

**MINISTERIAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON PROGRESS IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS AND
NEW EMERGING CHALLENGES. -24TH OCTOBER 2011ADDIS
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Hon Ministers, invited Guests Ladies and Gentlemen, I am here today proud to have been given this opportunity to contribute in this important policy dialogue on the progress made in the implementation of sustainable development and the new emerging challenges.

Major groups are part of civil society, and are the most significant institutional evolution since World Earth Summit in RIO 1992. Since then, civil society has developed its engagement on all fronts and at different levels, providing leading forums, pioneering in implementing, advocating for a shift in paradigms, and actively pushing to introduce reforms globally and regionally.

These organizations are effective in program design, implementation and monitoring. They have proven experience and success in fundraising for diverse projects, and possess strong advocacy skills. On monitoring sustainable development, civil society organizations have effectively played a watchdog role, worked with and pressured governments, and advocated for more progressive agendas. Civil society operates from the local to the global level, and is able to create linkages and information, and to mobilize ideas and resources across sovereign boundaries.

Despite being defined in Agenda 21 and have been provided a working mechanism for inputs to the Commission on Sustainable Development

and other UN processes, it is clear that in Africa, this has not been the same as it has been acknowledged by different presentation during the expert segment of this meeting last week. It is time to acknowledge their constructive role, and to increase civil society participation in Africa.

Hon Ministers, Mr. Chairman, ladies and Gentlemen. We appreciate the progress made so far by African States in the implementation of sustainable development in Africa. We have seen this through the approaches undertaken with a mind of progress and partnership. National strategies of implementing Agenda 21 have been visible and over 95% of countries have already ratified the main Environmental Conventions created in Rio 20 years ago. Progress has been seen in the Development of National strategies, policies and institutional coordination mechanisms for sustainable development. There has been improvement of institutional mechanisms for following up on international obligation on integrated environmental considerations into development activities. National Policies and laws relating to environment have been agreed upon and international environmental treaties have been supported and signed by African countries, a good example being the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing which was fully supported in the process of its development by African Governments and later agreed in Nagoya during the 10th Conference of parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. African leaders on the other hand have continued to show commitments in discussing challenges in implementing sustainable development initiatives.

Africa has introduced very good initiatives and institutions formed at the regional level in the implementation of sustainable development. Such strategies as NEPAD and the Regional Economic Communities have

been key in the implementation of the set activities. A good number of issues have been addressed such as Regional infrastructure development to promote trade and integration, land policy initiatives of the African Union, ECA and ADB framework, to manage diminishing grazing lands and land degradation, and environmental management aimed at rehabilitating land resources, approaches on water resource development, promotion of coordinated sustainable forest management in response to population growth and increased demand for food, energy and other resources. It is however important therefore that Action plan of the Environmental Initiative of those institutions be reviewed so as to ensure effective implementation of regional and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

Hon Ministers, Mr. Chairman ladies and Gentlemen, despite the many successes, there has been emerging challenges that have pushed Africa as continent behind in the process. Natural Resources continue to deteriorate in Africa, unsustainable Production and consumption, biodiversity loss and climate change are increasing poverty and instability and reducing options and opportunities for African countries in the future. Biodiversity resources sustain the livelihoods of million of people in the region. Population pressure, climate change occasioned by the new resource scramble for Africa are but a few of those challenges that have brought with them scarcity of water, the food crisis, energy, drought, desertification, youth unemployment and worst of all the global financial and economic crisis.

With such problems, the vulnerable, poor, and disempowered peoples cannot rely on market mechanisms. They need rights to protect their lives and livelihoods. In the present global market economy, the poor will

always lose out to the rich in the distribution of increasingly scarce resources. Mechanisms for international management of trade in resources for the collective benefit of all peoples and the planet will be the best means to protect the interests of the weak against exploitation by the powerful, and ultimately to ensure the equitable distribution of resources in the common interest.

