

# The Second Meeting of the ECA Committee on Human Development and Civil Society

## Opening Statement

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Mr. Chairman,  
Excellency Mr. Hassen Abdella, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs,  
Distinguished Representatives of Governments, the Private Sector and Civil Society,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), let me warmly welcome you all to Addis Ababa for this Meeting of the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society.

Let me also welcome UNAIDS and congratulate them for their major contribution to our meeting.

The primary objective of this meeting is to enhance dialogue on key issues aimed at the participation of stakeholders in addressing some of the human development and governance challenges of Africa. Special attention will be paid to actions required to strengthen the responses of governments on issues related to human rights and development; the promotion of ethical values and accountability in the public services; the importance of effective multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional responses to HIV/AIDS; and the special development requirements for countries emerging from conflicts.

Our meeting is indeed timely, taking place when, Africans are taking leadership for the political, economic and social revival of their continent.

Mr. Chairman,

It goes without saying that the principal responsibility for the development of the African continent rests squarely with the African countries themselves. Despite the encouraging signs of economic recovery in recent years, growth rates are still not sufficiently strong to reduce poverty. With the current pace of population growth, Africa would have to achieve a sustained rate of economic growth of 7 percent per year in order to arrest and, hopefully, reverse the spread of poverty. The origin of Africa's economic problems and a major factor explaining the fragility of its current recovery can be traced to the continent's policy weaknesses, adverse economic developments (both domestic and foreign), and political uncertainties. Consequently, if Africa is to restore lasting stability, reinforce growth and sustain confidence in the continent's ability to take its rightful place in the global economy, it must continue to take firm and consistent policy actions to address the root causes of its problems and spur additional domestic and foreign investment. There should be an overall framework within which to address all the problems in tandem. In this context, the following five prongs of policy and institutional measures, all of which are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, come to mind.

The five prongs are:

- i. the need for African countries to sustain, and deepen their macroeconomic policy stance;
- ii. the need for concerted efforts to end Africa's pervasive social strife;
- iii. the importance of good governance for development;
- iv. the necessity for enhanced investment in human capacity, and
- v. the role of a vibrant civil society and private sectors as pillars of growth and sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The theme of today's meeting, "Participation and Partnership in Africa's development" raises many fundamental issues and challenges facing Africa. The requirement is a holistic, comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and multiplayer framework. It should focus on the role of markets, public policy, government, civil society and partners.

New partnerships should reflect a consensus among major partners in the development of our continent, with governments setting priorities and bringing various stakeholders on board to support home-grown programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is against this background that UN member states and African Heads of States, through the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), unanimously recognized the importance of participation and partnership as pillars for addressing development challenges in their efforts to enhance prospects for sustainable human development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and NEPAD provide opportunities to enhance participation and partnership and encourage activities to maintain constructive dialogue.

The ECA believes that opening up a dialogue over the role of participation and partnerships in Africa's development marks an important opportunity for the international community. But if the process is to succeed for Africa then smarter partnerships must be built. These should go beyond relationships between political elites to include a broader set of African stakeholders.

The rights of people to participate in the development and governance processes are essential to creating an environment that lends support for the democratic involvement of citizens at the community level in national affairs. In the realm of the public service, attention should be paid to the effective roles the private sector and civil society.

Further, experience demonstrates, that although government efforts are critical in addressing post-conflict reconstruction, the challenges are beyond the capacity of governments alone and the process relies on a partnership

between the private sector and civil society to support the transition.

Similarly, the effectiveness of partnerships in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic should be emphasized, and the importance of broadening national responses to the virus, both in terms of players involved and sectors engaged, should be recognized.

The message is clear - the scope of the development challenges facing Africa today are beyond the capacity of governments alone and solutions will require the mobilization of all the talents and resources that stakeholders have.

Mr. Chairman,

Having highlighted, in broad terms, the challenges facing Africa in relation to the theme, I would like to ask that in your discussions you think not only about objectives, but about methodology as well. What should we do differently? How do we do all this through new partnerships with governments, multilaterals and bilaterals, the private sector, and civil society? If we are to move forward with a well-founded hope of success, then major change is essential.

I hope that you will guide our way in the months and years ahead. With all the intelligence gathered here and the expected rich exchange of ideas and views at this conference, I am sure you will have insightful discussions.

I wish you a very successful meeting and I thank you for your kind attention.

