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AFRICA CONSENSUS STATEMENT TO RIO+20



RIO+20
United Nations
Conference on
Sustainable
Development



**United Nations
Department of Economic
and Social Affairs**



UNEP
United Nations Environment Programme



I. PREAMBLE

1. We, Ministers of African States, recalling UN Resolution 64/236 calling for the convening of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, otherwise referred to as Rio+20, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 24 to 25 October 2011, in the context of the Africa Regional Preparatory Process for Rio+20. The aim of the Preparatory Conference was to deliberate on the objective and themes of Rio+20 and other substantive matters of importance to Africa, with a view to arriving at a consensus on Africa's key priorities and concerns to be reflected in the outcomes of Rio+20. In so doing, we took into account the concerns of all strata of the region's stakeholders – the public sector, private sector, civil society, youth, trade unions, academia and regional and subregional development institutions, among others.

2. We commend the objective of Rio+20, which is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges. We acknowledge the relevance of the two Conference themes - *A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication*, and the *Institutional framework for sustainable development* - to advancing the global sustainable development agenda.

3. Recalling that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) recognizes New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as providing the framework for sustainable development on the continent, we reaffirm our commitment to NEPAD and acknowledge the need to achieve its laudable objectives. We acknowledge and emphasize that the critical foundation for sustainable development lies in good governance, strong and responsive institutions, wealth creation, social equity and equality, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability, as well as sustained progress in the achievement of internationally-agreed commitments including the MDGs. While we strongly believe that the Africa region has made appreciable progress in meeting the requirements for sustainable development, we do urge the international community to accelerate and increase support to the region, to enable it to enhance implementation of its sustainable development commitment.

4. We call on Rio+20 to reinvigorate political will and international commitment to the goals and ideals of sustainable development, to move the sustainable development agenda forward, and raise the level of commitment by countries, regions and the international community to a common cause for sustainable development, including the need to achieve the international agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We therefore call for the Conference to adopt concrete measures supported by adequate means of implementation that would ensure accelerated implementation of sustainable development commitments, including those to be adopted at Rio+20. We further call on the developed countries to fulfil previous commitments and pledges to help Africa's efforts in achieving sustainable development.

Overall Africa regional performance

5. As we paused to review the region's performance in the implementation of sustainable development commitments from June 1992 to June 2012, we are strongly encouraged by the results achieved in governance and institution building. We are delighted by the performance recorded in the pursuit of economic sustainability. We are gratified that we pushed the performance frontiers of sustainable social development forward; and we note with a strong sense of optimism, the modest gains that the region achieved in environmental sustainability.

6. To further consolidate progress made, we call for enhanced commitments to advance action in areas critical to Africa's sustainable development, including: improving agricultural productivity and food security; promoting the use of biotechnology for sustainable development; combating desertification and land degradation; achieving sound management of coastal, marine and lacustrine ecosystems; sustainable use of natural resources, including freshwater, forests and biodiversity; promoting sustainable consumption and production and sustainable industrial development; ensuring the sound management of chemicals and waste; promoting sustainable tourism; ensuring access to secure and sustainable energy; achieving sustainable exploitation of mineral resources; enhancing access to safe drinking water and sanitation; promoting sustainable urban development; addressing disaster risk preparedness and reduction; achieving inclusive and equitable growth; and furthering the progress made in health and education.

II. NEW AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

7. We are deeply concerned that Africa's progress towards sustainable development is being severely compromised by new and emerging challenges. Chief among these are the adverse impact of climate change, increasing water scarcity, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, desertification, hazardous and electronic waste, low resilience to natural disasters, the energy crisis, the food crisis, rapid urban development, piracy, human trafficking, migration and the global financial and economic crisis. As a result of these challenges there is an increase in new diseases, worsening of poverty and unemployment especially of the youth.

8. We do, however, recognize that some of these new and emerging challenges also provide opportunities such as spurring the transition to a green economy, taking into account the human resources potential and the vast and largely untapped natural resources that are being discovered in many African countries. Other opportunities include the paradigm shift in development planning, in adapting to and mitigating climate change, and accelerating the regional cooperation in this matter.

9. We note that Africa is largely dependent on natural resources to achieve growth and development and may be hindered by the impact of climate change. Notwithstanding its low green house gas (GHG) emissions, it is the continent that will be the worst affected by climate change, mainly because of its low adaptive capacity. Climate change is significantly altering Africa's development pathway. [We have already taken concrete steps to address the climate change challenge and commit ourselves to addressing this development challenge, while leveraging opportunities such as capacity-building and technology transfer]. We reiterate our call to the international community to accompany Africa in this endeavour.