Such management must aim both to reserve adequate resources for poverty reduction and to ensure sustainability for future generations. Empower communities as stewards of nature, particularly ensuring land rights and use the international system to constrain behaviors that undermine indigenous governance, value systems and sustainability. Link the institutional arrangements for sustainability to the educational processes, media and institutions of civil society that play an important role both in building the human capacity to implement sustainability and in preparing public opinion to support the necessary actions to ensure equity and protect environmental systems and resources

The term “Green Economy” implies not only green technologies, infrastructure, investments, and jobs; but also a more equitable society with chances for everyone to earn a living wage, partake freely in democratic political activities, and increase their own well-being, as well as the wellbeing of their communities and of the entire planet. Africa should create governance mechanisms that provide an enabling framework for a green and equitable economy, thus stimulating business innovation and local experimentation. As a developing continent Africa must prioritize an integrated approach to poverty eradication, development and environment should feature more prominently and be embedded within sustainable policies. In many traditional cultures there

was no concept of private property, but alternatives based on shared rights and responsibilities, community and decision-making. We need to explore these alternative economic models and ask what they may have to offer to a more equitable and sustainable global economy that goes beyond the present disfunctional economic paradigm. The global financial architecture needs restructuring based on principles of equity, transparency, accountability and democracy

Indigenous and local communities are holders of valuable traditional ecological knowledge, which can make an important contribution to sustainable environmental, social, and economic policymaking. The Johannesburg Political declaration did acknowledge the “Vital role played by Indigenous Peoples in sustainable development”. This however has not been the case, as African Governments have not shown any commitment and good will. Economic globalization constitutes a major obstacle for the recognition of the rights of Indigenous and local communities on the continent majority of them join the vulnerable, poor, and disempowered peoples who cannot rely any more on their traditional economic systems of livelihoods. These communities are migrating from rural areas to urban putting more pressure on the high population growth already occurring in urban areas posing a significant challenge to sustainable development. Left behind in the rural areas are women who encounter challenges as they struggle to feed their children youth and the old. Historically women are also known as key players in the food production sector. However it is known that the access and ownership of land had been a major constraints by African women coupled with the large acquisition of land for industrial agriculture. This Mr. Chairman has left them to see alternatives, which have not made a positive impact to their lives and those of their families and communities.

The Rio process must ensure that precautionary measures are put in place to help States reserve adequate resources for poverty reduction and to ensure sustainability for future generations. Empower communities as stewards of nature, particularly ensuring land rights and using the international system to constrain behaviors that undermine indigenous governance, value systems and sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop inclusive and transparent guidelines/standards for civil society engagement in these forums and processes, and should be fully involved during and after processes of Rio+20 through recognizing their contribution in negotiations and establishing financial mechanisms so as to enhance representation and participation.
2. Civil society should be enabled to provide input in various forms: data collection and analysis, improving management and decision-making processes, reflecting on the role of the various actors, and agenda-setting and policy development.
3. It is important for African States to open up to wider partnerships and collaborations with all non-state actors including civil society in all its diversity, to enable practical solutions to emerge. Only through such collaborations will it be possible to mobilize greater resources, in order to reach the public and especially women, the youth and those communities in the remote areas through information, capacity building and empowerment programmes.

4. It is important to ensure that the three pillars are working and must be implemented. If one of them is not working then there will be no success. It is for this reason that Civil Society encourages the emphasis of Good and working environmental Governance. It has to be one of the crucial out come of Rio. Indeed most us civil society endorses the decision of the Assembly of the AU to have UNEP as an international specialized Institution of the Environment. More so should still be based in Nairobi the African continent.
5. Addressing poverty reduction, food security and youth employment should be top on agenda at Rio+20 and allow civil society representatives to participate in decision-making and support knowledge generation and sharing among key players in developing countries.
6. While sharing the concern for technology transfer, new technologies must be carefully evaluated for their social and environmental risks before they are commercialized.
7. Urge African governments to ensure that Green Economies enhance human well-being, narrows the gap between rich and poor, create decent green jobs.
8. National Development Plans be the driving policy instruments towards a realizing a green economy baring in mind that this transition be sector specific such as waste management, forestry, agriculture and tourism

9. African Governments must accelerate the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio declaration. Implement the principles of transparency and access to information, meaningful opportunities for public participation, and accountability as fundamental elements of institutional arrangements for sustainability, and ensure monitoring and review framework so as to track Africa's progress in balancing the 3 pillars of Sustainable Development

10. Strengthen the capacity of countries to implement effective environmental policies, in particular with regards to environmental rule of law, through technical assistance and advocacy of environmental justice and rights.

11. Provide a supportive international framework matched with predictable funding for regional programmes, conventions and intergovernmental organizations, and ensure that they are implemented by nation-states in the institutional arrangements for sustainability.

12. Rio+20 needs to strengthen an agricultural system that is sustainable, resilient to climate change, improve food security and benefit the livelihood of millions of farmers and their families.