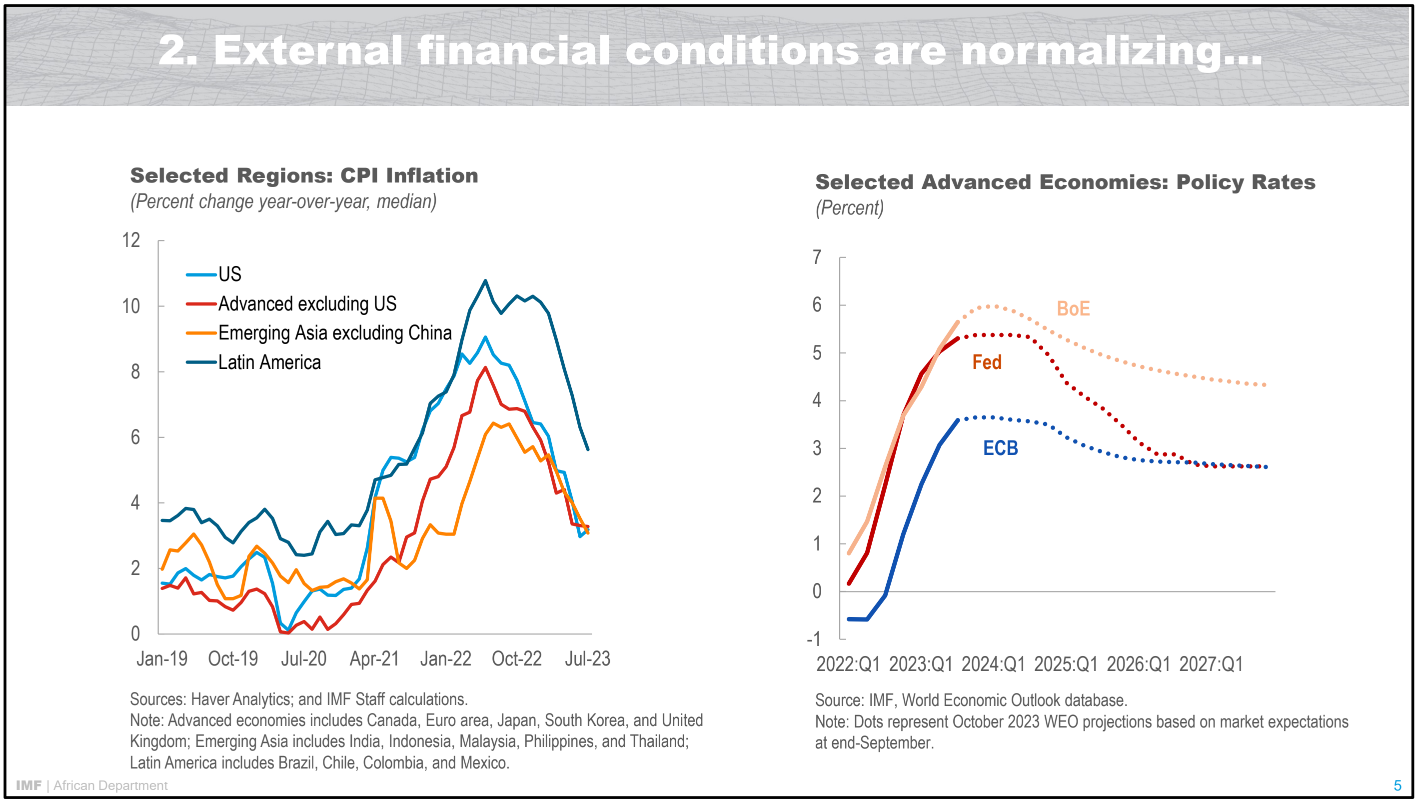
Source: Haver Analytics.

- One of the factor behind the economic recovery of the region next year is the **rebound in South Africa** from 0.9% in 2023 to 1.8% in 2024.

- In addition, South Africa's 2023 growth has been **revised up** by 0.8 ppt since April to 0.9 percent **due to better-than-anticipated outturns** in 2023H1, owing to a less severe-than-expected impact of power shortages.

- **More generally, high-frequency indicators** (such as PMIs of the large economies) suggest a **recent pickup** in economic activity in several large economies.

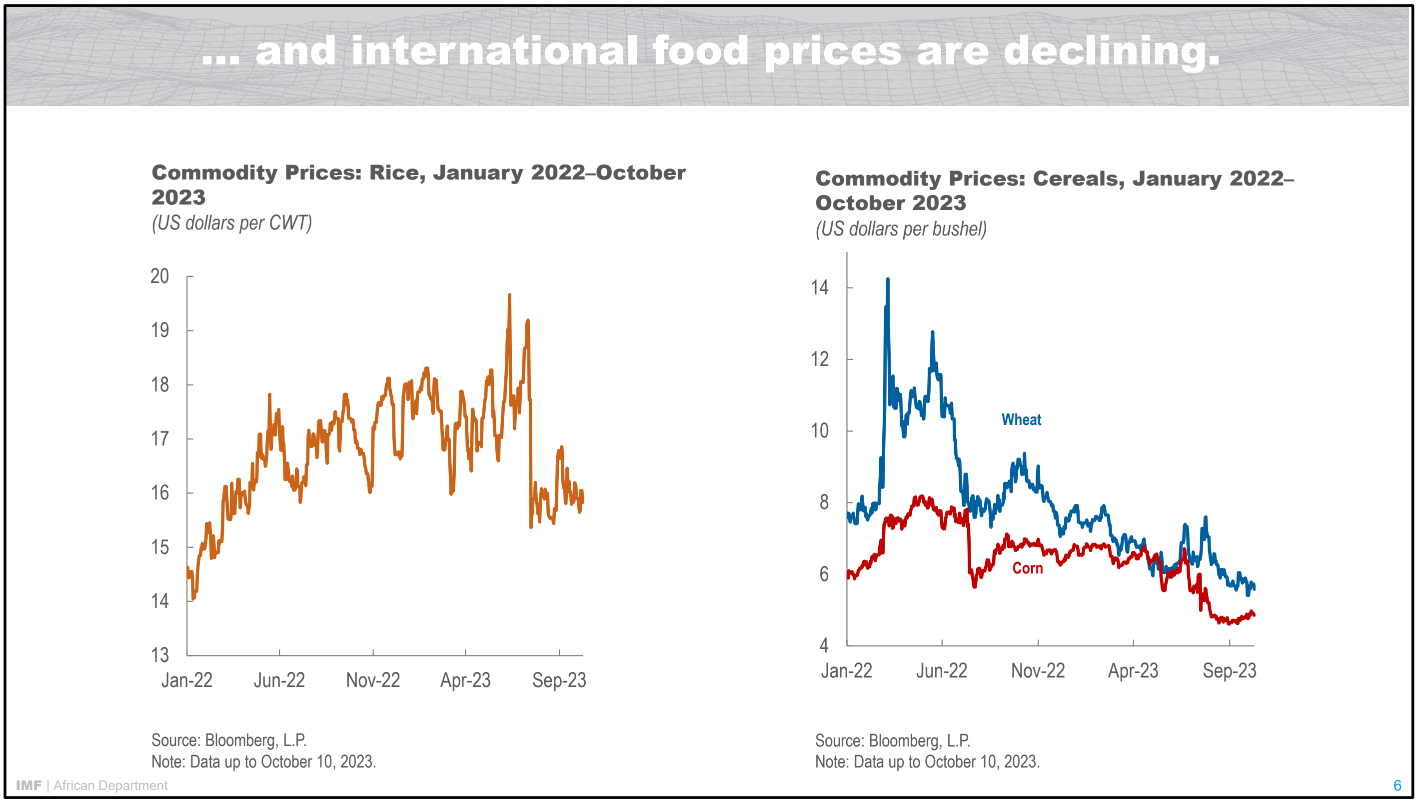
Note: A value above 50 for PMI reflects an expansion of economic activity, while a value below 50 is typically associated with economic contraction.



- **Second good news: global inflation has been declining**, due to tighter monetary policy, a normalization of global supply chains, but also aided by lower international commodity prices.

- As a result, **policy rate hikes are now on pause** in most advanced economies.

- This should **help reduce sovereign spreads and alleviate exchange rate pressures in SSA**.

