

Seventeenth Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry

Statement by

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Your Excellency, Dr. Ahmed Nazief, Prime Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Director-General of UNIDO
Dear UN Colleagues,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and on my own behalf, I would like to start by expressing thanks to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for accepting to host the meeting in this historical and beautiful country.

Egypt, especially its capital city Cairo, has always been for us a clear example of mastering technology whenever considering the huge work undertaken by the Pharaohs in building the pyramids and promoting the irrigation technology.

I would like also to convey to all of you the greetings of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, the Executive Secretary of ECA and his regrets for not being able to be here in person.

I would like also to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Kandeh K. Yumkella, the Director-General of UNIDO for reviving our traditional cooperation through the joint organization of this Conference. Today we are pleased as well to reinforce our relationships with the AU Commission and UNIDO to address industrial issues in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of the 17th Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry, "Productive Capacity: the Challenge for Africa in the Global Trade" perfectly matches with the objectives of both NEPAD and the MDGs agendas. In goal 8 of the MDG on partnership indicates there is a specific target that requests further development of an open, rule-based, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. In fact, the importance of linking industrial development and trade is emerging as a key issue in the international development agenda. Specifically, enhancing the productive capacity in Africa is now being addressed in trade-related gatherings as being essential to ensuring that African countries can participate effectively in world trade.

During the debates that have taken place for the last three days, it has been widely recognized that trade liberalization and enhanced market access alone are not sufficient to promote trade if the industrial capacity is not meeting actual market requirements in terms of quality and price. The limited response from Africa to the opportunities of world trade is due to the lack of productive capacity and the inability of African manufactured products to comply with international standards.

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Africa's current industrial situation and its marginalization in world trade provide a picture of where the whole continent is. The most important and exciting two questions we can raise are the following:

- where do we want to be in a couple of years from now?
- And how do we get there?

Our Conference should provide us with the opportunity to review the progress made in the continent in the area of industrial development. It should also help us to agree on a workable vision and strategy to improve the performance of Africa's industries, drawing the lessons from the implementation of the decisions taken within the framework of African Productive Capacity Initiative (APCI).

In this respect, ECA believes that African countries should target recovering their place in world trade through the implementation of effective industrialization programmes. This is feasible and achievable because Africa is on a new path.

African governments are enhancing their commitment to economic reforms that should include sound macro-economic policies, legal and regulatory reforms to support private sector development.

Governments should also provide and reinforce education and vocational training as means of enhancing technical and scientific skills. Finally, there is a need for African countries to focus on research and development through supporting national institutions.

Mr. Chairman
Your Excellencies,

The current focus on Africa within the international arena, as well as the recent changes in the regional institutional landscape and the current reform process, clearly dictate the need for repositioning the Economic Commission for Africa.

Given the above and in response to the requests from several African States, the newly appointed Executive Secretary, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh has undertaken a restructuring and reform exercise, that will enable ECA to serve Africa in a most efficient manner and enhance its partnership with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and UN agencies.

We at ECA believe that effective and productive partnerships are critical for advancing the African development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,

Africa is today at a crossroads of its industrial development. This shows opportunities as well as significant challenges, on top of them is the enhancement of its productive capacities to increase its participation in the world trade with manufactured goods. Africa must therefore concentrate its efforts to move toward the frontier of industrialization. I sincerely hope that the outcomes of our Conference will truly mark a turning point in the direction of Africa's industrial development.

Thank you for your kind attention.
