UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

AFRICAN UNION

The Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
20-25 October 2011

E

Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/CFSSD/7/Min./3
25 October 2011

Original: ENGLISH

AFRICA CONSENSUS STATEMENT TO RIO+20

RIO+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

UNDP

I. PREAMBLE

1. We, Ministers of African States, recalling UN Resolution 64/236 calling for the convening of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, otherwise referred to as Rio+20, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, and further recalling the African Union Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.381(XVII) inviting member States to work on a common African Position for Rio+20, met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 24 to 25 October 2011, in the context of the Africa Regional Preparatory Process for Rio+20. The aim of the preparatory conference was to deliberate on the objective and themes of Rio+20 and other substantive matters of importance to Africa, with a view to arriving at a consensus on Africa's key priorities and concerns to be reflected in the outcomes of Rio+20. In so doing, we took into account the concerns of all strata of the region's stakeholders – the public sector, private sector, civil society, youth, trade unions, academia and regional and subregional development institutions.

2. We commend the objective of Rio+20, which is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges. We acknowledge the relevance of the two Conference themes - *A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication*, and the *Institutional framework for sustainable development* - to advancing the global sustainable development agenda.

3. Recalling that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) recognizes the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as providing the framework for sustainable development on the continent, we reaffirm our commitment to NEPAD and acknowledge the need to achieve its laudable objectives. We acknowledge and emphasize that the critical foundation for sustainable development lies in good governance, strong and responsive institutions, wealth creation, social equity and equality, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability, as well as sustained progress in the achievement of internationally agreed commitments including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While we strongly believe that the Africa region has made appreciable progress in meeting the requirements for sustainable development, we do urge the international community to accelerate and increase support to the region, to enable it to enhance implementation of its sustainable development commitment.

4. We call on Rio+20 to reinvigorate political will and international commitment to the goals and ideals of sustainable development, to move the sustainable development agenda forward, and raise the level of commitment by countries, regions and the international community to a common cause for sustainable development, including the need to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We therefore call for the Conference to adopt concrete measures, supported by adequate means of implementation that would ensure accelerated implementation of sustainable development commitments, including those to be adopted at Rio+20. We further call on the developed countries to fulfil previous commitments and pledges to help Africa's efforts in achieving sustainable development.

Africa's overall performance

5. As we review the region's performance in the implementation of sustainable development commitments from June 1992 to June 2012, we are strongly encouraged by the results achieved in governance and institution building. We are delighted by the performance recorded in the pursuit of economic sustainability. We are gratified that we pushed the performance frontiers of sustainable social development forward; and we note with a strong sense of optimism, the modest gains that the region achieved in environmental sustainability.

6. To further consolidate progress made, we call for enhanced commitments to advance action in areas critical to Africa's sustainable development, including: improving agricultural productivity and food security; promoting research and development and the use of biotechnology for sustainable development; combating desertification and land degradation; achieving sound management of coastal, marine and lacustrine ecosystems; enhancing sustainable use of natural resources, including freshwater, forests and biodiversity; promoting sustainable consumption and production and sustainable industrial development; ensuring the sound management of chemicals and waste; promoting sustainable tourism; ensuring access to secure and sustainable energy; achieving sustainable exploitation of mineral resources; enhancing access to safe drinking water and sanitation; promoting sustainable urban development; strengthening disaster risk preparedness and reduction; achieving inclusive and equitable growth; and furthering progress made in health and education.

II. New and emerging challenges

7. We are deeply concerned that Africa's progress towards sustainable development is being severely compromised by new and emerging challenges. Chief among these are the adverse impact of climate change, increasing water scarcity, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, desertification, hazardous and electronic waste, low resilience to natural disasters, the energy crisis, the food crisis, rapid and unplanned urbanization resulting from rural-urban migration, piracy, human trafficking, migration and the global financial and economic crises. These challenges have led to the spread of new diseases, worsening poverty, and unemployment, especially of the youth.

8. We do, however, recognize that some of these new and emerging challenges also provide opportunities such as spurring the transition to a green economy, taking into account the human resource potential and the vast and largely untapped natural resources that are being discovered in many African countries. Other opportunities include the paradigm shift in development planning, adapting to and mitigating climate change, and accelerating regional cooperation.