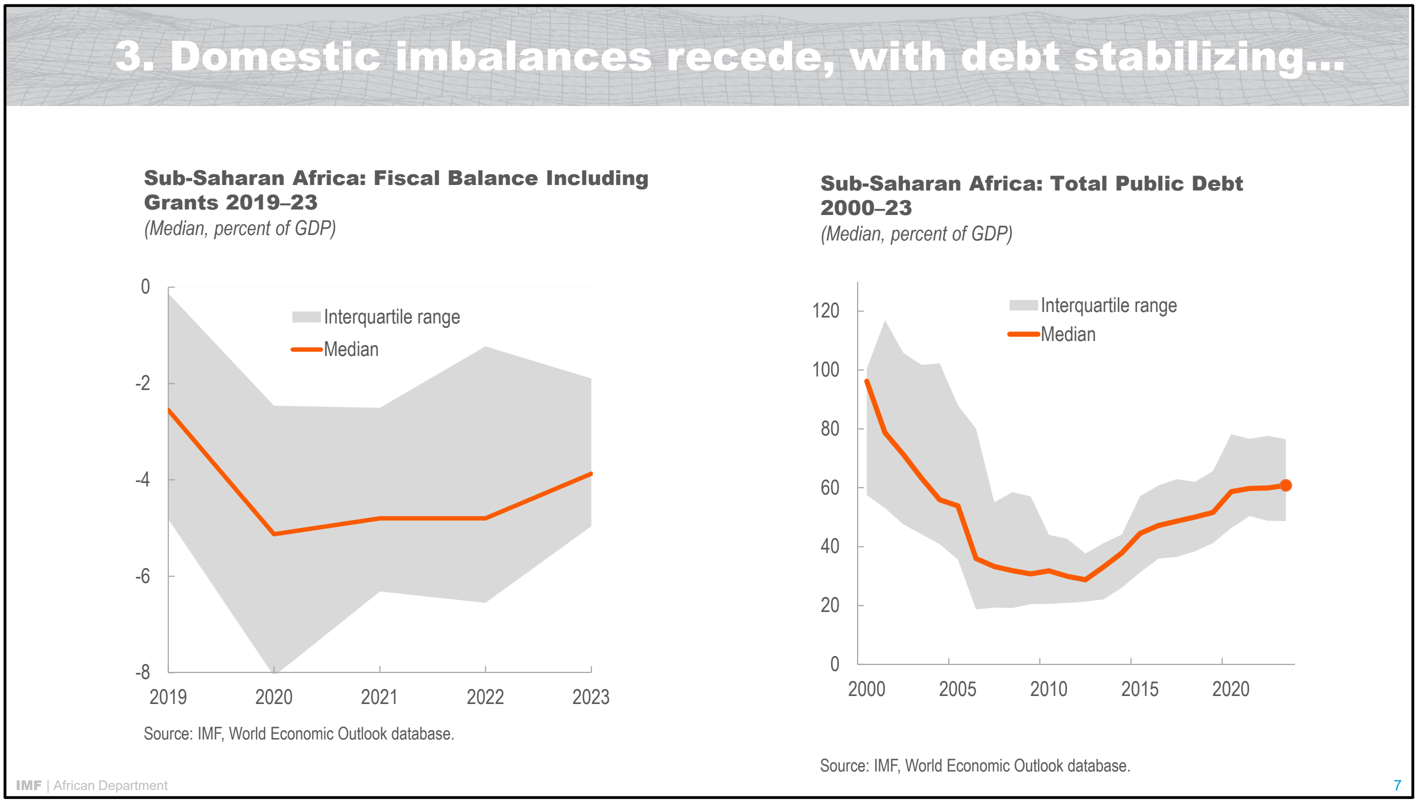


- Another favorable external development: **international food prices** (proxied by IMF's Aggregate Food Index) has fallen by about 20 percent since its peak after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

- Prices for **main cereals** (e.g., wheat, corn) are now **below levels seen before the war in Ukraine.**

- **Rice prices** have also recently declined.

Note: Corn and rice represent the **most common staples** in SSA, followed by cassava and wheat.



- Third, positive development: **macroeconomic imbalances are declining.**

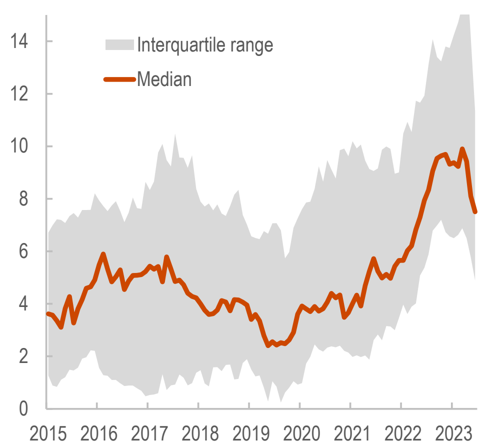
- Let me start with the fiscal side.

- **Fiscal adjustment is ongoing in many countries.** The median fiscal deficit ratio in the region should improve by 1 percentage point in 2023. Another point of adjustment is expected in 2024.

- And along with a growth pick up, this helps **stabilize public debt** at around 60 percent. We project a gentle easing starting from 2024—**halting an almost decade-long upward trend.**

… and inflation coming down

Sub-Saharan Africa: Headline Inflation, 2015–23
(Percent)



Sources: Haver Analytics; Country authorities; and IMF staff calculations.

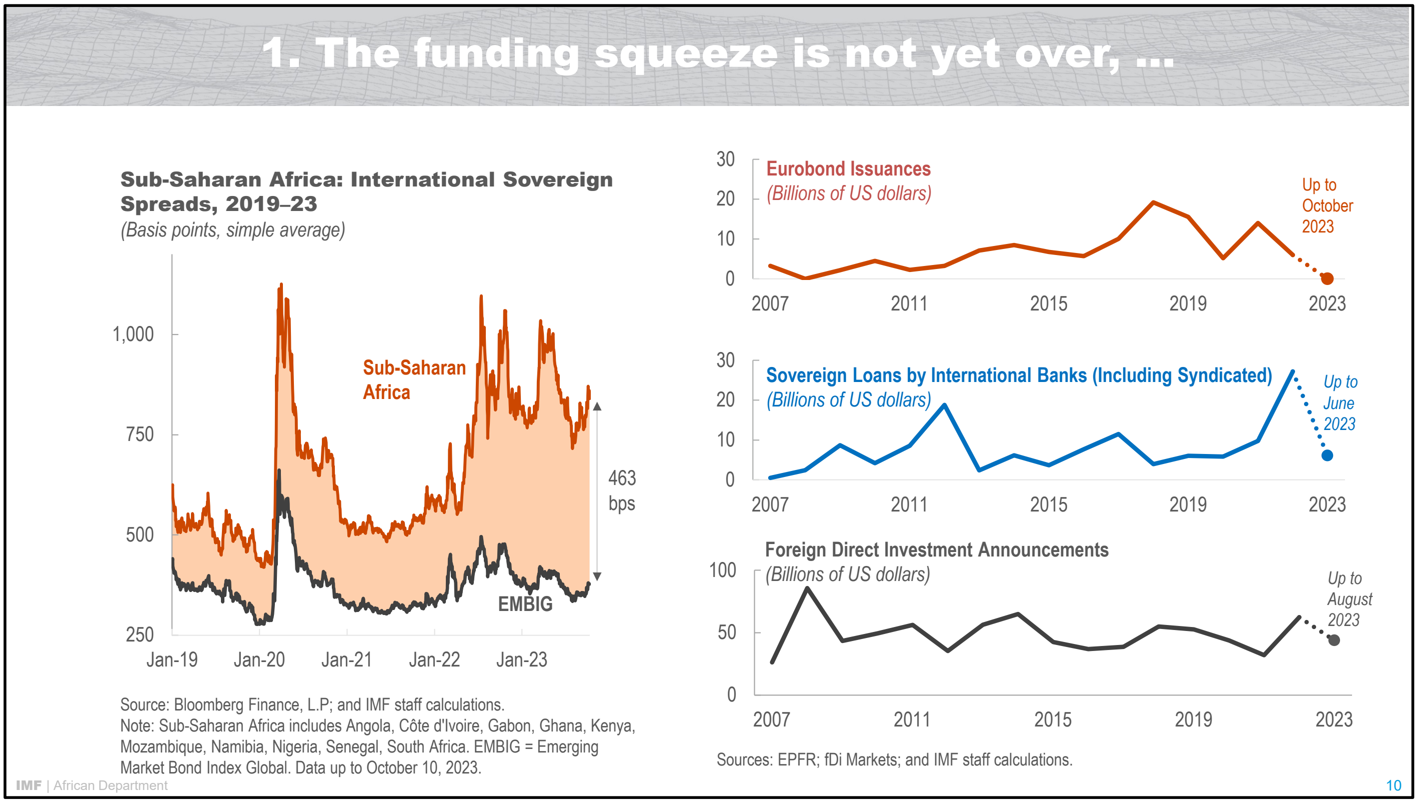
- Median SSA inflation has dropped by almost 3 ppts…
- …helped by the decline in international food prices, easing of supply chain constraints, and monetary policy tightening

- **Inflation has also started to decline** in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

- After peaking at about 10% in March, **median inflation across the region has dropped to 7%** (latest data point with sufficiently large sample in July).

- The main reasons behind the disinflation are the decline in international food prices (close to 40% of the consumption basket in SSA, on average), the easing od supply chain constraints, and the monetary tightening in the region in the past year and a half.

Still, dark clouds remain



- **The outlook is less ominous but it still too early to celebrate.** Let me highlight 3 main concerns.

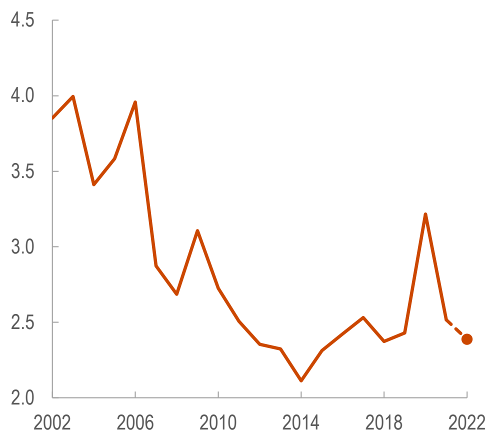
- First, although debt ratios have stared to stabilize, **the funding squeeze is not over and debt costs are very high.**

  - **Sovereign spreads remain elevated** (despite declining since the peak of March 2023). All frontier markets in the region—making up one third of the countries but 60 percent of total GDP—**are effectively priced out from the Eurobond market**.
  - The absence of Eurobond issuance since May 2022 has been, to some extent, **compensated by higher recourse to bank loans last year**.
  - **FDIs picked up after 2020**. The slide shows FDI announcements in SSA countries based on a monthly dataset called fDi. [In the first 8 months of 2023, the capital expense of announced projects surged by 40 percent compared to January-August 2022.]

Note: fDi Markets dataset is based on FDI project announcements in the media, plus 2000 industry organizations and investment agencies. Each project identified is cross-referenced against multiple sources, with primary focus on direct company sources. fDi Markets is the most comprehensive greenfield FDI tracking database on the market, from the Financial Times, providing real-time data since 2003. Note that the data may include FDIs made by one SSA country in another SSA country. “Sovereign Loans by International Banks” correspond to loans by international banks to governments in SSA. Syndicated loans refer to the subset of bank loans where two or more banks are engaged. Syndicated loans represent more than 50% of international bank loans to sovereigns in SSA. Data on “Sovereign Loans by International Banks” are sourced from Dealogic, a financial markets platform that integrates data across fixed income, capital markets, and banking.

