



United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Statement by Fatima Denton

Officer-in-Charge, Special Initiatives Division

Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals

Ato Admasu Nebebe, Director of UN Agencies and Regional Economic Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Representatives of the AUC, AfDB and other partners

Representatives of UN Agencies, Representatives of diplomatic missions in Addis A-ba-ba

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of Mr. Carlos Lopes, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development Goals. The convening of this meeting by the Economic Commission for Africa, African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) demonstrates the commitment of our respective organisations in supporting member States to pursue focused and coherent action on sustainable development.

This stems from our resolve to pool resources and use our comparative advantage to strive for transformative change in our societies. It is gratifying to observe the great partnership that binds our three institutions echoing the timeless maxim of

As a follow-up to Rio+20, the ECA, in collaboration with the AUC, AfDB and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) organised the Africa Regional Implementation Meeting (Africa-RIM) for the Twentieth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-20) in November 2012, to deliberate on the main outcomes of Rio+20 and its implications for Africa. This multi-stakeholder meeting adopted the Africa RIM Outcome Document, which serves as Africa's collective input to the UN General Assembly processes on Rio+20 follow-up. The Africa-RIM agreed on the need for an effective, broad-based, bottom-up and consultative process to flesh out the goals, indicators and targets that should underpin the SDGs.

Underscoring the global nature of the consultation process, a UN General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) comprising 30 representatives nominated by Member States from the five United Nations regional groups was established on 22 January 2013.

As you are aware, the Sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the AUC Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in March 2013 deliberated on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and implementation of the Rio+20 Outcomes in Africa. Ministers urged that necessary steps be taken to achieve an

Ladies and gentlemen;

This Africa regional consultation is important as it is expected to carry the “African voice” in the global development agenda. We are relying on your vast knowledge and expertise to effectively negotiate a draft Outcome Document of the Meeting that will be considered by your ministers on 4th and 5th November. The Outcome Document that is expected to be adopted at the end of this meeting will purvey Africa’s voice to ensure that SDGs are well aligned with the continent’s sustainable development priorities and aspirations.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us fast forward to the current realities in Africa. The continent is poised on a hopeful pathway and the slogan “Africa on the rise” has become a recurrent headline. Africa is the world’s second fastest growing region. Yet, according to the World Bank a little less than half of Africa’s population still live in extreme poverty.

Looking quickly at the paradoxes of our continent, Africa has around 600 million hectares of uncultivated arable land, roughly 60 percent of the global

The issue of water is perhaps the most vexing paradox. Our continent is rich in aquifers and transboundary rivers. Yet it is estimated that nearly 400 million people living in Africa's 36 largest river basins experience water scarcity for at least one month each year. And this links us to the energy challenge, the challenge of clean green energy for all. Africa is rich in energy resources and renewables, however these resources are unevenly distributed. Since the 1980s we have been talking about Africa's need for 'appropriate technology'. Today, we must face the reality that in a context of climate change, the technology that is most appropriate for Africa is green technology.

It is projected that in less than three generations, 41% of the world's youth will be Africans. It is believed that between 2010 and 2020, Africa will add an additional 163 million people to its potential labour force. By 2035, if such trends continue, the African labour force will outpace China's. In the interest of intergenerational equity how can we draw up a new social contract that will take on this new demographic time "line" from a position of enlightened self-interest?

Ladies and gentlemen, let me leave you with one last paradox, Africa boasts huge natural resource wealth that should boost economic growth. Many of our resource rich countries are "riding the crest of the commodity boom". The vast wealth associated with the management of extractives and natural resources is one of the

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in a perilous and unpredictable world, but the African continent gives us good reason for optimism. If sustainable development is to deliver to its fullest potential, Africa must become the hub, the laboratory in which we measure its outstanding results. This is precisely because in Africa, economic and structural transformation is the feedstock for a sustainable development agenda. This transformation is crucial to achieving sustainable growth that will create jobs, particularly for our youth. The future we want is that of shared prosperity for both this and future generations. Our defiance must stem from our resolve to “snuff out poverty” so that it does not continue to claim current and future lives and result in missed opportunities.

I trust therefore that the Draft Outcome Document that you will adopt in this Expert Segment of the meeting will effectively reflect these expectations. The world is indeed watching and the future we want will be more achievable if sustainable development compels us to reshuffle the cards and redistributes the gains to our children and future generations who, unlike us, do not have a choice in the world that we are likely to hand down to them.

I thank you all, and wish you fruitful deliberations.