10. [Annex I parties of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) must commit to a second commitment period under the KP for the period from 2013-2017 and they must reduce their emissions by 40 per cent for this period below 1990 levels by 2017. Annex I parties must provide non-annex parties particularly African countries with appropriate additional and long term financing, technology, and capacity-building support in order to enable them to face the adverse effects of climate change.]

11. We are concerned that increasing severity of loss of biodiversity, desertification and land degradation, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, are major problems that countries have to address.

12. We note that the intensity of desertification of most of Africa's arable land is a serious challenge for sustainable development in Africa. Most of the land in Africa is prone to land degradation and suffers the worst impact of drought, desertification, and deforestation, with 65 per cent of the population affected. We recognize the economic and social significance of land, particularly, its contribution to growth, food security, and poverty eradication, and will step up efforts to effectively implement initiatives at regional, subregional, national, and local levels to combat these problems, to promote sustainable land management, and to reinforce reinforcing north-south and south-south cooperation.

13. We are concerned that Africa is characterized by highly variable rainfall, which results in uneven distribution of water resources, which is exacerbated by the effects of climate change. []

14. We are concerned about the persistent high food prices in many countries in Africa. Food prices increased dramatically as a result of droughts in grain-producing countries. There were also reduced yields, depleting cereal stocks and multiple demands on existing stocks from human and animal consumption. While the interventions undertaken jointly with affected communities and the international community have boosted food output, we are concerned about the high cost of food in Africa. We shall, therefore, take measures to ensure that the benefits derived from our efforts trickle down and contribute positively to reducing hunger and poverty. We invite developed countries to provide developing countries with sound technologies, particularly biotechnologies, bearing in mind the precautionary principle, to increase production in the agricultural sector.

15. We are further concerned with the effects of the international economic crisis, financial debts of African countries, the danger of failure of the Doha round, and the repercussions for achieving sustainable development in Africa.

16. While the informal sector has widely been accepted to present significant potential for poverty eradication, it has continued to receive minimal support.

17. We remain concerned that 40 per cent of the 1.4 billion people worldwide without access to energy services are in Africa, and almost entirely in sub-Saharan Africa. Access to sustainable energy facilitates development and contributes to the achievements of internationally-agreed sustainable development goals, including the MDGs. However, we recognize the opportunities offered by the energy sector in terms of growth, social and economic development and improved quality of life. We reiterate our commitment to addressing the energy challenge, by improving the availability of sustainable forms of energy in rural areas.

18. We recognize that Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent globally with a growth rate of 3.4 per cent. Already, almost 40 per cent of Africa's people are living in urban areas and it is projected that by 2050, 60 per cent of all Africans will be living in cities. Planning and financing urban development therefore is not only a priority but presents a major opportunity to structure growth that will lead to job creation, to secure ecosystem integrity, and deliver affordable public services. We therefore undertake and equally enjoin the international community to promote well-planned human settlements and to catalyse green-based urban growth for the realization of sustainable urbanization.

19. We are concerned by the increasing challenges posed by internal and international migration, compounded by other challenges such as climate change, and we call for adequate solution to be found at the national and international levels that would allow for the dignity of the migrants to be protected.

20. We affirm the many actions undertaken by African countries to address new and emerging challenges, and call on the international community to provide meaningful support, including by adequately supplementing the means of implementation at the disposal of African countries.

III. THE GREEN ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

21. There is a need to define green economy as a tool to achieve sustainable development, and to assess the opportunities and challenges related to this concept, as well as the means of implementation needed to achieve the green economy in our countries.

22. We note that the combined stream of economic, social and environmental crises that have plagued the global economy in recent years points to a need to reorient the current development models towards a more efficient, inclusive and sustainable economy by enhancing the resource efficiency of national economies, and decoupling economic activity from environmental degradation. In this context, we recognize that the transition to a green economy could offer new opportunities for advancing the achievement of Africa's sustainable development objectives through economic growth, employment creation, and poverty reduction, in accordance with the principles and recommendations of the 1992 Rio Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

23. We confirm that through a consultative process, African countries have already begun to identify opportunities and challenges in the region's transition to a green economy.