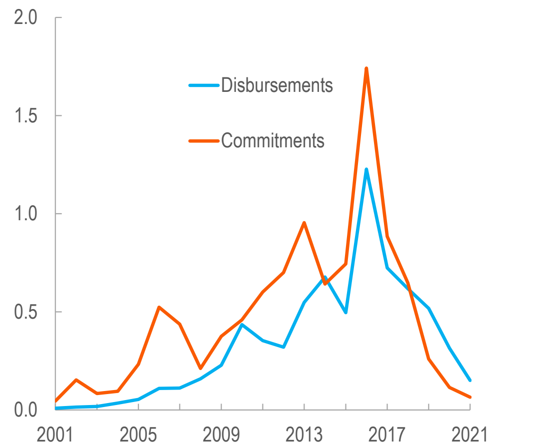
… adding to a long-term trend of declining official flows.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Official Development Assistance, 2002–22
(Percent of GDP)



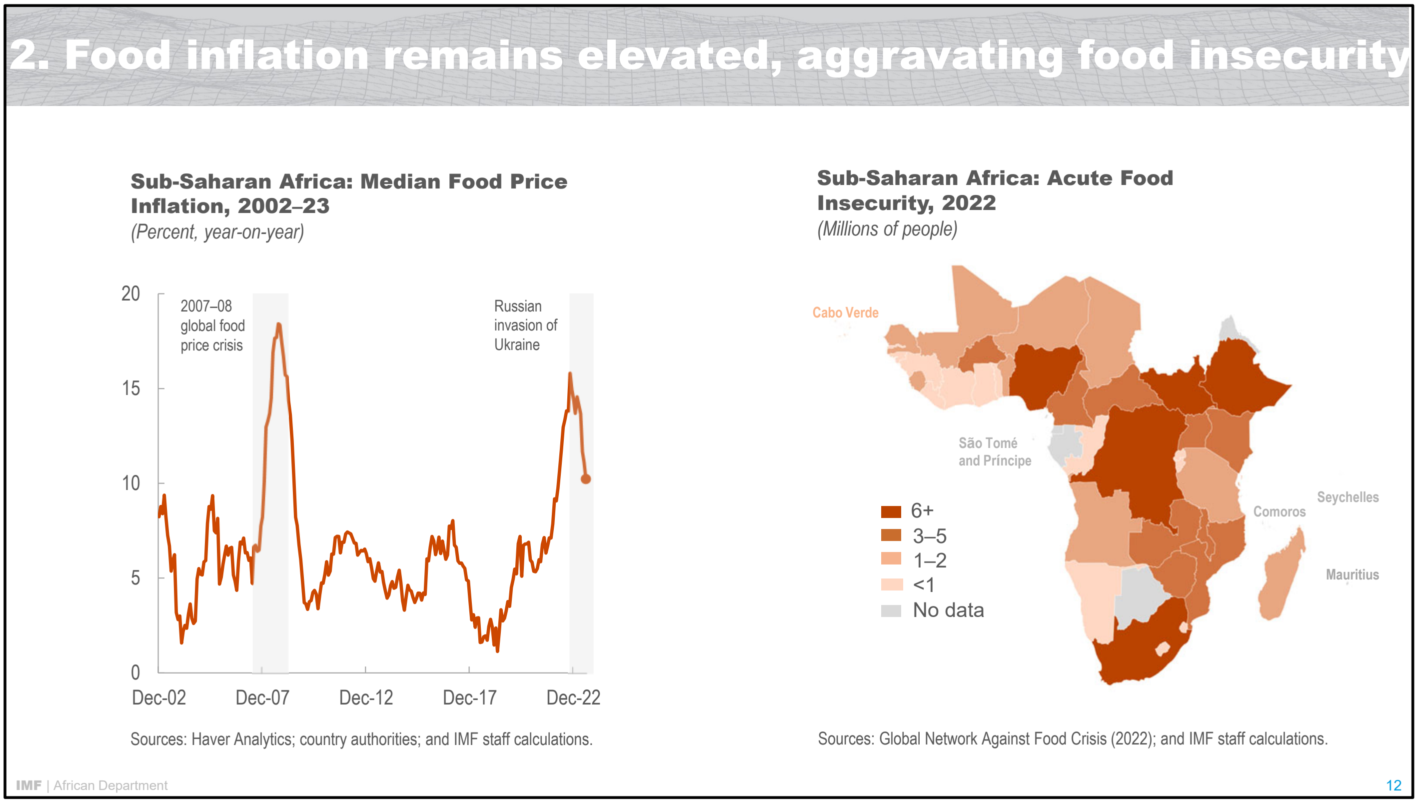
Source: OECD; and IMF, World Economic Outlook database.

Lending from China to Sub-Saharan Africa, 2001–21
(Percent of GDP)



Sources: Boston University, Chinese Loans to Africa database; World Bank, International Debt Statistics database; and IMF, World Economic Outlook database.
Note: Aggregate GDP for sub-Saharan Africa excludes South Sudan.

- The recent funding squeeze **aggravates a longer-term trend of declining official flows to the region**.
- **ODA** has been on a downward trend in the past two decades.
- **China financing** of African governments has also fallen more recently (see REO Note on China-Africa).

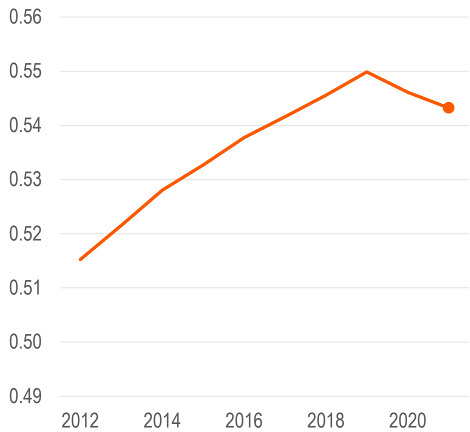


- Second source of concern: although domestic **food price inflation** has fallen from its peak at the end of last year (helped primarily by the normalization of supply chain disruptions and lower transportation costs), it **remains elevated at about 10%.**

- **Food insecurity** is one of the most pressing challenges in the region, with about **140 million people** estimated to be highly food-insecure in 2023.

3. Cascading shocks have stalled development,…

Sub-Saharan Africa: Average Human Development Index, 2017–21
(Units)



Sources: UNDP; and IMF staff calculations. Simple average across countries.

- Progress in human development has reversed since the pandemic
- High prevalence of poverty: one third of SSA population lives with less than $2.15 a day.

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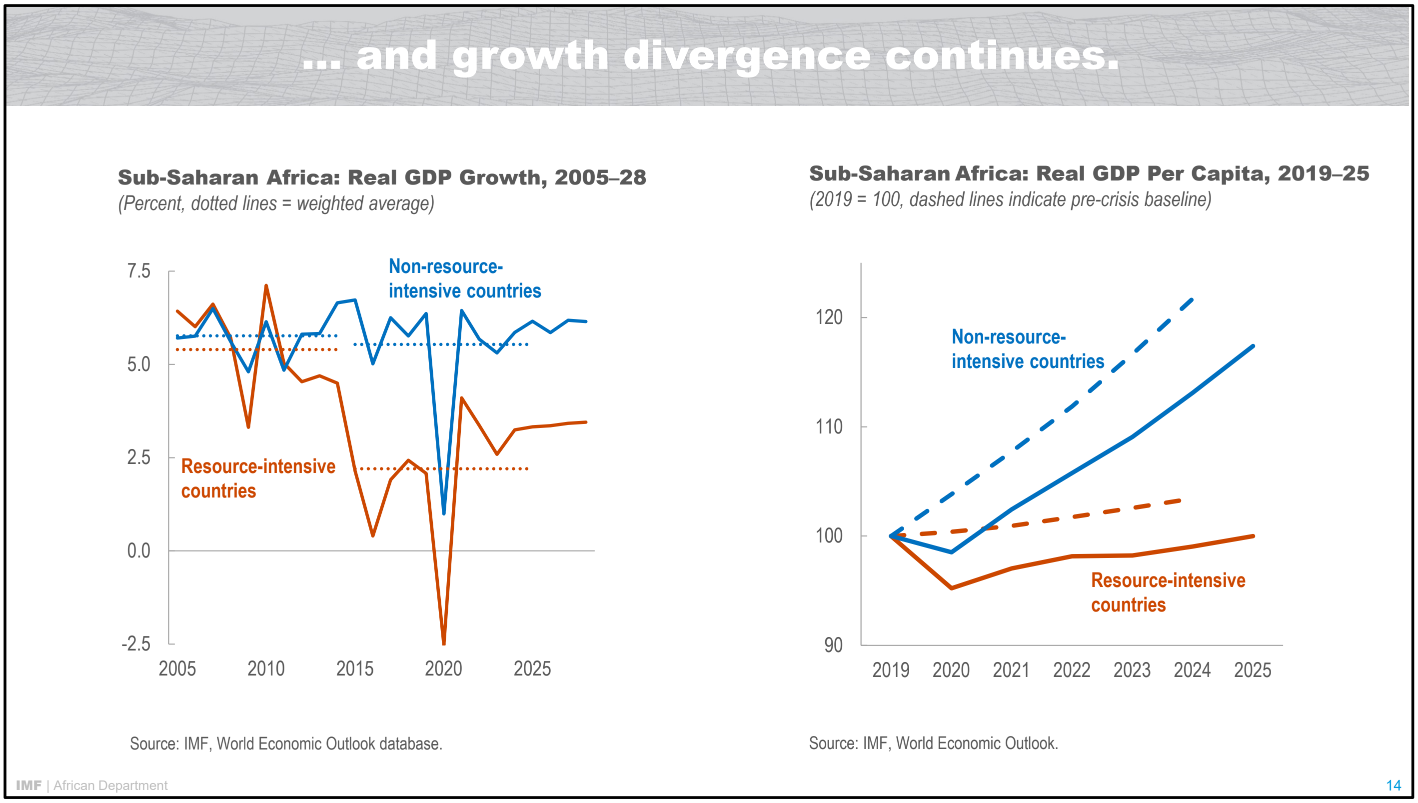
- With subdued growth, income levels have stagnated for many people.

- **Progress in human development has reversed since the pandemic**. The average human development index has declined in 2020 and 2021, erasing some progress made in previous years.

- According to the latest estimates produced by the WB, one third of SSA population lives with less than $2.15 a day.

Note: definition of HDI : The average human development index measures achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. This index therefore summarizes life expectancy at birth, both expected and mean years of schooling, and GDP per capita.