9. We note that Africa is largely dependent on natural resources to achieve growth and development, which may be hindered by the impact of climate change. Notwithstanding its low greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it is the continent that will be the worst affected by climate change, mainly because of its low adaptive capacity. Climate change is significantly altering Africa's development pathway. We are taking concrete steps to address the climate change challenge and commit ourselves to addressing this development challenge, while leveraging opportunities such as capacity-building and technology transfer. We reiterate our call to the international community to support Africa in this endeavour.

10. Annex I parties of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) must commit to a second commitment period under the KP for the period from 2013-2017, and reduce their emissions by 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2017. Annex I parties must provide non-annex parties, particularly African countries, with appropriate additional and long-term financing, technology, and capacity-building support, in order to enable them to face the adverse effects of climate change.

11. We are concerned that increasing severe biodiversity loss, desertification and land degradation, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, are major problems that countries have to address.

12. We note that the intensity of desertification of most of Africa's arable land is a serious challenge to sustainable development in Africa. Most of the land in Africa is prone to degradation and suffers the worst impact of drought, desertification, and deforestation, with 65 per cent of the population affected. We recognize the economic and social significance of land, particularly its contribution to growth, food security, and poverty eradication, and will step up efforts to effectively implement initiatives at regional, subregional, national, and local levels to combat these problems, promote sustainable land and water management, and reinforce north-south and south-south cooperation.

13. We note, with concern, the inadequate support provided by the international community to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), despite its unique global role in preventing and reversing desertification and land degradation with impact on poverty eradication, preservation of the resource base for food security, building adaptation and resilience of affected ecosystems and populations to climatic shocks such as drought.

14. We are concerned about persistent high food prices in many countries in Africa. Food prices increased dramatically as a result of droughts in grain-producing countries. There were also reduced yields, depleting cereal stocks and multiple demands on existing stocks from human and animal consumption. While the interventions undertaken jointly with affected communities and the international community have boosted food output, we are concerned about the high cost of food in Africa. We shall, therefore, take measures to ensure that the benefits derived from our efforts trickle down and contribute positively to reducing hunger and poverty. We invite developed countries to provide developing countries with sound technologies, particularly biotechnologies, bearing in mind the precautionary principle, to increase production in the agricultural sector.

15. We are further concerned about the effects of the international economic crisis, financial debts of African countries, the danger of the Doha round failing, and the repercussions of not achieving sustainable development in Africa.

16. We remain concerned that 40 per cent of the 1.4 billion people worldwide without access to energy services are in Africa, and almost entirely in sub-Saharan Africa. Access to sustainable energy facilitates development and contributes to the achievements of internationally agreed sustainable development goals, including the MDGs. However, we recognize the opportunities offered by the energy sector in terms of growth, social and economic development and improved quality of life. We reiterate our commitment to addressing the energy challenge by improving the availability of sustainable forms of energy in rural areas.

17. We recognize that Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent globally, with a growth rate of 3.4 per cent. Almost 40 per cent of Africa's people live in urban areas; and it is projected that by 2050, 60 per cent of all Africans will be living in cities. Not only are planning and financing urban development a priority, they also present a major opportunity to structure growth that will lead to job creation to secure ecosystem integrity, and deliver affordable public services. Furthermore, we recognize the need to provide adequate support to the informal sector, which presents significant potential for poverty eradication. We, therefore, undertake and equally enjoin the international community to promote well-planned human settlements and to catalyze green-based urban growth for the realization of sustainable urbanization.

18. We are concerned by increasing challenges posed by internal and international migration, compounded by climate change, and call for appropriate solutions to be found at the national and international levels to protect the dignity of migrants.

19. We recognize the special needs and challenges faced by countries emerging from conflicts. In this regard, we urge the international community and the United Nations system to address these needs and challenges by providing technical assistance, financial support and infrastructure development.

20. We affirm the many actions undertaken by African countries to address new and emerging challenges, and call on the international community to provide meaningful support, including by adequately supplementing the means of implementation at the disposal of African countries.

III. The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

21. We reiterate the need to define the green economy as a tool for achieving sustainable development, and to assess the opportunities and challenges related to this concept, as well as the means of implementation needed to achieve a smooth transition to a green economy in our countries.

