



Statement

by

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at the

Ministerial Segment: High-Level Policy Dialogue

of the

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

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*Honorable Minister Ato Sufian Ahmed, Minister of Finance and Economic Development of Ethiopia,
Honorable Ministers and heads of delegations,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Let me start by thanking the Economic Commission for Africa, The African Union Commission and the African Development Bank for hosting this important event and congratulate my dear colleague Carlos Lopes for the excellent leadership in preparing the documents presented at this meeting, and for the excellent arrangements made to ensure its success. I would like to commend ECA for its partnership with OSAA in the implementation of our respective mandates at regional and global levels.

I will concentrate my remarks on the four main themes for the High-Level Dialogue. Today, from the United Nations perspectives, aiming to build on the gains Africa has made in the negotiating process to achieve the maximum possible results from the MDGs, from the shaping to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and from crafting the next stage in sustainable development through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I. The Post-2015 Development Agenda and Africa's development priorities A. Continuing importance of MDG acceleration

The Millennium Development Goals no doubt have provided a powerful framework for tackling poverty and galvanizing national, regional and global efforts towards promoting human development. Africa as a whole has made commendable progress towards achieving the MDGs.

Despite good progress that Africa has achieved, challenges remain.

According to the 2013 MDG Report prepared by the AUC, ECA, UNDP and the African Development Bank, poverty in Africa is not declining fast enough to reach the MDG target by the year 2015. Poverty on the continent remains extremely high, exacerbated by rising inequalities between and within African countries. This situation is compounded by persistent food insecurity and a high prevalence of hunger and malnutrition, particularly amongst children. According to the most recent data from FAO, the proportion of undernourished people in Africa fell by less than 5 percent between 1990 and 2009, slower than other developing regions. Africa was also the only region to experience a further decline in this regard after the food crisis. As such, Africa's undernourished population actually increased from 175 million in 1990 to 239 million by 2012.

In addition, while the continent has made progress regarding issues of health, some challenges still persist. In particular, Africa has had significant difficulty in meeting goals related to child mortality and maternal health, bearing the greatest burden of child and maternal deaths in the world. The continent has also had mixed progress on ensuring environmental sustainability, with challenges related to biodiversity, land degradation, deforestation, desertification and drought persisting.

In the Outcome Document of the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly on follow-up efforts made towards achieving the MDGs, held in September of this year, Member States

recognized that those challenges and others have kept most African countries "off track in meeting the MDGs".

That is why, as the international community looks ahead to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we must not forget the importance of unfinished business of the MDGs. As the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs draws near, fulfilling existing commitments and promises to Africa on the MDGs must remain a foremost priority. There is a need also to focus on the goals that are most off track and on African countries that face particular development challenges, paying more attention to conflict-affected countries and to the needs and rights of the most vulnerable and excluded groups.

Bolder actions are needed, both by African countries and the continent's development partners, to overcome challenges and fast-track progress over the next two years. This will not only requires holding partners to account to meet the targets of partnership set in MDG 8, it must also be side by side with the mobilization of necessary domestic resources of finance to supplement external support. Strong and meaningful efforts in this regard will ensure that Africa has a strong foundation from which to implement a universal transformative agenda for sustainable development beyond 2015. That would lead to regional integration as a vehicle for sustainable inclusive growth and African Renaissance.

In recognition of the importance of meeting all commitments made towards Africa's development, the United Nations General Assembly, in Resolution 66/293, decided to establish a United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, to review commitments made towards Africa's development. This Mechanism -- for which my Office will provide its Secretariat -- will play an important role in monitoring commitments made, both by African countries and their development partners, and will galvanize action on commitments that are critical for the continent's success.

B. New and emerging challenges, as well as some old ones that have intensified, must be addressed by the Post -2015 Development Agenda / Sustainable Development Goals:

New and emerging challenges that straddle the peace and development divide pose serious challenges to good economic and political progress and sustainable development in Africa, the continent's development efforts are hampered by lack of energy, dependency on extractive industries, inadequate infrastructure and weak institutional capacity. Indeed, human and drug trafficking, piracy and terrorism have emerged as key challenges on the continent. These challenges reflect the complex nexus between peace, security and development as well as the need for a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing them.

While intensifying their efforts to achieve the MDGs, Africa and the rest of the world are now focusing their attentions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. While it is important that the new agenda address unmet MDGs, including those related to poverty, food insecurity, water and sanitation, education and healthcare, it is also important to address the new and emerging challenges facing Africa. In order to fulfill our vision of promoting sustainable development, the agenda will have to integrate all three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, while addressing challenges beyond those considered by the MDGs.

One particularly important challenge for the continent is its changing demographics, particularly in the form of its rapidly growing youth population, and the related concerns of decent employment, urbanization and migration. With 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world. According to Africa's Economic Outlook 2012, this figure is expected to double by 2045. Unfortunately, job creation in Africa has not kept pace with economic growth or the continent's burgeoning youth population, creating greater risk of social instability and political unrest.

Another key challenge facing the continent is that of inequality and social exclusion. The stark income, gender and rural–urban inequalities, have hindered the continent's efforts to achieve the MDGs, limited the effects of the continent's growth on its poverty rates, and have sown the seeds of social unrest.