- There is significant **heterogeneity across the region** though.

- Resource rich countries record a significantly weaker economic performance.

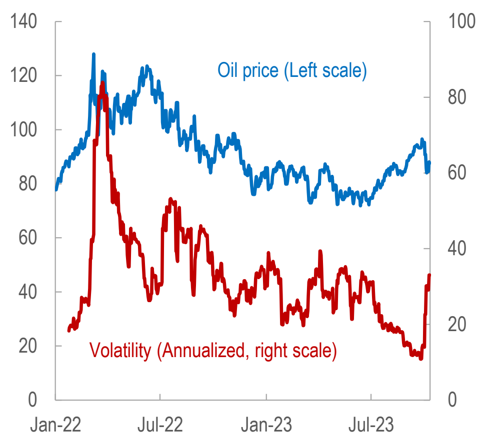
- This **divergence** between resource-intensive and diversified economies is **expected to persist.**

- In per capita terms, growth is projected at around 0-1% for resource rich countries compared to around 3% for diversified economies over the medium term.

A turbulent road ahead

Commodity prices are volatile

Brent Oil Price, January 2022–October 2023
(Dollars per barrel)



Source: Bloomberg, L.P.
Note: Data up to October 10, 2023. Volatility is computed as the annualized standard deviation of the daily returns over a 22-day rolling window.

- Commodity prices continue to be highly volatile
- Baseline oil prices projected to be stable in 2024…
- …but risks could surprise both on the upside and downside

- **The outlook is very uncertain**. Let me highlight 4 important risks for the region in the following slides.

- **First, commodity prices are volatile**. And the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas may further aggravate the volatility.

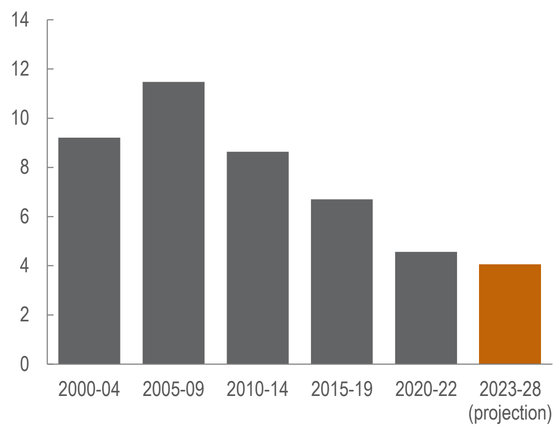
- Although high oil prices could benefit oil producers in the region, they constitute a **negative terms of trade shock for net oil importers** (37 out of 45 SSA countries, representing 2/3 of SSA GDP).

- **Costly energy subsidies** often associated with high oil prices would weigh on public finances. And high oil prices could **fuel domestic inflation**, which leading central banks to keep policy rates higher for longer.

- More generally, volatile commodity prices create uncertainty in the economy, which can **discourage investment.**

China's growth is slowing down

China: Average annual growth rate, 2000–28
(Percent)



Sources: IMF, World Economic Outlook database.

- China's economic slowdown is underway
- SSA's exports, inward FDI, and financing are at risk
- A 1 percentage point decline in China's GDP growth rate could cause a 0.25 percentage point decline in SSA GDP growth in the first year

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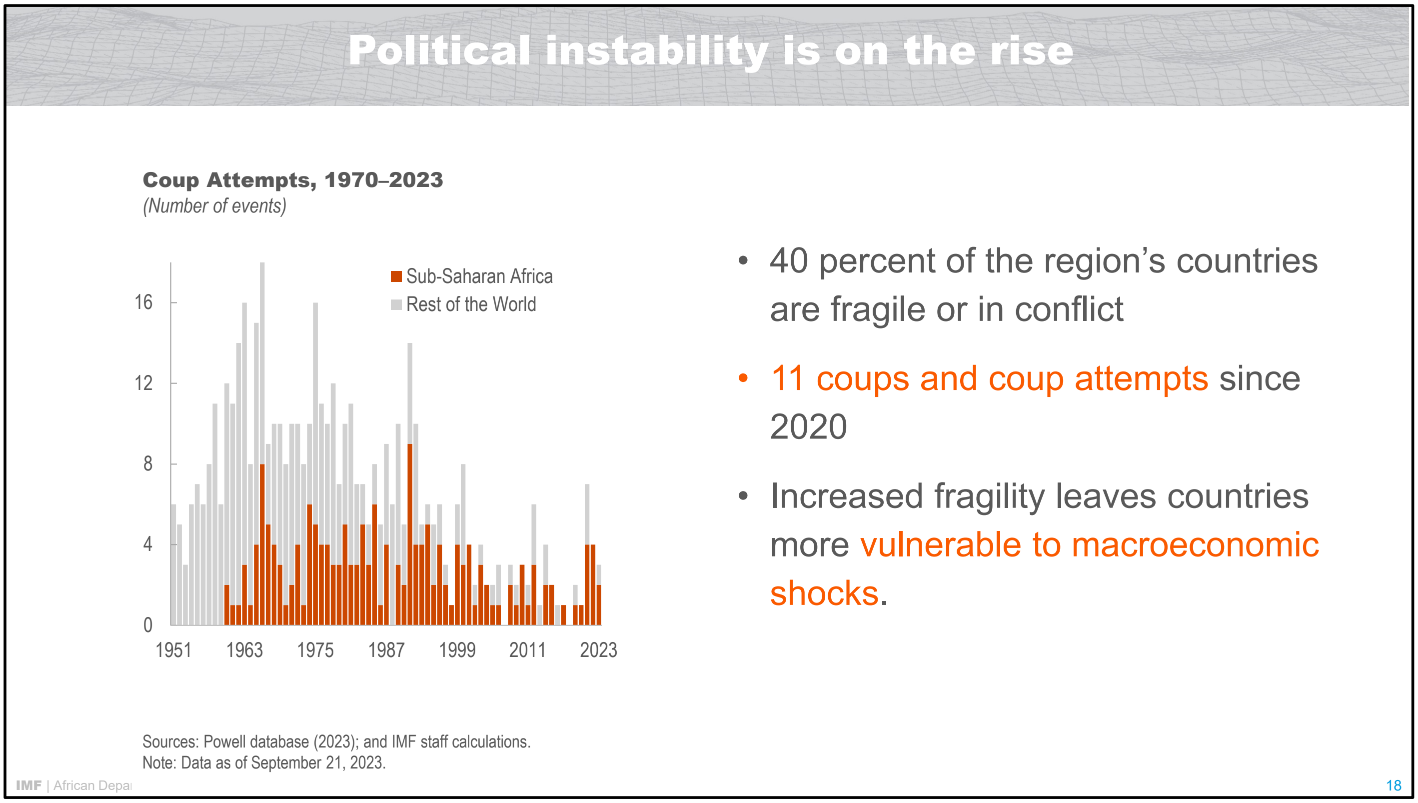
- **Second risk. China's economy is slowing down**. Although China's annual growth rate averaged about 10 percent in the 2000s, it grew by less than 8 percent per year on average in the 2010s. China's growth has declined even further since the pandemic, and the latest IMF projections show average annual growth of only about 4 percent in the next five years.
- This could impact negatively SSA's exports, inward FDI and financing inflows.
- The REO Note estimates that a slowdown of **1 percentage point in China's real GDP growth rate causes, on average, a 0.25 percentage point decline in sub-Saharan Africa's GDP growth** in the first year, with oil exporters particularly vulnerable (almost 0.5 percentage points decline).

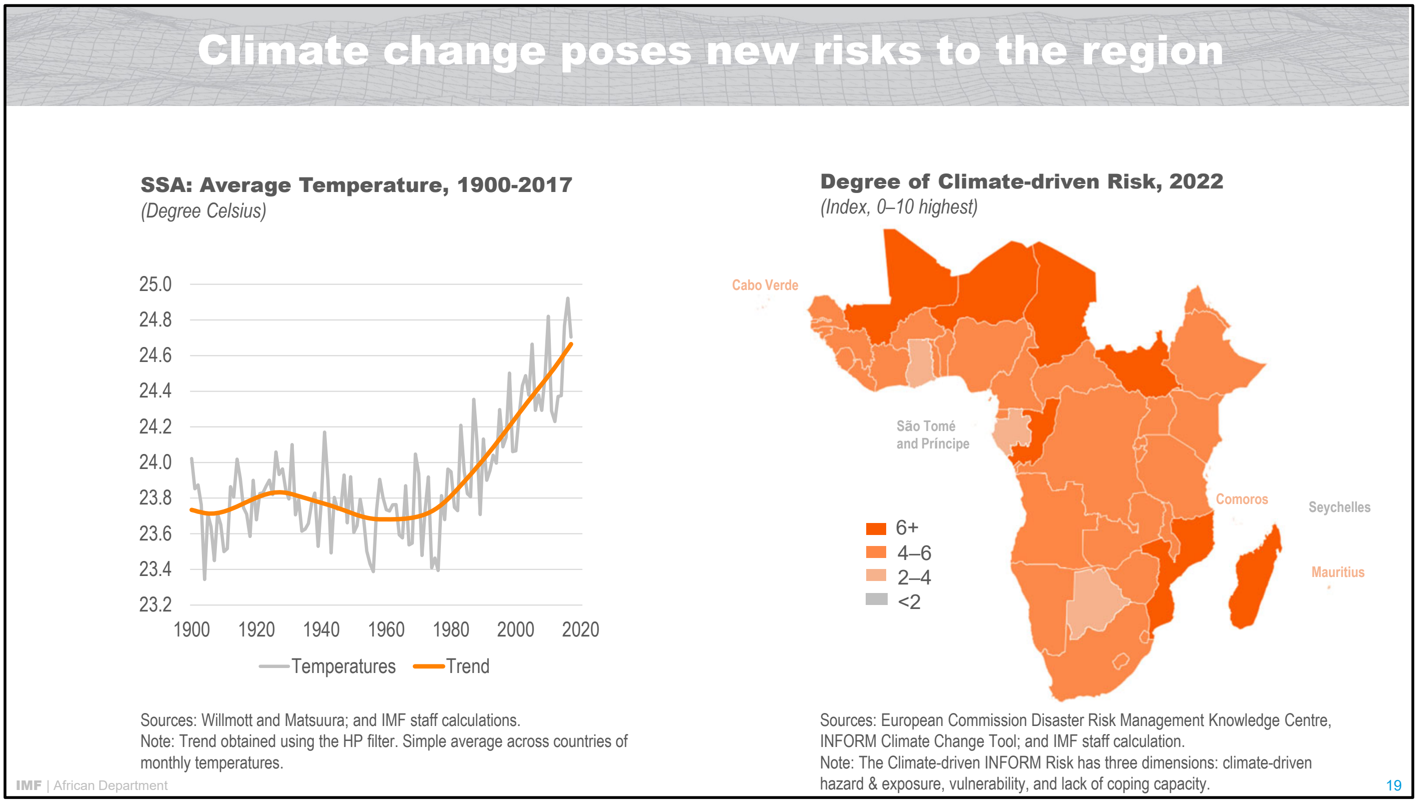


- **A third risk relates to political instability.**

- **40 percent** of the region's countries are classified as fragile or in conflict (19 out of 45 countries).