22. We note that the combined stream of economic, social and environmental crises that have plagued the global economy in recent years points to a need to reorient the current development models towards a more efficient, inclusive and sustainable economy by enhancing the resource efficiency of national economies, and decoupling economic activity from environmental degradation. In this context, we recognize that the transition to a green economy could offer new opportunities for advancing the achievement of Africa's sustainable development objectives through economic growth, employment creation, and the reduction of poverty and inequalities, in accordance with the principles and recommendations of the 1992 Rio Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

23. We confirm that through a consultative process, African countries have already begun to identify opportunities and challenges in the region's transition to a green economy.

24. We emphasize that, for Africa to benefit from this transition, the promotion of a green economy in the region should be underlined by national objectives, social, economic and environmental development imperatives and the attainment of internationally agreed sustainable

31. We further call for enhanced implementation of UNCCD, supported by a globally agreed strong and effective science-policy interface, and improvement of the financing framework for implementation.

32. We reiterate that the green economy should not be used as a trade barrier or to impose conditionalities on developing countries; neither should it be used by developed countries as a pretext for not fulfilling their pledges and commitments towards developing countries. The green economy should be based on the Rio principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and respect the policy space of each country.

33. We emphasize that transitioning to a green economy, including the scoping thereof, should be accompanied by adequate means of implementation, including new and additional financial, technological and technical assistance to developing countries, in Africa, especially. At the regional level, countries need to develop their own marketing mechanisms. Furthermore, all parties, in particular, developed countries, should refrain from using unilateral measures or initiatives in this framework.

34. We further emphasize that the transition to a green, efficient and inclusive economy in Africa would require increased investments, access to technologies and capacity-building. This calls for the development of a new generation of physical and institutional infrastructure. To this end, we are of the view that an agreement on the Global Ten-Year Framework of Programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production would be a useful contribution, by Rio+20, to support the transition to green economies and help developing countries with financial and technical support, appropriate technology transfer, capacity-building and market access.

35. We are pleased to note that several African countries have already begun to identify opportunities and challenges in the region's transition to a green economy through different regional support programmes. We are further gratified that over the years, innovative policies and practices on sustainable forms of farming, renewable energy development, ecosystem-based adaptation, resource efficient production and the enhancement of natural capital have been successfully implemented in some countries. We welcome the exchange of experiences and best practices in these areas, and call for the scaling up of these practices. We underscore the need for mechanisms to regulate the use of land for commercial purposes, with equity and judicial considerations of communities in mind.

IV. Institutional and strategic frameworks for sustainable development

36. We emphasize that the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD) should be based on Chapter 11 of the JPOI, the provisions of Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 (A21), the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (PFIA21), and the principles of the Rio Declarations, in particular, that of common but differentiated responsibilities. Furthermore, IFSD should promote the achievement of internationally agreed sustainable development goals, including the MDGs, taking into account the Monterrey Consensus and the needs of developing countries.

37. We are guided by the call made by the African Union Summit to ensure that Africa's interests on IFSD are defined and taken into account.

38. We acknowledge the need to strengthen international environmental governance within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, in order to promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

39. We call on the Conference to agree that all institutional frameworks for sustainable development should take the specific needs of Africa into account, in addressing the implementation gap, capacity-building, technology transfer, and linking the science-policy interface for environmental sustainability.

40. We recognize that IFSD is not an end in itself but is linked to the achievement of commonly agreed sustainable development goals, and should lead to the balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, without putting any additional burden on developing countries or posing an obstacle to their development prospects.

41. We acknowledge that sustainable development requires balanced integration of its three pillars - economic, social and environmental - by institutions and strategies that promote holistic and integrated approaches. We recognize that the region has responded to this requirement with varying degrees of success. However, a common challenge that persists is balancing the three pillars, especially in planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plans and programmes.

42. We confirm that institutional reforms have been undertaken and sustainable development strategies developed, while implementation has commenced at all levels. We are pleased that to a large extent, multi-stakeholder participation has improved, and institutional and programmatic linkages have been established. The various long-term visions, plans and strategies have also catered for inter-generational and intra-generational equity.