24. We appeal to the Conference that, for Africa to benefit from this transition, the promotion of a green economy in the region should be underlined by national objectives, social and economic development imperatives and the attainment of internationally agreed sustainable development commitments, including the MDGs. There is a need to put in place an international investment strategy in order to facilitate the transition towards green economy. Furthermore, there is a need to foster better understanding of the green economy in the context of Africa, as a way to protect and sustain natural capital, improve resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production, and enhance contributions to sustainable development. Africa emphasises the need to ensure the sustainable management of lands as part of the green economy efforts. We note that managing a

green economic transformation will require an enabling environment, including policies and institutional frameworks that imply a critical role for the State, through public investment, fiscal and social policies, regulations, public procurement, public-private partnerships, sustainable livelihoods, and market creation at national, regional and global levels, as well as the facilitation of an active participation of non-State actors. We recognize the African private sector as critical player in the region's transition to a green economy. We encourage the private sector to play its rightful role in the context of sustainable development.

25. The fact that Africa is at the early stages of the industrialization process offers the region an opportunity to promote sustainable industrial growth that limits the environmental, social and economic costs of industrialization, and increases the efficient use of energy and material input, thereby enhancing international competitiveness. Therefore, there is a need to remove all obstacles to the full implementation of this process. The African 10-Year Framework of the Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production, as endorsed by AMCEN and the African Union, and the subsequent activities on developing national local sustainable consumption and production action plans should be used and supported to contribute to the promotion of sustainable industrial development and the green economy.

26. We strongly urge the international community to ensure that African countries benefit fully from the sectors in which they have a comparative advantage. We recognize particularly the stakes that forests ecosystems represent not only for the people but also for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. We therefore request the international community to support countries in the sustainable management of their forests through the effective and efficient implementation of the mechanisms of UNFCCC.

27. The green economy should not be used as a trade barrier or impose conditionalities on developing countries and neither as a pretext for developed countries not to fulfil their pledges and commitments towards developing countries. The green economy should be based on the Rio principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and respect the policy space of each country.

28. Transitioning, including the scoping thereof, should be accompanied by means of implementation, including new and additional financial, technological and technical assistance to developing countries, and Africa in particular. At the regional level, countries need to develop their own marketing mechanisms. Furthermore, all parties, and in particular developed countries, should refrain from using unilateral measures or initiatives in this framework.

29. The transition to a green, efficient and inclusive economy in Africa would require increased investments, access to technologies and capacity-building. This calls for the development of a new generation of physical and institutional infrastructure. To this end, we are of the view that an agreement on the Global 10-Year Framework of Programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production would be a useful contribution by Rio+20 to support the transition to green economies and help developing countries with financial and technical support, appropriate technology transfer, capacity-building and market access.

30. We note that several African countries have already begun to identify opportunities and challenges in the region's transition to a green economy through different regional support programmes. We are further gratified that over the years, innovative policies and practices on sustainable forms of farming, renewable energy development, ecosystem-based adaptation, resource efficient production and the enhancement of natural capital have been successfully implemented in some countries.. We welcome the exchange of experiences and best practices in these areas, and we call for the scaling up of these practices. We underscore the need for mechanisms to regulate the use of land for commercial purposes with equity and judicial considerations of communities in mind.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

31. We emphasises that institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) should be based on Chapter 11 of the JPOI, on the provisions of Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 (A21), the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (PFIA21), and the principles of the Rio Declarations, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Furthermore,

IFSD should promote the achievement of internationally-agreed sustainable development goals, including the MDGs, taking into account the Monterrey Consensus and the needs of developing countries.

32. We are strongly encouraged by the call made by the African Union Summit to ensure that Africa's interests on IFSD are defined and taken into account.

33. We acknowledge the need to strengthen international environmental governance within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, in order to promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

34. We call on the Conference to note that all institutional frameworks for sustainable development should take into account the specific needs of Africa for addressing the implementation gap, capacity-building, technology transfer and linking the science-policy interface for environmental sustainability.

35. We recognize that IFSD is not an end in itself but is linked to the achievement of commonly-agreed sustainable development goals, including those that will be agreed upon at the Rio+20 Conference, and it should lead to the balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, and it should not put any additional burdens on developing countries or obstacles for their development prospects.

36. We acknowledge that sustainable development requires a balanced integration of its three pillars - economic, social and environmental - by institutions and strategies that promote holistic and integrated approaches. We recognize that the region has responded to this requirement with varying degrees of success. However, a common challenge that persists is balancing the integration of the pillars in planning, budgeting and implementation of plans and programmes.