- There have been **11 coups and coup attempts** since 2020 (including recently Niger and Gabon).

- If **political instability** intensifies and spreads to other countries, **food insecurity** and other social-economic outcomes could swiftly deteriorate. Reforms and economic convergence would be further delayed.



- **Fourth, SSA is the region of the world most vulnerable to climate change.**

- The **average temperature in SSA** has increased by about 1 degree Celsius since 1980, making SSA one of the most affected regions.

- RHS shows an indicators called **Climate-driven INFORM Risk index**, which helps assess risks associated with climate-driven hazards. It was developed by the European Commission and adopted by the IMF to capture three dimensions: climate-driven hazard & exposure, vulnerability, and the lack of coping capacity.

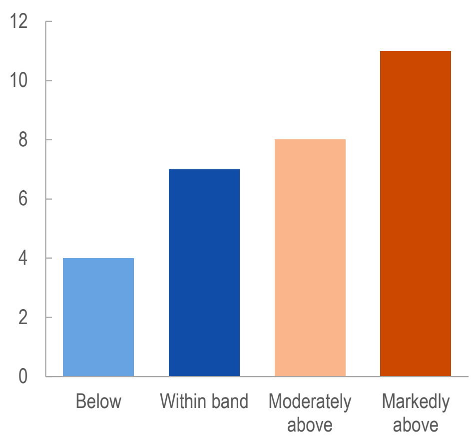
- Most vulnerable SSA countries are in the Sahel, along with Madagascar and Mozambique.

- Extreme weather events tend to **reduce countries' GDP growth, create additional budgetary pressures, and aggravate poverty and food insecurity**.

- Although the outlook is finally starting to look less ominous, **it is too early to celebrate**.
- Countries should **refrain from prematurely relaxing stabilization policies**, while also continuing to pursue reforms that address the region's large development needs.
- **The four policy priorities** are to:
  - Address still-elevated inflation
  - Respond to exchange rate pressures
  - Reduce debt vulnerabilities
  - Improve living standards
- I will describe these policy challenges in greater detail in the next slides.

1. Inflation is easing but not everywhere…

Sub-Saharan Africa: Actual versus Target Inflation
(Number of countries, As of July 2023)



Source: IMF staff calculations.
Note: Sample of 30 countries available as of July 2023. Moderately above = between the upper bound of band and twice the upper bound. Markedly above = exceeding twice the upper bound of band.

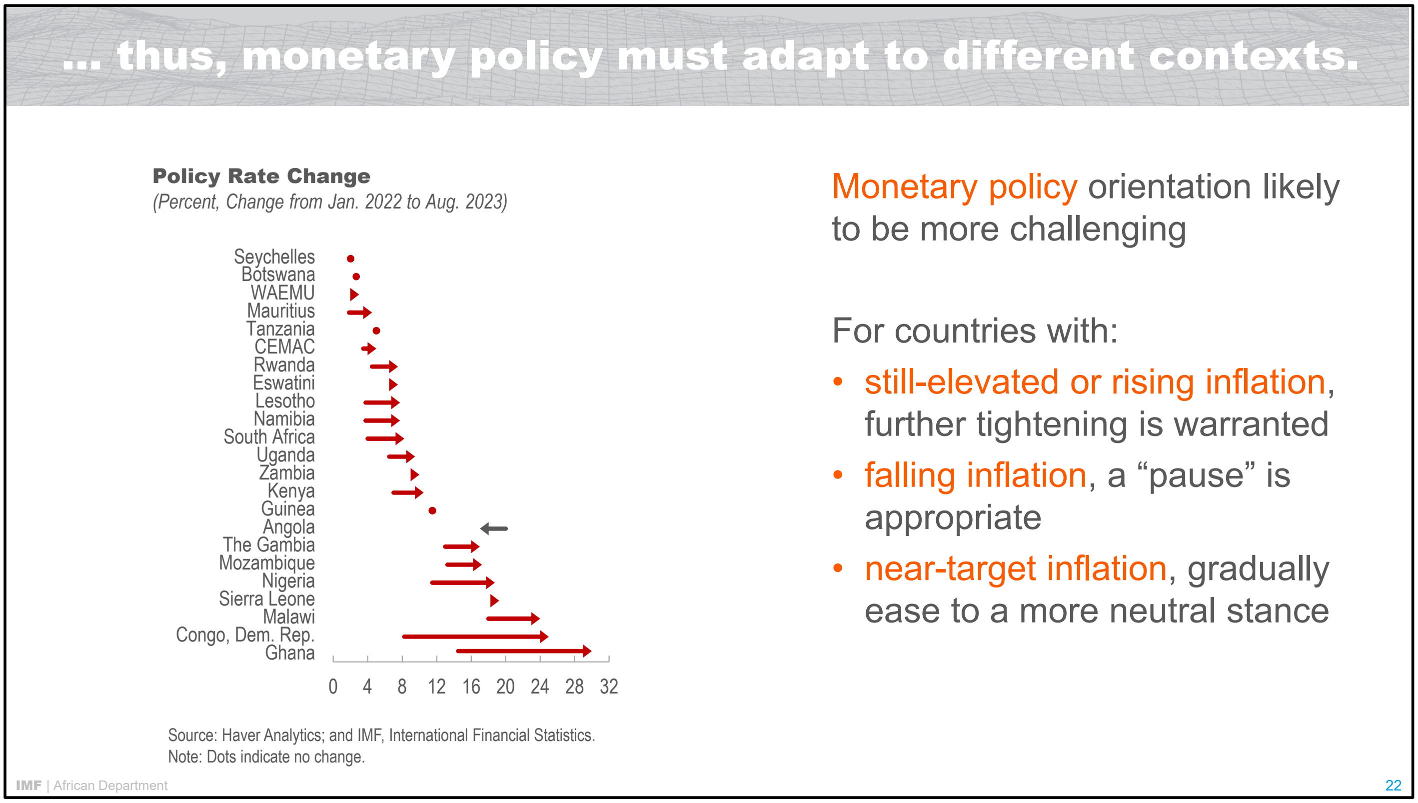
- Relative to central banks' targets, inflation remains elevated
- Two thirds of the countries (with inflation target) experiencing above-target inflation
- One third of countries with double digit inflation

- Let me start with monetary policy.

- Relative to central banks' targets, **inflation remains elevated**. (note: chart based on sample of 30 countries available as of July 2023).

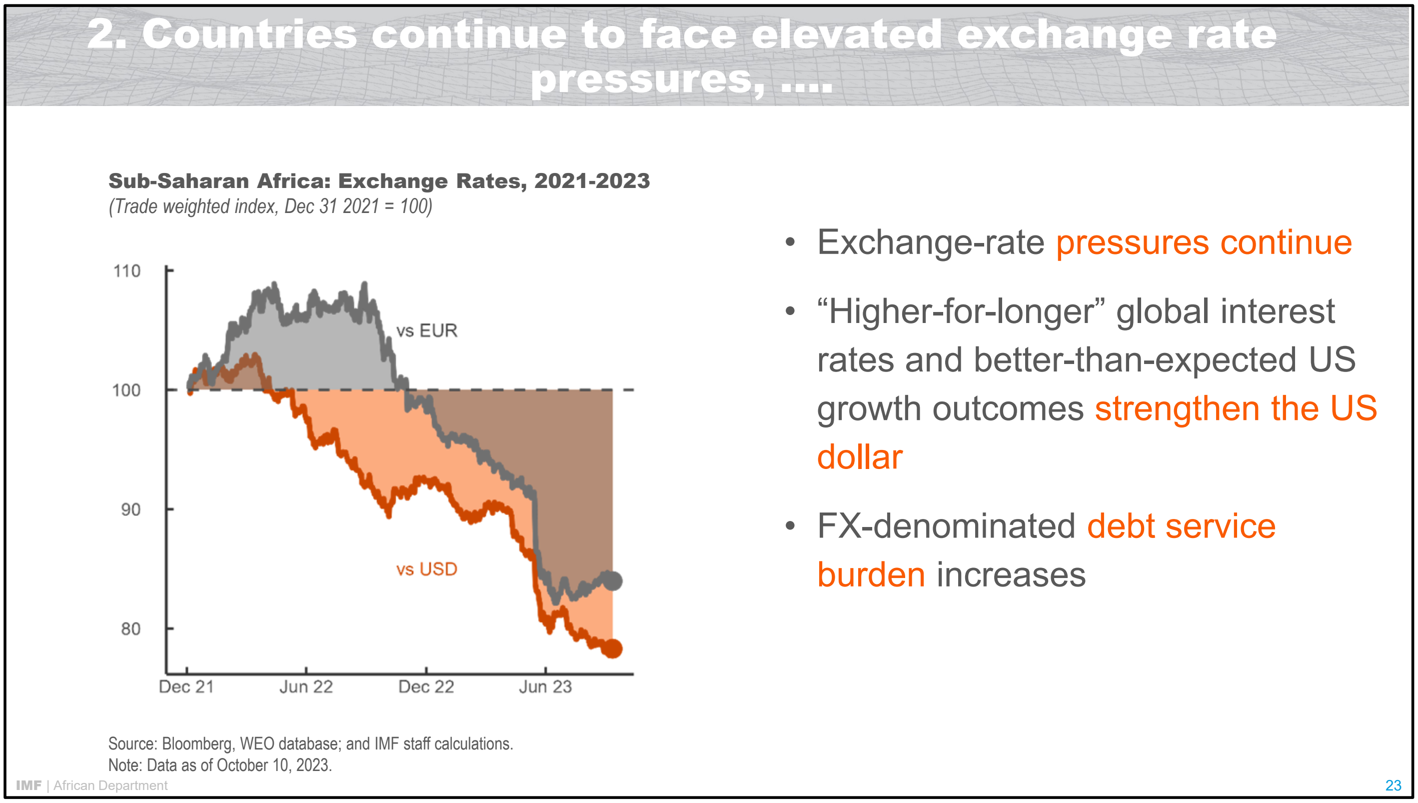
- **Two thirds of the countries** in our sample are still experiencing either moderate or markedly-**above-target inflation.**

- **One third** of the countries have **double digit inflation**.