43. We note that institutional reform is an ongoing process designed to implement sustainable development strategies. In addition to reforming global coordination of the sustainable development agenda, we recall that the WSSD identified NEPAD as the regional framework for sustainable development and, in this regard, we call for enhanced implementation through subregional initiatives.

44. We urge countries to consider establishing, reviving and further strengthening national sustainable development strategies and councils, with a mandate to address the challenge of integrating economic, social and environmental goals by engaging a broader range of ministries and stakeholders at country level. We call on Rio+20 to explore the possibility of reactivating and reinvigorating the National Councils for Sustainable Development to enable them to coordinate, consolidate and ensure the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in the highest decision-making bodies. These should be adequately capacitated to play a more active role. To this end, we call on the international community to assist in developing effective and responsive institutional frameworks for sustainable development in the region.

45. We recognize that regional and subregional institutions have a significant role to play in spurring the establishment and development of institutional and strategic frameworks for sustainable development, as well as in ensuring their effective operationalization and implementation. We underscore the need to support these institutions and facilitate institutional coherence and harmonization of relevant development policies, plans and programmes. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to ensure effective linkage among global, regional, subregional and national processes to advance sustainable development, based on the principle of subsidiarity.

46. We support the efforts to reform the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, to enhance their capabilities to help countries achieve sustainable development, and we emphasize the importance to increase synergies, coherence, and coordination within the United Nations system and between the United Nations system and international financial institutions, as well as between the Rio Conventions, with respect to their individual mandates, to support developing countries to achieve sustainable development.

47. We underscore the need for the full involvement of all key ministries and relevant stakeholders, in order to adequately mainstream sustainable development goals into national policies, strategies, plans and programmes. In this respect, we call on Rio+20 to decisively support the involvement of all ministries and other stakeholders to enable them to exercise their full responsibilities in sustainable development.

48. We are concerned about the impacts that rising sea levels, coastal erosion, dumping of hazardous waste, degradation of lacustrine ecosystems, and unsustainable fishing are having on concerned communities, national economies and sustainable development. In this context, we recommend the introduction of a global mechanism for revitalizing institutions at global, regional and national levels for sustainable management of coastal, marine, and lacustrine resources, while respecting national sovereignty.

49. We undertake to establish platforms for dialogue on sustainable development among stakeholders at the regional, subregional and national levels, to promote and popularize sustainable development in the African context. We also undertake to assess how best to implement commitments and share experiences with a view to determining what works, what does not work and why, and to take appropriate actions to accelerate implementation progress.

50. We recognize the need for a clear and actionable indicator framework for sustainable development at the national level, to enhance understanding, guide integration modalities and identify the type of linkages that should exist among different sectors. In this connection, we request global and regional institutions to promote the development and application of sustainable development indicator frameworks.

51. We also recognize the need to have new reference indicators to assess the economic, social, and environmental performance of our economies, alongside the Gross Domestic Product. We should also use these new indicators and the Human Development Index to have a better understanding of the state of our economies and ensure the preservation of our natural environment and a more sustainable development. We recommend the adoption of policies that promote the integration of the true environmental costs of production and consumption into accounting models,

in order to address the cause rather than the symptoms of environmental and natural resource degradation and depletion. We also recognize the need for multifaceted and empirical and scientific evidence-based standardization systems , to help us move to sustainable consumption and growth. We call on the international community to support Africa in adopting these systems.

52. We reaffirm the role of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in promoting a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in the region, and call on the Commission, the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the African Development Bank, and the Regional Economic Communities to continue facilitating consultative meetings and processes to monitor, evaluate and scale up the implementation of sustainable development commitments by African countries.

53. In line with the Assembly of the African Union decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.381(XVII)), calling on member States to take into consideration the need to strengthen, consolidate and transform the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) into an international specialized institution for the environment based in Nairobi, Kenya, we strongly call on the Rio +20 Conference to endorse the decision of the Assembly of the African Union which recognizes that current institutional structures did not fully address Africa's needs in matters of the environment, sustainable development and climate change, within the context of revision of institutional frameworks for sustainable development.