37. We confirm that institutional reforms have been undertaken and sustainable development strategies developed and implemented at all levels. We are pleased that to a large extent, multi-stakeholder participation has improved, and institutional and programmatic linkages have been

established. The various long-term visions, plans and strategies have also catered for inter-generational and intra-generational equity.

38. We note that institutional reform is an ongoing process to implement sustainable development strategies. In addition to the need for establishing a global entity to coordinate and advance the sustainable development agenda, we note that the WSSD identified NEPAD as the regional framework for sustainable development and, in this regard, we call for enhanced implementation through subregional initiatives.

39. We urge countries to consider establishing, reviving and further strengthening national sustainable development strategies and councils, with a mandate to address the challenge of integrating economic, social and environmental goals by engaging a broader range of ministries and stakeholders at country level, as part of national strategies on sustainable. We call on Rio+20 to explore the possibility of reactivating and reinvigorating the National Councils for Sustainable Development to be able to coordinate, consolidate and ensure the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in the highest decision making bodies. These should be adequately capacitated to play a more active role. To this end, we call on the international community to assist in developing effective and responsive institutional frameworks for sustainable development in the region.

40. We recognize that regional and subregional institutions have a significant role to play in spurring the establishment and development of institutional and strategic frameworks for sustainable development, as well as in ensuring their effective operationalization and implementation. We underscore the need to support these institutions and facilitate institutional coherence and harmonization of relevant development policies, plans and programmes. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to ensure effective linkage among global, regional, subregional and national processes to advance sustainable development, based on the principle of subsidiarity.

41. We support the efforts to reform ECOSOC and the CSD in order to enhance their capabilities to help countries achieve sustainable development, and we emphasize the importance to increase synergies, coherence, and coordination within the UN system and between the UN system and international financial institutions, as well as between the Rio Conventions with respect to their

individual mandates, to support developing countries to achieve sustainable development at the national level.

42. Given the need to mainstream sustainable development goals in national strategies and plans, the full involvement of all key ministries and relevant stakeholders is needed. We call on Rio+20 to decisively support the involvement of all ministries and other stakeholders to enable them to exercise their full responsibilities in sustainable development.

43. We are concerned about the impacts that rising sea levels, coastal erosion, dumping of hazardous waste, degradation of lacustrine ecosystems, and unsustainable fishing have on coastal communities, national economies, and on sustainable development. In this context, we recommend that a global mechanism for revitalizing institutions at global, regional and national levels for sustainable management of coastal, marine, and lacustrine resources be instituted, while respecting national sovereignty.

44. We note that the concept of sustainable development is still unclear to some countries and stakeholders. Platforms for dialogue on sustainable development should thus be encouraged among stakeholders at the regional, subregional and national levels, to promote a common understanding of what sustainable development means in the African context. Also, we should see how best to implement commitments and share lessons of experience, and determine what works and what does not work and why.

45. We recognize the need for a clear and actionable indicator framework for sustainable development at the national level, to enhance understanding, guide integration modalities and identify the type of linkages that should exist among different sectors. In this connection, we request global and regional institutions to promote the development and application of sustainable development indicator frameworks.

46. We reaffirm the role of ECA in promoting a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in the region.

47. We recognize the need to have new reference indicators to assess the economic, social, and environmental performances of our economies, alongside GDP, and to use these new indicators, as well as the Human Development Index, to have a better understanding of the state of our economies and ensure the preservation of our natural environment and a more sustainable development. We also recognize the need for standardization systems which are multifaceted and based on empirical and scientific evidence, to move to sustainable consumption and growth, and the need for supporting their adoption.

48. We further call on ECA, AUC, NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, AfDB, and the Regional Economic Communities to continue facilitating consultative meetings and processes to monitor, evaluate and scale up implementation of commitments by the region.

49. In line with the decision of the Assembly of the African Union (AU/December.381XVII), calling for taking into consideration the need to strengthen, consolidate and transform the UNEP into an international specialized institution for the environment based in Nairobi, Kenya, we strongly call on the Rio +20 Conference to [reflect on] [endorse] the decision of the Assembly of the African Union which recognized that current institutional structures did not fully address Africa's needs in matters of the environment, sustainable development and climate change, within the context of revision of institutional frameworks for sustainable development.