- **As inflation continues to ease in most countries, albeit at different speed, monetary policy decisions are likely to be more challenging and divergent**:
  - In countries with still-elevated and persistent inflation, **further monetary tightening** remains appropriate.
  - For countries with high but falling inflation, **a “pause” may be warranted**, with rates held at existing elevated levels until inflation is reasonably close to target.
  - Going forward, in countries with near-target inflation and well-anchored expectations, authorities might consider **gradually easing** to a more neutral stance, while closely coordinating with other policies (e.g., fiscal).

Note: Between January 2022 and August 2023, the median monetary policy tightening cycle was about 350 basis points. In cumulative terms, Angola is the only country which has loosened monetary policy since January 2022; however, the monetary policy in Angola was significantly tightened in 2021. Note that Uganda and Eswatini have started cutting monetary policy rates in Q3-2023.



- Second policy priority. Many sub-Saharan African countries **continue to face exchange rate pressures.**

- The trade-weighted nominal exchange rate for the region has depreciated by **more than 20 percent against the US dollar since early 2022.**

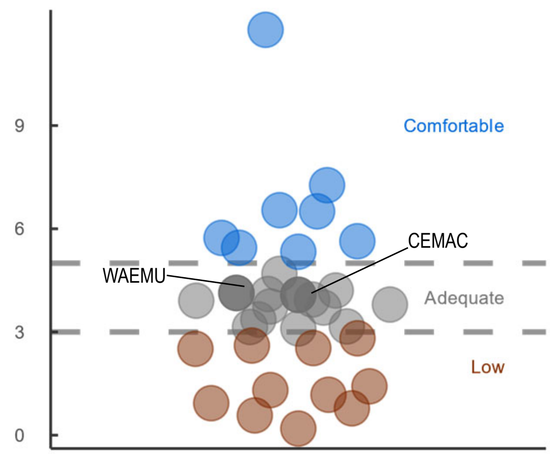
- "Higher-for-longer" global interest rates and better-than-expected US growth outcomes have continued to strengthen the US dollar.

- The nominal appreciation of the US dollar **remains a headwind for the SSA region**, adding extra pressure on FX reserves of African countries, inflating dollar-denominated debt burden, and fueling domestic inflation.

… with reserve buffers below comfortable levels.

- Non-pegged regimes should let the exchange rate adjust, particularly when reserves are low
- Pegged regimes require policy mix that sustains peg without reserve pressure
- Coordinate with other policies to alleviate costs of adjustments
- Avoid distortionary administrative measures

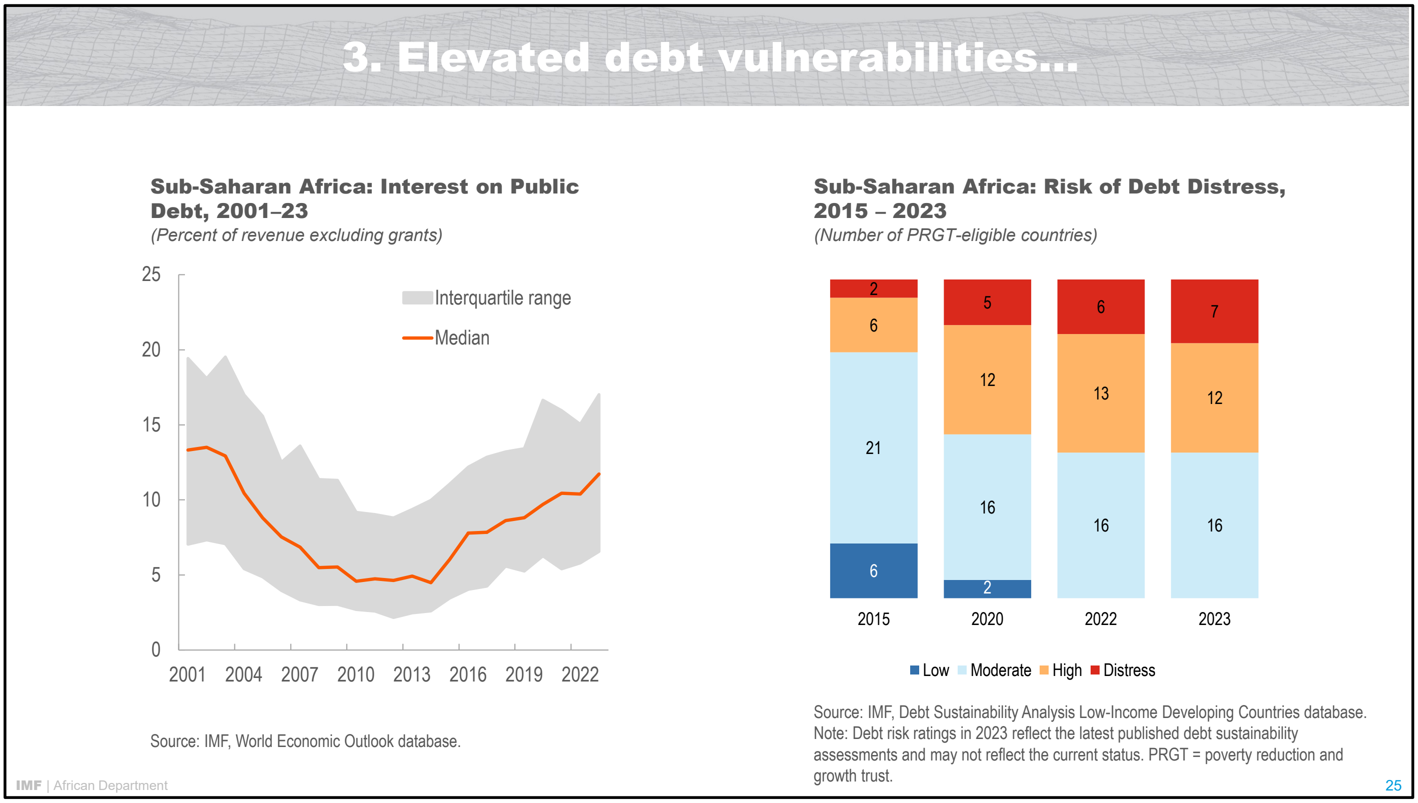
Sub-Saharan Africa: Reserve Cover, 2022
(Months of imports)



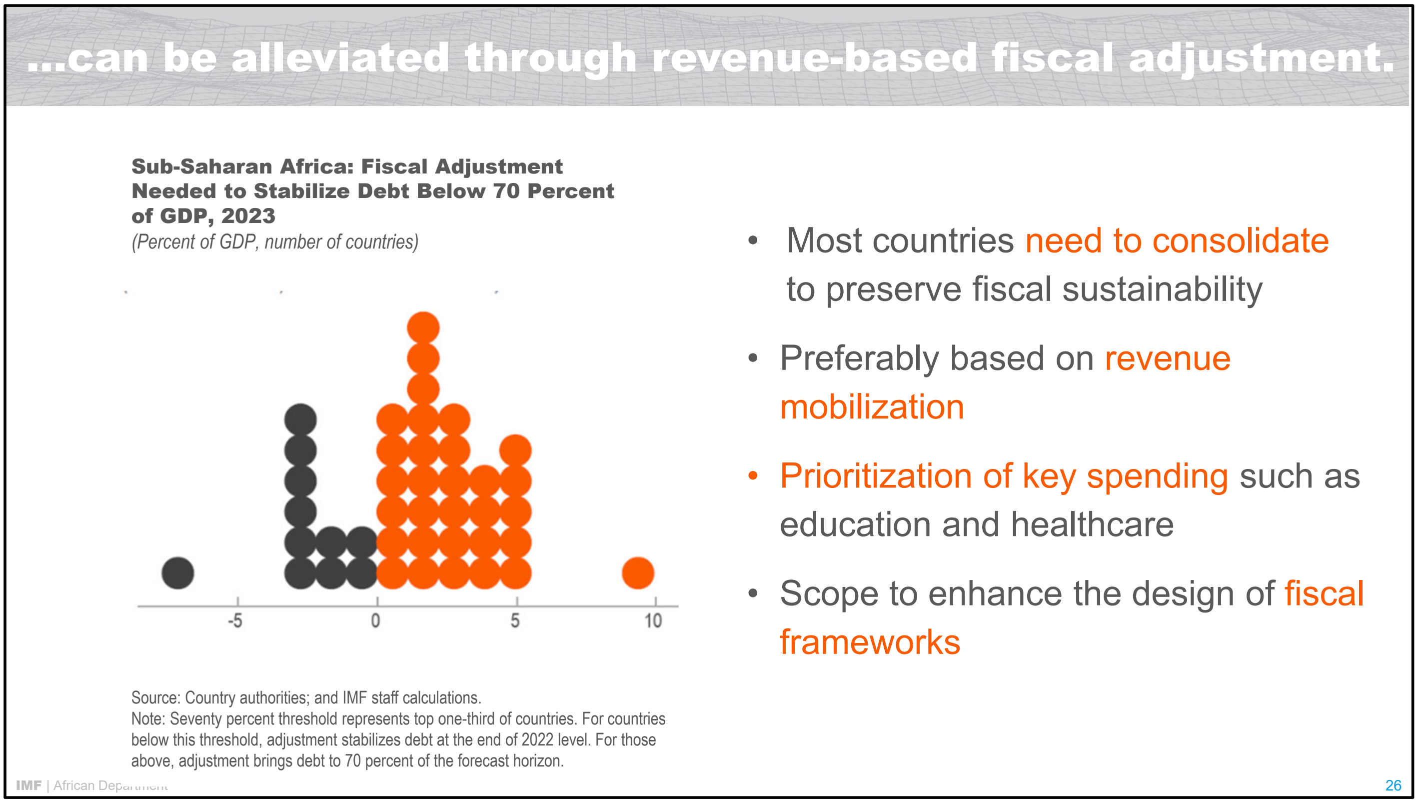
Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook database.
Note: Dark dots represent CEMAC and WAEMU.

