

**Experts Segment
Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable
Development Goals**

Opening Address

By

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Representatives of:

The African Union Commission;

African Development Bank

United Nations Development Programme;

United Nations Environment Programme; and

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, it is indeed my great pleasure to welcome you all to Addis Ababa and Ethiopia, and to the Experts Segment of the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we all know, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development also known as Rio+20 held last year, our heads of States and Governments, as well as other high level representatives reached a decision to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process open to all stakeholders to define global Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) to be agreed upon by the UN General Assembly. The UN General Assembly Open Working Group on the SDGS established in pursuit of this decision is mandated to consult widely and submit a proposal on the SDGs to the General Assembly for consideration and appropriate action.

Rio+20 also recognized the efforts underway to come up with a successor global level framework for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are set to expire in the year 2015. As such, Rio+20 acknowledged that the SDGs should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations Development Agenda Beyond 2015.

The agenda before us at this meeting is therefore of great significance:

First, it presents Africa with the opportunity to take championship of its development agenda and ensure that its development aspirations and priorities are well articulated, defended and adequately reflected in the ongoing process to define global sustainable development goals that should be adequately integrated into the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

I therefore wish at the outset to stress and call upon all experts to be bold and ensure that what comes out of this meeting are Africa's development driven-goals. Our discussion over the next

three days should take cognizance of the realities of millions of our people, and their aspirations for a prosperity future. Our discussions should therefore pay particular attention to the development trajectory that Africa should pursue, particularly to extricate its people from the pangs of poverty, as well as create jobs and ensure sustainable economic transformation that benefits all.

Secondly, the meeting presents the region with the opportunity to carefully reflect on the two on-going processes, namely the elaboration of sustainable development goals, and designing of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. There is no doubt that these two processes are complementary and reinforce each other. They are both intended to catalyse concrete actions and achieve time bound development outcomes aimed at the same beneficiaries across the globe.

In this regard, I wish to call upon you all to carefully reflect and come up with proposals for one set of goals that encapsulate Africa's development priorities that would place sustainability as a central strand of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Over the next three days, we should deliberate on Africa's priorities, as well as the issue of harmonising the two processes and provide our ministers with pointed advice, including clear steps needed to bring these processes to an early convergence. By achieving convergence of the two processes, we shall be paving way for one integrated development framework at the global level, thus eliminating the prospects of multiple national planning frameworks. A multiplicity of planning frameworks is a disservice to our resource-constrained region, and would negate the desire for focused attention and concerted efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our continent proved resilient in the face of the global economic crisis that hit the world over the last few years. The region continues to post remarkable growth figures projected to increase from 4.8 per cent this year to 5.1 percent in 2014.

In spite of these growth rates, we should not lose sight of the following key challenges that need addressing:

One, to consolidate growth and ensure that it is pro-jobs, inclusive and benefits a large majority our population, and therefore adequate to lift Africans out of poverty, disease and hunger which continue to burden Africa's economies.

Secondly, to capitalize on this growth trajectory and set our continent on the right footing to achieve structural transformation.

In the context of these challenges, we need to use this meeting to take a hard and honest look at what worked and did not work with the MDGs framework.

It is in light of this that I would like to stress that the goals that we eventually agree on should also prioritize and deliver investments to strengthen Africa's major growth engines without

which prospects for economic transformation are doomed to fail. One such major engines with wide ranging ramifications, is infrastructure.

This is the time and an opportunity for us to agree on goals that will address the dire energy poverty of our region. The acute energy insecurity in our region has been fueled by the general stagnation in sustainable energy development in Africa. Access to modern energy sources that are affordable, clean, reliable and safe should not continue to elude millions of people in our region. Despite our energy potential, only twenty per cent of Africa's population has direct access to electricity and 70 per cent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa lives without access to clean and safe energy for cooking, lighting and heating.

The stagnation of energy development is also a major impediment to Africa's industrial drive which is so central to economic diversification and job creation in the region. Without adequate and reliable sources of energy, Africa will continue to export wealth and jobs in the form of unprocessed and no or low value-added commodities.

Moreover, as a result of the poor access to affordable, clean, reliable and safe energy sources, there is mounting pressure on Africa's natural resources, especially forests and biodiversity. In 47 sub-Saharan countries, most rural and urban residents rely on wood-based biomass to satisfy their energy needs, especially for cooking. About 81 per cent of households burn solid fuels, far more than any other region in the world. Without sustainable energy development, pressure on Africa's forests and biodiversity will not be relieved. The regions contribution to overall sustainable development, including through climate change adaptation and mitigation, will continue to be undermined.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, Ethiopia has been implementing the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) which will help Ethiopia to under go a major strategic shift to embark on a transformational growth trajectory aimed at not only lifting millions of people out of poverty but placing it strongly on the path to become a middle income country by 2025. Ethiopia is determined to transform, buoyant and confident as it is based on the solid and sustained economic growth attained over the past decade.

The GTP aims to foster broad-based and inclusive development in a sustainable manner to achieve its vision. The Plan has taken into account all dimensions of sustainable development which includes social, economic growth and environmental aspect.

As a result the country is now experiencing remarkable economic growth, human development, on a right track to achieve most of the MDGs and building a resilient and a green economy.

Ethiopia is of the view that the sustainable development and Post-2015 development agenda should be consistent and complementary and should primarily focus on the eradication of poverty through accelerated and inclusive economic growth. To do so, Africa should focus on building its productive capacity, which is the basis for competitiveness in the global market.

In this regard, Ethiopia has been giving high priority for investing in pro-poor sectors demonstrated through 60-70% of its budget allocation. These include energy for all, rural roads, railway, education, health, WASH among others.

Ethiopia has demonstrated its commitment to build resilient and green economy balancing all dimensions of sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are high prospects for African countries to individually and collectively continue to rise and achieve greater competitiveness at the global level. To this end, unity of purpose and coherence in our engagement with the international community is paramount.

We should capitalize on the rich and diverse participation at this meeting to harmonize the rich views on Africa's development. I wish therefore, to call upon this meeting to agree on the draft outcome document that you will present to your ministers, as well as clear strategies to promote Africa's common position, and ensure that the continent's priorities feature prominently in the frameworks that will shape and drive development across the globe.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.