50. In the context of the African position for the establishment of an international specialized institution, we affirm that any such institution, whatever its form, should have the following characteristics:

(a) Have a strong mandate and the political visibility, to fulfil the key functions of an effective international environmental governance system as set out in the Nairobi-Helsinki outcomes, working with major economic and social sectors at the international level to ensure that their policies are mutually-supportive of sustainable development;

(b) Be universal in its membership and decision-making, with each member State allocated one vote and decisions taken by consensus;

- (c) Be an autonomous body that could set the global policy agenda for environment and provide guidance for environmental financing;
- (d) Have secure, stable, additional and predictable financing to fulfil its mandate;
- (e) Have increased authority to bring coordination and coherence to the range of multilateral environmental agreements by promoting synergies while respecting the legal autonomy of the conferences of the parties to those agreements;
- (f) Have a strengthened regional presence, and improved implementation at the national level through the development of operational capacity;
- (g) Have the authority to lead a process of United Nations system-wide strategic planning for the environment and to coordinate the inputs of the many agencies with environmental mandates in the international system;
- (h) Promote the science-policy interface to deal with pressing environmental sustainability concerns, and to support national and regional scientific networks and scientists; and
- (i) Have the ability to enhance capacity and technology support, especially for Africa, monitor the effectiveness of implementation, and facilitate access to technology and technology transfer.

51. We stress that a new specialized institution should not imply the establishment of an environment inspection body, compliance mechanism for developing countries, or the putting in place of green conditionalities or trade barriers, and should not lead to additional financial burdens for Africa.

V. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

52. We recognize that African countries are primarily responsible for driving their own sustainable development agenda. In this regard, we confirm that countries have established and strengthened regional and subregional organizations to accompany them in the development process. We also recognize that well-targeted external support is crucial to meeting the incremental costs of realizing commitments on means of implementation.

53. Rio+20 must have at its heart the Means of Implementation. There are several critical gaps with regard to the fulfilment of international commitments related to the achievement of sustainable development in Africa, especially in the areas of finance, external debt, trade investment, capacity building, and technology transfer. This package of international commitments and support, which must be urgently met, includes:

(a) The commitment of **developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GDP to developing countries** in the framework of ODA must be met, as well as the target of **0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for least developed countries**;

(b) The need to meet commitment of **doubling aid to Africa** by 2010 as articulated at the Summit of the Group of Eight, held at Gleneagles in July 2005;

(c) Urgent need for the international community to adopt an effective, equitable, durable and development oriented solution to the **debt problem** of developing countries, particularly through total debt cancellation, and increased concessional financial flows;

(d) The need to fully implement the **Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building**, the implementation of the provisions as contained in Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 and JPOI Agreements on technology transfer;

(e) The need for a **development-oriented universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system**, and to reinvigorate the multilateral trade negotiations, to achieve a development oriented outcome of the Doha Round. We also call for facilitating the **accession of the WTO by developing countries**; and

(f) **Science and technology** are vital for the achievement of development goals and that the “technological gap” impedes the capacity of African countries to fully participate in the global economy and constitutes a major challenge in their efforts to enhance productive capacity, increase competitiveness, attract private capital flow, generate income and employment, reduce poverty and achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

54. We affirm that the following means of implementation identified in Agenda 21, the Programme for further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation are indispensable to ensuring the full and effective translation of sustainable development commitments into tangible sustainable development outcomes: financing, technology development and transfer, capacity development, globalization and trade, regional integration and south-south cooperation. We also affirm that the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness, as well as the ongoing discussions between Africa and its partners on development effectiveness are equally relevant.

55. In order to meet current sustainable development commitments and any new commitments that may emerge from Rio+20, we understand the need to capitalize on the synergies that exist among the various means of implementation, to ensure the effectiveness of the interventions, and invest financial and human resources efficiently. For instance, appropriate investments in vocational training and capacity development will help the transition towards a green economy and sustain the existing blue economy, which, in turn, will facilitate economic diversification and improve the prospect of international trade for African products. In this regard:

(a) We commit ourselves to enhance our efforts relating to improving the national governance environment, ensuring full accountability of institutions and transparent and inclusive planning and budgetary processes, by developing national strategies for sustainable development. In

this respect, we call on the international community to step up efforts to support the strengthening of institutions and planning capabilities in Africa;

(b) [We shall endeavour to improve domestic resource mobilization for sustainable development, through tax collection, innovative mechanisms, and increased use of public-private partnerships.]