- **Since reserve coverage remains fragile across the region, resisting exchange rate pressures is often not possible.** 80 percent of the countries in the region had reserves below 5 months of imports at end 2022. And one quarter had reserves below 3 months of imports.
- Generally, countries with flexible exchange rates should **let their exchange rates adjust** to reflect fundamental values and preserve dwindling FX buffers.
- **Distortionary administrative measures** (like rationing of FX) **should be avoided**.

Note: To mitigate these adverse effects, policymakers can rely on several complementary policies: (1) To deal with inflation passthrough, tighten monetary policy. This would also stem capital outflows and potentially lead to new inflows. (2) Where external debt is elevated, fiscal consolidation can help contain these imbalances and bring debt on a more sustainable path.



- Third policy priority: debt. Although debt ratios have started to stabilize, **debt vulnerabilities are elevated**.
- The **ratio of interest payments to revenues** is generally much higher in the SSA region than that in the rest of the world. The median ratio has **more than doubled** since the start of the last decade.
- **Half of the low-income countries in the region are either in debt distress or at high risk.**
- In a global environment with "higher-for-longer" interest rates, the **funding squeeze** is likely to persist and expose governments to rollover risks. Some countries in the region may find it challenging to refinance existing Eurobonds as about $12 billion in repayments are coming due over the next two years.

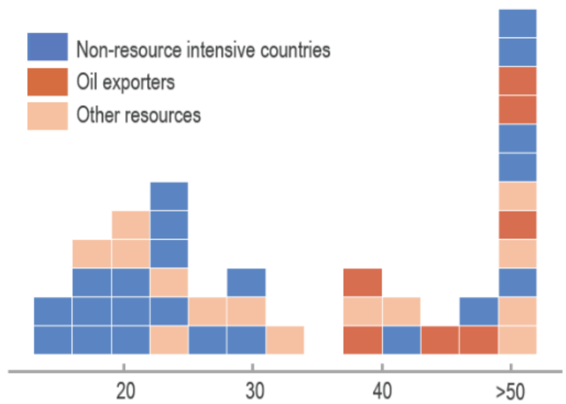


- Against this backdrop, policymakers need to **continue to strengthen their public finances** through advances in:
  - Revenue mobilization
  - Prioritization of key spending such as education and healthcare
  - Stronger medium-term fiscal frameworks

4. Economic convergence is a challenge…

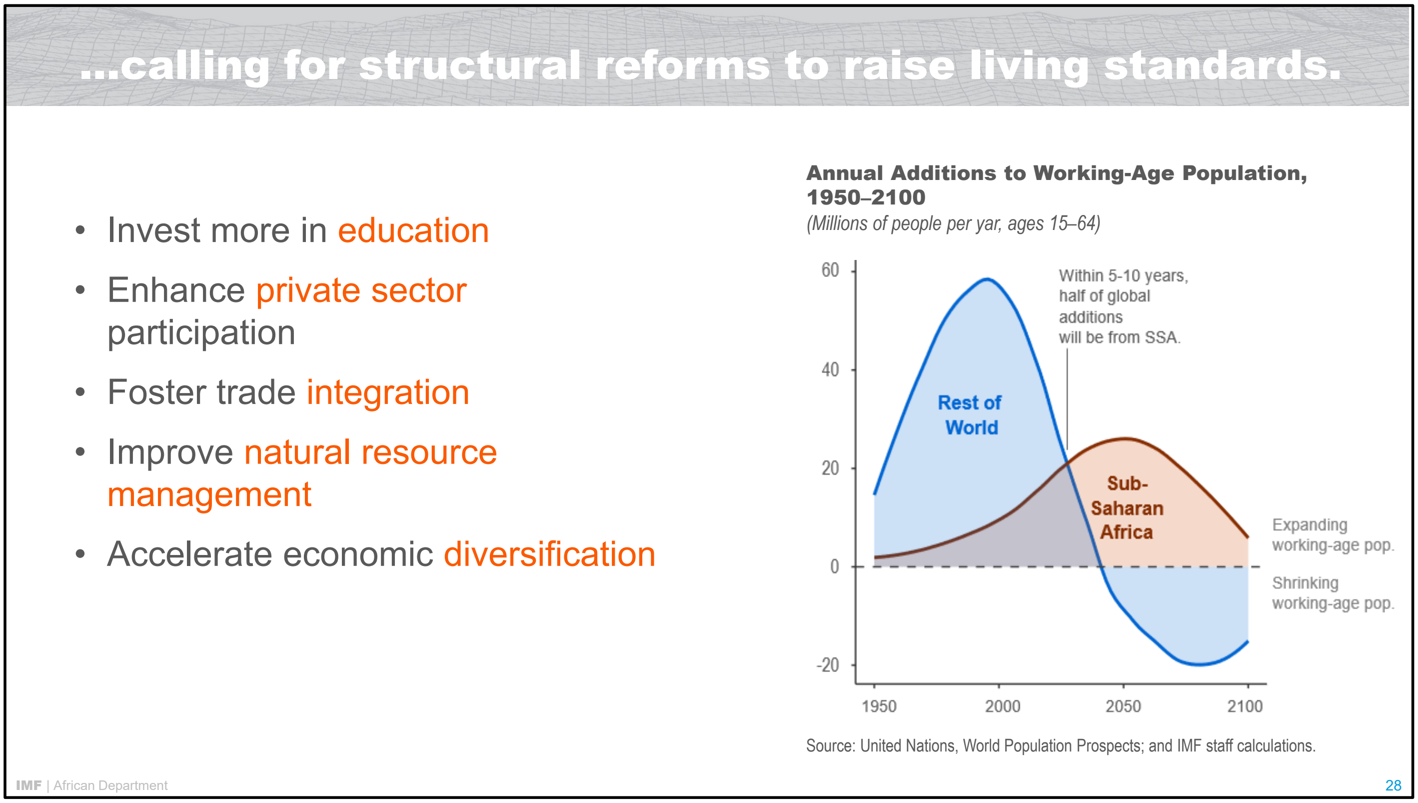
- Divergence between resource-intensive and non-resource-intensive countries
- Doubling of living standards could take 20-30 years in more diversified economies…
- …but likely to take generations in resource-intensive countries

Sub-Saharan Africa: Time to double per capita Income
(Years)



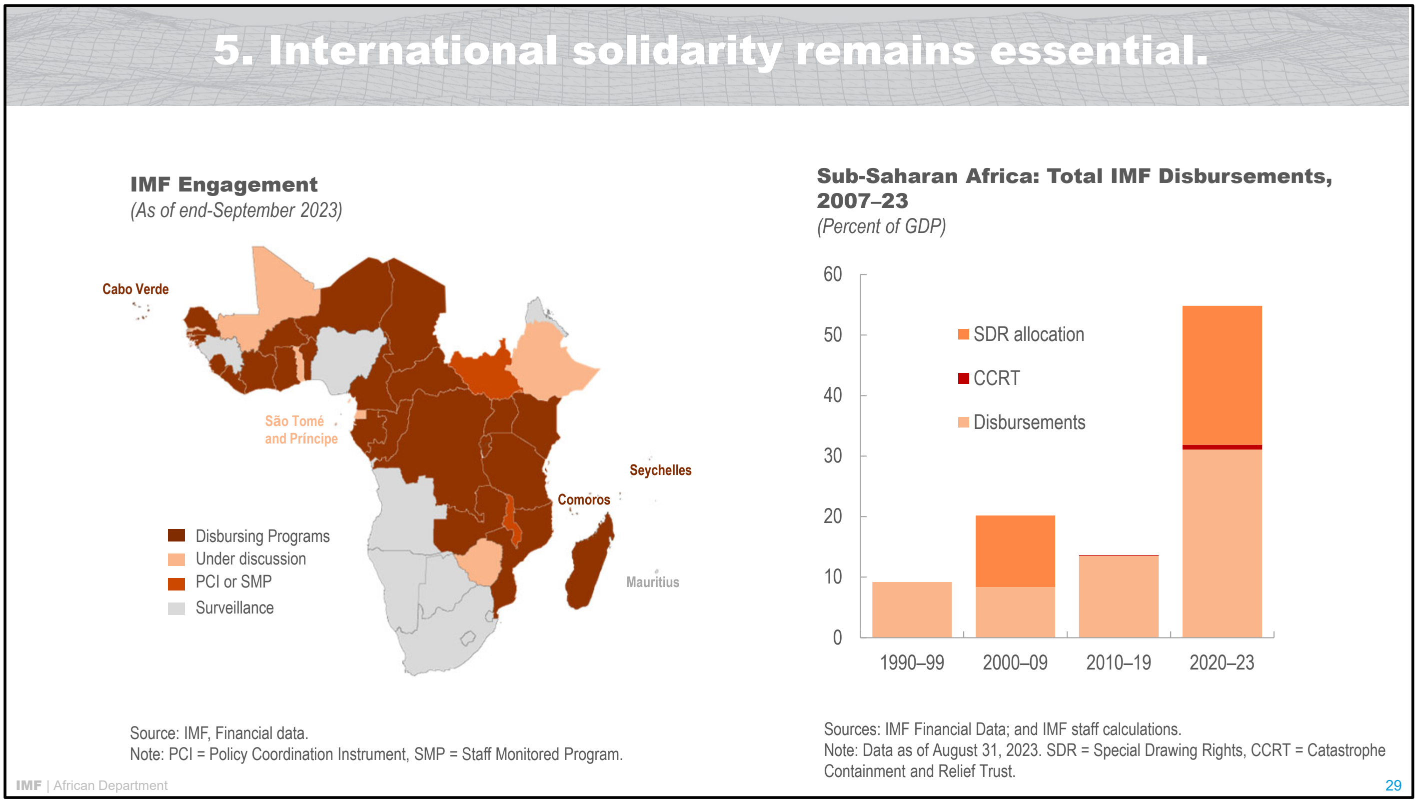
Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook database; and IMF staff calculations.
Note: Each box corresponds to a country.

