



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

**Ministerial Segment
Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for the
United Nations Conference of Sustainable Development (Rio+20)**

**Statement
by
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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
24 October 2011**

Your Excellency, Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency, Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo,

Your Excellency, Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by welcoming you to the United Nations Conference Centre and to the
Ministerial Segment of the Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for the United
Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, popularly known as the Rio+20
Conference.

Their Excellencies, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia, and President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo are here with
us today and I wish to thank them most sincerely for accepting to grace this occasion
and for championing Africa's sustainable development agenda.

I am also glad that my brother Dr. Jean Ping is here with us and I would like to thank
him for the strong collaboration that we have had with the African Union Commission,
which was similarly complemented by the United Nations Development Programme,
represented here by Mr. Teg Gettu and the United Nations Environment Programme
whose Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Amina Mohammed is here with us. The African
Development Bank was also a key partner in this process but its President, Dr. Donald
Kaberuka is unable to join us this morning due to his desire to remain in Tunisia during the
elections held yesterday.

Excellencies,

The first Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 put sustainable development firmly on the global agenda. It also established that sustainable development is multi-dimensional in nature and requires both the effective engagement of all the stakeholders and the balanced integration of its economic, social and environmental pillars. It is therefore very appropriate that this conference has attracted such an impressive turnout of a diverse range of actors engaged in promoting the sustainable development agenda.

It is common knowledge that African economies have continued to achieve and sustain positive real growth rates since 2000 and were relatively resilient in the face of the global economic and financial crisis. However, the improved economic performance of the last decade has not translated into commensurate reduction in unemployment and poverty, nor into outstanding progress towards achieving the MDGs. Indeed, environmental degradation and erosion of our natural resource base continues unabated, and poverty and income inequalities persist.

Given these trends, the call made in Rio nineteen ^{years} ago for a balanced integration of the interdependent and mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development remains relevant. This is why the Rio+20 meeting taking place next year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil has been carefully designed to enable reflection on the journey since 1992 and to give greater momentum to the pursuit of sustainable development, taking into account present realities. The Conference aims to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development and to establish agreed outcomes two main themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Debates on the green economy in various global forums show that the international community is still grappling with the concept and what it means for the sustainable

development agenda. Yet, it is not debateable that we need to rethink existing growth paradigms given the continued imbalance between the three pillars of sustainable development and the need to move from old resource intensive methods of growth to ones in which productivity is boosted by the more efficient use of natural resources, and which reduces environmental degradation, tackles climate change, and protect biodiversity.

Africa on its part has moved to embrace the green economy because of its undoubtable advantages but we must also acknowledge that it still poses some dilemmas for us. We know for instance that moving to a green growth paradigm while striving for growth that creates jobs and helps to meet the MDGs will be a costly process. We are also concerned that a global outcome should lead to regulatory framework that leads to loss of competitiveness, encourages trade protectionism and the imposition of more policy conditionalities on developing economies.

The outcomes of Rio+20 must address such concerns and also provide appropriate governance mechanisms to achieve desired objectives, which is why articulating the institutional frameworks for sustainable development at Rio+20 is an indispensable part of any viable outcome. An agreed institutional framework must promote coordination and synergies across various sectors and actors, and give greater voice to developing countries. The African Union Summit adopted a resolution on this matter at its last summit in Malabo and we have also prepared a document on this matter to assist further discussion at this meeting. The challenge before us now is to ensure that outcomes on the institutional framework are good for Africa and, indeed, for the rest of the international community.

One important element that brings all these issues together and which will continue to determine the pace and scale of progress is the means of implementation related to

financing, technology, capacity development, and the harnessing of opportunities provided by globalization, trade, regional integration and south-south cooperation. Limited progress in this area has been a constant feature since the 1992 conference, which is why the various preparatory committees for Rio+20 have underlined the importance of delivery on the means of implementation as a critical element in the process.

In Africa, the NEPAD programme of the African Union provides an integrated framework for sustainable development, as it addresses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of Africa's development challenges and priorities. We should take the opportunity provided by Rio+20 to secure renewed international commitment to strengthen and deepen the implementation of NEPAD programmes.

Before I conclude, I urge Ministers to closely examine progress made towards sustainable development and to help identify and articulate practical and effective policy options and measures that will reinforce international commitment and support to Africa's sustainable development agenda. The African Consensus Statement to be adopted at this meeting is but a first step towards realising these objectives. I should also stress in this regard that since most of the consultations will take place in New York, there is need for strong coordination between capitals and our diplomatic representatives in Addis Ababa and New York. Africa must prepare itself and rally round to speak with one strong voice on the region's interests and priorities.

In concluding, I wish to once again extend sincere appreciation to our leaders, partners and collaborators for their invaluable support to the successful convening of this Conference. We count on your continued commitment and engagement up to and beyond Rio+20. It is also an opportune time to appreciate the efforts of our experts who

have worked hard over the last few days and whose deliberations will inform and underpin this Ministerial meeting.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you very fruitful deliberations.