(c) Despite the need to increase domestic effort, it is clear that Africa alone cannot meet the sustainable development challenge, especially in the face of new and emerging issues such as climate change, and the global financial and economic crisis. We therefore enjoin the international community to meet its commitments in terms of transfer of financial and technological resources, while ensuring that they complement and strengthen domestic effort, and are conducive to skills development and capacity-building. In this regard, we shall make development effectiveness a key priority, to which non-traditional donors should also adhere;

(d) We call on development partners and non-traditional donors to make more use of countries' own systems to strengthen their national institutional structures, and to include sustainable development criteria in financial international institutions in order to facilitate investment in sustainable development. This would further the development effectiveness agenda. We understand development effectiveness in the broader context of sustainable development; and this fosters greater policy coherence with trade, investment and other sectoral policies, which greatly influence progress towards sustainable development. In this context, we pledge to harmonize local, national, subregional, regional and international efforts and pursue policy coherence;

(e) We therefore recognize the need to encourage south-south cooperation and to adopt and promote coordinated, integrated, inclusive and transparent cooperation arrangements and initiatives;

(f) We emphasize that technology transfer should target green technologies that can help Africa exploit its rich natural resource base without undermining its sustainability. We will step up efforts to improve skills development, while ensuring that the targeted skills are conducive to the

transition towards a green economy. Furthermore, we call for the transfer of appropriate technologies to be based on fair and equitable principles;

(g) We recognize the key role played by science, technology and innovation in the implementation of a sustainable development agenda. Just by increasing investments in science and technology, we will ensure that Africa is not left behind in the race for green technologies. We shall endeavour to promote and strengthen institutions for technology innovation, introduce codes and standards that can foster green developments, build partnerships within and outside the region for technology development, and also promote industry-academia-government partnerships. In this respect, we recognize that it is critical to strengthen networking among institutions and centres of excellence within and outside Africa;

(h) We underscore the need to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies, including the three facets of capacity development: human resource development; organizational development; and institutional development, in order to help minimize migration of skilled labour. We commit ourselves to strengthening partnerships with non-traditional actors and the private sector, both within countries and outside countries, in order to leverage resources and capacities for sustainable development;

(i) We recognize that regional integration has a critical role to play in promoting economic diversification, expanding markets, pooling and more efficient allocation of resources, and addressing trans-boundary as well as globalization issues and challenges confronting Africa. We thus pledge to deepen and accelerate regional integration in Africa;

(j) While we recognize that trade is clearly an important element of sustainable development, we will ensure that our economies do not rely solely on international trade for economic growth, as this would over-expose them to the vagaries of international markets. We therefore call on the international community to support economic diversification in Africa, as it can play a key role in reducing the region's vulnerability to external shocks; and

(k) Despite its size, Africa has too little a voice in international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, and at the G20. The continent's specific needs are not well taken into account in the current debate on reshaping the international financial architecture. We therefore stress the need for Africa's special circumstances and interests to be fully reflected in the international governance set up.

Broad-based participation

56. We acknowledge that sustainable development requires all major groups at all levels to play a meaningful role, as participation engenders collective ownership of a process and promotes a strong sense of commitment in the delivery of results. In this regard, the participation of all stakeholders representing the nine major groups in national, regional and international forums on sustainable development should be ensured.

VI. VOTE OF THANKS

57. We wish to thank and pay tribute to the Government and people of the Federative Republic of Brazil for hosting the Conference. We salute Brazil's political leadership and commitment to promoting global sustainable development, and in particular, championing the cause of developing nations. This leadership role, which was amply demonstrated at the Rio Summit, held in this same country in 1992, has remained intact, hence the choice of your country to host this Conference.

58. We take this opportunity to express Africa's appreciation to the United Nations for its drive and unwavering commitment to sustainable development. In the context of the Africa, we express deep appreciation to ECA, AUC, AfDB, UNEP and UNDP for coordinating the Africa Regional Preparatory Process at the technical level, and to the Republic of the Congo for leading the process at the political level in order to ensure that Africa speaks with one strong and coherent voice at Rio+20.

VII. UPDATING THE AFRICA CONSENSUS STATEMENT TO RIO+20

59. The Africa Consensus Statement to Rio+20 as adopted at this Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for Rio+20 should be considered a living document that provides for the flexibility necessary to take into account any new additional issues and information and adjust Africa's position as and when necessary.