- Finally, the pandemic and the ongoing funding squeeze have exacerbated an already-existing **growth divergence across the region** between resource rich and diversified economies.
- Ultimately, this **makes the catch up in living standards more difficult**.
- This chart shows the time needed to double real GDP per capita at current pace for each SSA country.
- The doubling of living standards could take 20-30 years in more diversified economies, but **for less-diversified resource-intensive countries, doubling may take generations**.



- **Structural reforms to raise living standards are needed more than ever**. These include:

    - Invest in people through better **education**. In the next decade, half of the global additions to the working age population will come from SSA. And these newcomers will need to be well educated to be productive.
    - Enhance **private sector participation to the economy**. A favorable business environment (including by lowering entry, regulatory, and tax barriers) could help catalyze private sector growth and enhance the region competitiveness.
    - Foster **trade integration**. The African Continental Free Trade Area is particularly promising, but its implementation will require substantial reduction of trade barriers and improvements in the broader trade environment, including lower non-tariff trade barriers.
    - Improve **natural resource management** and accelerate **economic diversification** are important goals for resource-rich countries (will help reduce the divergence).



- **International support is critical** for countries to achieve all the policy priorities described in the previous slides.

- On countercyclical flows, the IMF is an essential component of the global safety net.

- Demand for assistance has increased dramatically **since the start of the pandemic**, with the IMF providing policy guidance **and financing of $55 billion**, much with highly concessional terms.

- **Twenty-six countries** have currently IMF financing arrangements, with about $4 billion disbursed so far in 2023.

Analytical Notes

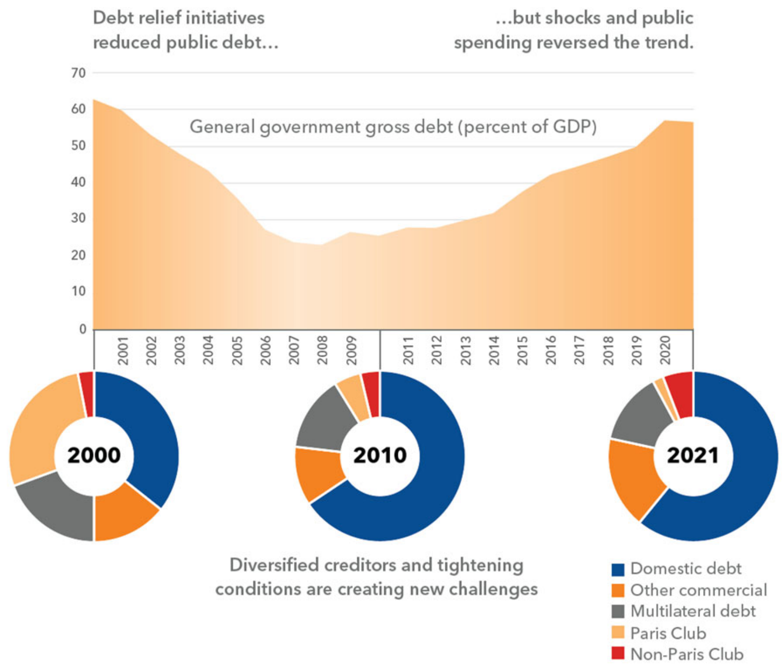
Note 1: China and SSA economic ties at crossroads

What does a slowdown of China's economy mean for Sub-Saharan Africa?

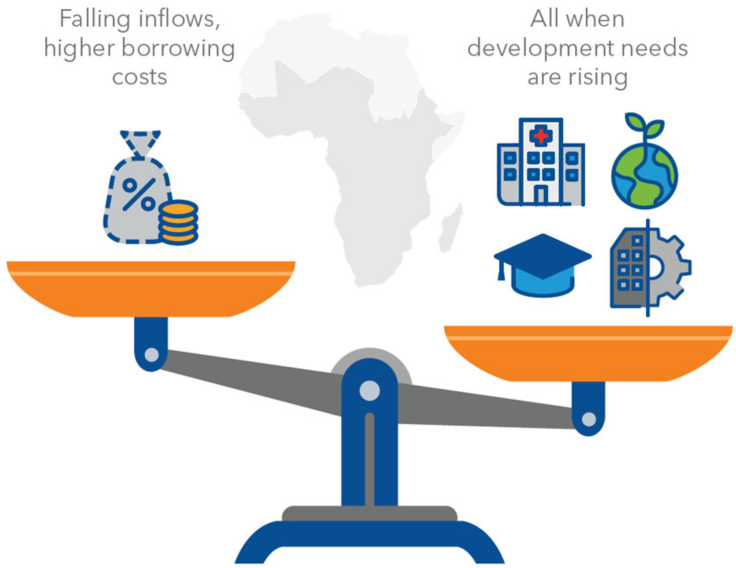
At risk is
China scaling down 20 years of:

TRADE **INVESTMENT** **CREDIT**

Note 2: Principles of debt restructuring



Note 3: Crisis of development finance



Thank you

For more information please visit the link
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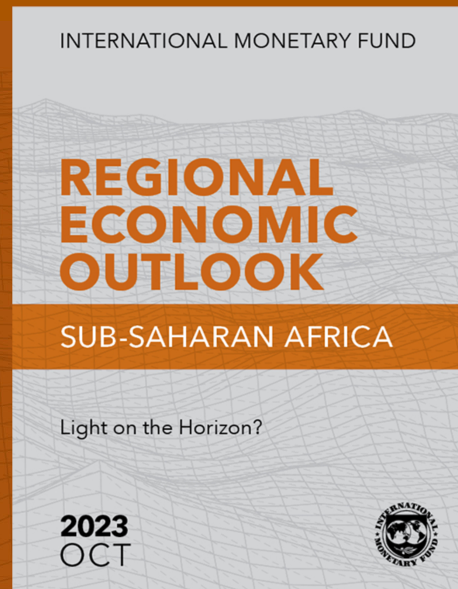
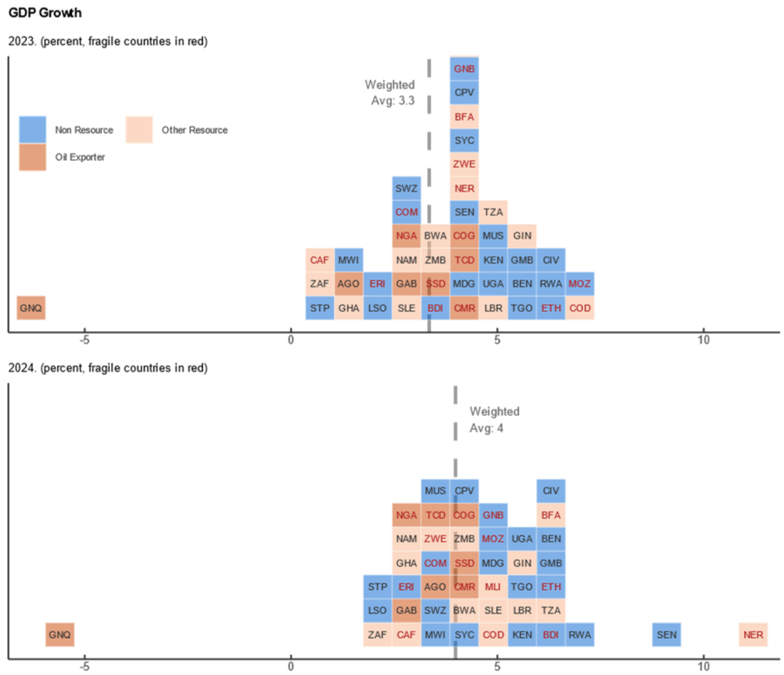
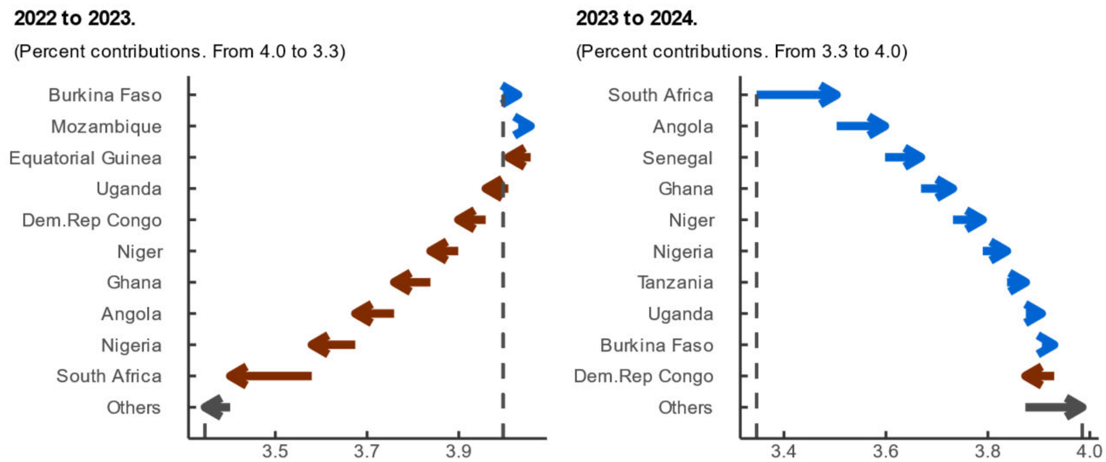


Annex 1: Growth heterogeneity across the region in 2023-24



Annex 2: contributions to growth 2023 and 2024

Sub-Saharan Africa: Contributions to Change in GDP Growth



Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook Database.