In addition, despite all efforts by the NEPAD Agency, progress in infrastructure development has been slow, with inadequate infrastructure remaining a major constraint to growth and the achievement of development goals. Energy poverty remains a particular challenge, with lack of access and consistency affecting much of the continent. 30 African countries have experienced energy crises in recent years and only 31 per cent of the Sub-Saharan African population had access to energy in 2010, the lowest level in the world. In addition, the paved road access rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is only 19 per cent, which is substantially lower than other regions, and implementation of PIDA, which now celebrate 10 years on its establishment, is lagging behind. I therefore thank the initiative of H.E. President Macky Sall of Senegal to convene a NEPAD Summit on financing infrastructure development before the end of the year, an initiative that enjoys wide support from the UN.

The continent also faces significant environmental sustainability challenges, particularly in the form of climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought. Soil erosion from overgrazing, unsustainable agricultural practices, aggravated by climate change, play a major role in overall land degradation, which affects almost two-thirds of the population.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that by 2020, between 75 and 250 million people in Africa will be exposed to increased water stress, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 per cent in some regions, and agricultural production and access to food, may be severely compromised. That is why the initiative of the Secretary-General of the UN to convene a Special Summit on Climate Change at the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly in 2014 is extremely important and Africa should be the largest beneficiary of such a Summit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The new agenda will need increased focus on the transformative agenda announced by the African Union, which is based on inclusive growth to support and reach the very poorest and most excluded people. In addition, to be truly effective, the transformative agenda will also have to take into account the pivotal nexus between peace, security and development, as well as the increasing importance of good governance and strong institutions that guarantee the rule of law, free speech and open and accountable government. Progress cannot be achieved or sustained amid armed

conflict, violence, insecurity and injustice. This is the clear message that the visit to the Sahel region that starts today sends. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations joined by, the President of the World Bank, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the African Development Bank, and the European Union Commissioner for Development, their joint visit will include; Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania and will strive to enhance the nexus between peace and security on one side and development on the other. It must be noted here that during a similar visit to the Great Lakes Region, the World Bank announced One Billion dollars in support of development projects that stabilizes peace and security in the region.

The transformative agenda will also need to address the critical means of implementation, with an emphasis on those highlighted in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation and the Rio+20 Outcome Document: financing sustainable development, technology development and transfer, capacity development, globalization and trade, regional integration and South-South cooperation.

II. Enhancing convergence between the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs process

While each of the working groups on SDGs and on Financing have their own focus, they are mutually reinforcing and will converge into a single, coherent and coordinated framework that is a blueprint for a new development agenda. It is imperative to craft a coherent framework that integrates in a balanced manner the three pillars of sustainable development, and has a set of goals that are universal in nature and applicable to all countries, while taking account of differing national and regional circumstances and giving countries their national policy space to pursue their own national strategies.

III. Strategies for ensuring that Africa priorities are effectively articulated in the global negotiations

A. Importance of Africa identifying and articulating a common position as soon as possible and launching it as a platform for negotiation

As processes are moving swiftly at the global level, time is of the essence. It is therefore imperative that Africa reaches consensus on a Common Position on Post-2015 Development Agenda including, the Sustainable Development Goals, as quickly as possible, in order to ensure ownership, mobilize action and use the Common Position as a platform for the region to speak with one voice. This model was successfully used by adopting the African Consensus before the Rio+20 process as well as during Climate Change negotiations.

Regional ownership, commitment and leadership by the AU and Regional Economic Communities will be critical at both the political and the technical levels to leverage opportunities to promote the African Common Position in ongoing deliberations, as well as to rally international support around an African Common Position that is well-aligned with the region's sustainable development priorities and aspirations.

B. Global Partnerships for Development

The African Common Position should amplify the importance of diverse and mutually beneficial partnerships that ensure ownership, coherence and alignment of international support with national and regional priorities. For global partnerships in development to work for Africa, they must be aligned with the strategic vision of the continent as outlined in the 2014-2017 Strategic Framework and guided by a unified continental voice. The partnerships should result in an environment in which means of implementation are availed and technology and skills transfer takes into account Africa's specific characteristics and conditions and a global governance architecture that is equitable and accountable.

C. Role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

As the United Nations increases its support to Africa at this initial stage, my Office will continue to support Africa's efforts to influence acceleration of MDG implementation as the foundation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDGs, and will also continue to rally international support for Africa's objectives to achieve a Post 2015 Development Agenda and SDGs that are well-aligned with the region's sustainable development priorities and aspirations. We are committed to galvanizing wide ranging support for the much anticipated African Common Position through our global advocacy function, as well as supporting the Africa Group in its negotiations. We will utilize our role as the convener of the UN Inter-departmental Task Force on African Affairs and with the close coordination and cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), led by my dear colleague Wu Hongbo and, with the Secretary-General' Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, Ms. Amina Mohammed and other funds and programmes to enhance the United Nations system-wide support towards full and successful implementation of Africa's priorities.

In addition, we will continue our work to promote Africa's partnerships with its traditional development partners, as well as with new and emerging development partners of the South and key stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society, the Diaspora and philanthropic organizations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

IV. Conclusion and the way forward

This is a historic opportunity for a major transformation to take place in Africa. The work we do today and in the coming months and years will lay the foundation to ensure that Africa achieves its full sustainable development goals, and take part in the shaping of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in a manner that ensures its compatibility with the African Transformative Agenda, and I trust that Africa will be able to do that.

I congratulate our experts for their diligent work over the past few days and for agreeing to the unified draft input to the High-Level Committee of Heads of State and Government on the Post-2015 Development Agenda under the sterling leadership of Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of Republic of Liberia.

Thank you.