54. In the context of the African position for the establishment of an international specialized institution, we affirm that any such institution, whatever its form, should have the following characteristics:

(a) Have a strong mandate and the political visibility, to fulfil the key functions of an effective international environmental governance system as set out in the Nairobi-Helsinki outcomes, working with major economic and social sectors at the international level to ensure that their policies are mutually-supportive of sustainable development;

(b) Be universal in its membership and decision-making, with each member State allocated one vote and decisions taken by consensus;

(c) Be an autonomous body that could set the global policy agenda for environment and provide guidance for environmental financing;

(d) Have secure, stable, additional and predictable financing to fulfil its mandate;

(e) Have increased authority to bring coordination and coherence to the range of multilateral environmental agreements, by promoting synergies while respecting the legal autonomy of the conferences of the parties to those agreements;

(f) Have a strengthened regional presence, and improved implementation at the national level through the development of operational capacity;

(g) Have the authority to lead a process of United Nations system-wide strategic planning for the environment and to coordinate the inputs of the many agencies with environmental mandates in the international system;

(h) Promote the science-policy interface to deal with pressing environmental sustainability concerns, and to support national and regional scientific networks and scientists; and

(i) Have the ability to enhance capacity and technology support, especially for Africa, monitor the effectiveness of implementation, and facilitate access to technology and technology transfer.

55. We stress that a new specialized institution should not imply the establishment of an environment inspection body, compliance mechanism for developing countries, or the introduction of green conditionalities or trade barriers, and should not lead to additional financial burdens for Africa.

V. Means of implementation

56. We recognize that African countries are primarily responsible for driving their own sustainable development agenda. In this regard, we confirm that countries have established and strengthened regional, subregional and national organizations to accompany them in the development process. We also recognize that well-targeted external support is crucial to meeting the incremental costs of realizing commitments on means of implementation.

57. We emphasize that Rio+20 must focus on delivering on the *Means of Implementation*. There are several critical gaps undermining the fulfilment of international commitments on the achievement of sustainable development in Africa, especially in the areas of finance, external debt, trade investment, capacity-building, and technology transfer. This package of international commitments and support, which must be urgently met, includes:

(a) The commitment of developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GDP to developing countries in the framework of official development assistance must be met, as well as the target of 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for least developed countries;

(b) The need to meet the commitment of doubling aid to Africa by 2010 as articulated at the Summit of the Group of Eight, held at Gleneagles in July 2005;

(c) The urgent need for the international community to adopt an effective, equitable, durable and development-oriented solution to the debt problems of developing countries, particularly through total debt cancellation, and increased concessional financial flows;

(d) The need to fully implement the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building, and the provisions contained in Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 and the JPOI Agreements on technology transfer;

(e) The need for a development-oriented universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system, and to reinvigorate multilateral trade negotiations, to achieve a development-oriented outcome of the Doha Round. We also call for facilitating the accession of developing countries to the World Trade Organization;

(f) The need to recognize that science and technology are vital for the achievement of development goals and that the "technological gap" impedes the capacity of African countries to participate fully in the global economy. It also constitutes a major challenge in their efforts to enhance productive capacity, increase competitiveness, attract private capital flow, generate income and employment, reduce poverty and achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development;

58. We affirm that the following means of implementation identified in Agenda 21, PFIA21 and JPOI are indispensable to ensuring the full and effective translation of sustainable development commitments into tangible sustainable development outcomes in the areas of financing, technology development and transfer, capacity development, globalization and trade, regional integration and South-South cooperation. We also affirm that the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness, as well as the ongoing discussions between Africa and its partners on development effectiveness, are equally relevant;

59. We recognize that in order to meet current sustainable development commitments and any new commitments that may emerge from Rio+20, we need to capitalize on the synergies that exist among the various means of implementation, to ensure the effectiveness of the interventions, and invest financial and human resources efficiently. For instance, appropriate investments in vocational training and capacity development will help the transition towards a green economy and sustain the existing blue economy, which, in turn, will facilitate economic diversification and improve the prospect of international trade for African products. In this regard:

(a) We commit ourselves to enhancing our efforts to improve the national governance environment, ensuring full accountability of institutions and transparent and inclusive planning and budgetary processes, by developing national strategies for sustainable development. In this respect, we call on the international community to step up efforts to support the strengthening of institutions and planning capabilities in Africa;

