

STATEMENT

BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP**

**At the
SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD 16)**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK
15 MAY 2008**

Chairperson,

It is an honour and privilege for me to speak on behalf of the African Group. The Group aligns itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 and China.

Chairperson,

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), and the Secretary-General's report on "Africa" clearly articulate the achievements, challenges and opportunities for Africa.

The African Group welcomes the focus on the special needs of Africa within this CSD cycle and other fora of the United Nations. We hope that this will translate into tangible benefits for the continent in terms of support to development efforts.

The impediments to sustainable development in Africa can be among other things, extreme poverty, a fragile natural resource base which is overexploited, high energy prices limiting access to modern sources of energy for the bulk of the population, prevalence of pandemic diseases-such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, and malaria and challenges in governance and institutional capacity. Furthermore lack of adequate infrastructure, low levels of FDI, ODA, and existence of international trade bottlenecks that hinder market access as well as a crippling debt problem and a gaping international digital divide continues to worsen poverty in Africa.

Chairperson,

In Africa, roughly one third of the population does not have access to clean water, while 60% lack access to safe improved sanitation, which is responsible for the death of millions annually due to sanitation related diseases.

CSD 13 mandated the review of Water and Sanitation in 2008 and then in 2012. The African Group is of the view that since this is the first time that a review is being undertaken at CSD, anything that goes beyond stock taking should take place in 2012 at the next review session of water and sanitation.

Chairperson,

The solutions to sustainable development challenges in Africa lie in re-invigorating the commitment of the international community to address these and give effect to a new vision based on concrete actions for the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa. The New partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and other efforts, which the international community pledged to support, was seen at its inception as a new framework for accelerating progress on the continent.

African countries have since taken concrete measures to implement outcomes of all major conferences. Strong economic performance in Africa in recent years is evidence of the creation of a conducive environment for economic development through sound macroeconomic policies. But, the attendant growth has not translated into corresponding increases in employment and poverty reduction. NEPAD has, in its own limited way, contributed to African countries' efforts to improve infrastructure and institutional capacity in a number of areas, including agriculture, rural development, environment, and gender mainstreaming. The peer review mechanism encourages good governance at the national and local levels, while conflict resolution is high on the continental agenda and is increasingly registering success on the ground.

Chairperson,

Four out of ten Africans live on less than US\$1 a day without access to food, housing, education or healthcare. Despite various efforts by individual countries to implement Agenda 21 and the JPoI, the continent is least likely to achieve the MDG targets. The G8 summit held at Glen Eagles in July, 2005 agreed to a comprehensive plan to support Africa's efforts at development. This included provision of extra resources over and above 0.7% of GDP to support Africa in meeting its challenges. However these promises have not yet been fulfilled.

Africa continues to face the following challenges in trying to address its challenges:

Trade

Uncertainty in domestic production, volatility in international prices and deteriorating terms of trade often deprives African countries of

resources to import essential raw materials for industrial development and economic growth.

The stalled Doha development Round is putting at risk the development dimension of the round which is crucial for the developing countries particularly Africa. This further reinforces the urgent need to guarantee an equitable and fair international trading system that safeguards the interests of developing countries, especially Africa, including duty free and quota free market access and the elimination of agricultural subsidies. We call for the speedy conclusion of the Doha negotiations.

On trade capacity building, the Group calls for the Aid for Trade Initiative to be made operational in order to assist African countries to add value to their products.

Debt

The majority of African countries suffer from unsustainable debt burdens. Debt servicing diverts resources from critical economic activities aggravating poverty and affects the long-term productivity of economies of African countries. We believe that it is time to find a lasting solution to the problem of multilateral and bilateral debt, including in those countries outside the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC). We must renew and strengthen our efforts to make the debt-relief initiative more inclusive.

ODA and FDI Flows

It is disappointing to note that the ODA, net of debt relief, declined in 2006 to 0.25 percent of the gross national income (GNI) of DAC group. This is down from 0.26 per cent in the previous year. This was well below the 0.33 percent level that was reached in the early 1990s and far below the 0.7 percent target as reaffirmed in Monterrey. We call upon the OECD countries to fulfill their commitment of 0.7 of their GNP as ODA to developing countries and 0.20 percent to LDCs as early as possible.

FDI flows have been more volatile and concentrated in a few countries. However there has been a marked growth of FDI from Asian countries in the form of South-South cooperation.

Technology Transfer and Capacity Building

Africa has not benefited from globalization due to its low technological, human and institutional capacity. Most African countries lack the technology and the capacity to achieve sustainable developed.

Faced with the current phenomenon of climate change, the international community is called upon to assist African countries gain access to environmentally sound technologies which include know-how, scientific processes, goods and services, and equipment as well as organizational and managerial skills that are necessary for mitigation and adaptation.

Protecting and Managing the Natural Resource Base for Economic and Social Development

Africa is rich in natural resources which present opportunities for economic and social development. However, degradation of the resource base threatens the livelihood of many people who rely on them. Poverty forces many poor people to resort to natural resources for survival resulting in over exploitation and degradation.

Agriculture is the mainstay for most African economies yet productivity has declined due to land degradation exposing many people to food insecurity, hunger and disease. About 80% of the rural poor live in rural areas and depend mainly on agriculture and natural resources for survival. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only major world sub-region where per capita food output has declined over the past 4 decades.

More than 30% of the world's drylands are found in North Africa the Sahel and the Southern parts of Africa covering 2billion hectares in 25 countries representing 65% of continental land mass. These drylands are prone to deforestation, soil erosion, nutrient mining, recurrent droughts and climatic change, resulting in land degradation and desertification.

We call for increased funding for the UNCCD especially for the implementation of the National Plans of Action to combat desertification in African countries. Transfer of technology to support value addition of agricultural products and infrastructure development for irrigation will go a long way in promoting sustainable land management, sustainable agriculture and rural development and economic growth in Africa.

Chairperson,

As we prepare for the conference on Financing for Development due to take place in Doha this November we look forward to the special needs of Africa being adequately reflected in the outcome of that meeting.

In this particular cycle of the CSD, the African Group therefore proposes that a mechanism be set up to verify, measure and report on the status of implementation of all commitments made to Africa arising from all UN conferences and summits.

I Thank You