(b) We undertake to improve domestic resource mobilization for sustainable development, including through innovative mechanisms, and increased use of public-private partnerships;

(c) We underscore that despite the need to increase domestic effort, Africa alone cannot meet the sustainable development challenge, especially in the face of new and emerging issues such as climate change, and the global financial and economic crisis. We therefore enjoin the international community to meet its commitments in terms of transfer of financial and technological resources, while ensuring that these complement and strengthen domestic effort, and are conducive to skills development and capacity-building. In this regard, we shall make development effectiveness a key priority, to which non-traditional donors should also adhere;

(d) We call on development partners and non-traditional donors to make more use of country systems to strengthen their national institutional structures, and to include sustainable development criteria in financial international institutions, in order to facilitate investment in sustainable development. This would advance the development effectiveness agenda. We understand development effectiveness in the broader context of sustainable development, which fosters greater policy coherence with trade, investment and other sectoral policies, which greatly influence progress towards sustainable development. In this context, we pledge to harmonize local, national, subregional, regional and international efforts and pursue policy coherence;

(e) We enjoin the international community to fulfil commitments undertaken within the framework of the Copenhagen Accord and the Cancun Agreements for additional fast-start financing, and long-term financing, effective 2013, including the establishment of a Green Climate Fund, which should be directly accessible to developing countries;

(f) We recognize the need to enhance south-south cooperation and to adopt and promote coordinated, integrated, inclusive and transparent cooperation arrangements and initiatives;

(g) We emphasize that technology transfer should target appropriate and safe green technologies that can help Africa exploit its rich natural resource base without undermining its sustainability. We will step up efforts to improve skills development, while ensuring that the targeted skills are conducive to the transition towards a green economy. Furthermore, we call for the transfer of appropriate technologies to be based on fair and equitable principles;

(h) We affirm the need to reform education curricula and systems in Africa in support of the sustainable development agenda in general, and the transition to a green economy in particular. We recognize the key role played by science, technology and innovation in the implementation of a sustainable development agenda. We undertake to increase investments in science, technology and innovation in order to ensure that Africa is not left behind in the race for green technologies. We shall promote and strengthen institutions for technology innovation, introduce codes and standards that can foster green developments, build partnerships within and outside the region for technology development, and also encourage industry-academia-government partnerships. In this respect, we recognize that it is critical to strengthen networking among institutions and centres of excellence within and outside Africa;

(i) We call for a programme of support to help African countries assess the costs and benefits of a green economy transition, formulate and implement relevant policies that address the needs and priorities of Africa so that the green economy contributes to Africa’s sustainable development and poverty eradication objectives;

(j) We underscore the need to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies, including the three facets of capacity development, namely: human resource development; organizational development; and institutional development, in order to help minimize migration of skilled labour. We commit ourselves to strengthening partnerships with non-traditional actors and the private sector, both within and outside countries, in order to leverage resources and capacities for sustainable development;

(k) We recognize that regional integration has a critical role to play in promoting economic diversification, expanding markets, pooling and more efficient allocation of resources, and addressing transboundary as well as globalization issues and challenges confronting Africa. We thus pledge to deepen and accelerate regional integration in Africa;

(l) We further recognize that while trade is clearly an important element of sustainable development, we will ensure that our economies do not rely solely on international trade for economic growth, as this would over-expose them to the vagaries of international markets. In this regard, we undertake to enhance intra-African trade, and call on the international community to support economic diversification in Africa, as it can play a key role in reducing the region's vulnerability to external shocks;

(m) We are deeply concerned that despite its size, Africa has too little a voice in international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, and at the G-20. The continent's specific needs are not well taken into account in the current debate on reshaping the international financial architecture. We therefore stress the need for Africa's special circumstances and interests to be fully reflected in the international governance set up.

Broad-based participation

60. We acknowledge that sustainable development requires all major groups at all levels to play a meaningful role, as participation engenders collective ownership of a process and promotes a strong sense of commitment in the delivery of results. In this regard, the participation of all stakeholders representing the nine major groups in national, regional and international forums on sustainable development should be ensured.