



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY NADIA M. OSMAN, MINISTER  
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TO THE UN, ON BEHALF OF GROUP 77 AND CHINA, AT THE  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR CSD 17: AFRICA  
(New York, 26 February 2009)**

Chairperson,

On behalf of the Group 77 and China, I wish to congratulate you and the bureau for your leadership in organizing this important intergovernmental meeting intended to focus the 17th meeting of Sustainable development.

Chairperson,

According to the latest ECA Report on Sustainable Developing in Africa, Africa is the only region in the world where poverty has increased both in absolute and relative terms. Poverty eradication is hence the greatest challenge facing Africa and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. And the only continent not on track to meet of the MDGs by 2015.

While national governments continue to shoulder the primary responsibility for fighting poverty in their respective countries, concerted efforts are required at the regional and global levels to enable Africa achieve its poverty-related targets regardless of global economic slow down. The cluster of issues to be discussed namely agriculture and rural development, land, drought and desertification and Africa's development in general are among the key priorities of the continent and are interlinked.

Unlike other developing regions of the world where progress towards meeting the poverty MDG has been tangible, the level and nature of economic growth have not yet yielded any significant reduction of the proportion of people living below the poverty line in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Overall, GDP growth remains below the 7-percent minimum annual target rate and mostly associated with enclave sectors, with little impact on employment and income for the majority of the poor. Yet we know that at least two-thirds of the increasing numbers of poor Africans live in rural areas, where their livelihoods depend primarily on activities related directly or indirectly to agriculture, a sector with proven great potential for lifting scores of people out of poverty. This fact strongly underscores the need for a substantial and sustainable transformation of the African rural sector.

Chairperson,

The structural and sustainable transformation of agriculture and the rural economy in Africa entails shifting from highly diversified and subsistence-oriented production systems towards more specialized market-oriented ones. This process involves a greater reliance on input and output delivery systems and increased integration of agriculture with other sectors of the domestic and international economies.

We need, therefore to take a broader view of the food and agriculture system, which encompasses an integrated approach to investing in improving productivity and efficiency at all stages of the commodity value chains, from research and development to input markets, farm level production,

produce processing, storage, handling, transport and distribution to the final consumer. The linkages among these stages, and among agriculture and the other sectors of the overall economy, are key to generating employment and eradicating poverty.

To address the challenges of Africa's sustainable development an integrated holistic approach must be adopted. The work of various initiatives on Africa shows that no "silver bullet" exists to reach any individual target, let alone the whole set of MDGs. We need to adopt an inter-linkages approach that recognizes the complexity of ecosystem dynamics and their interface with the equally complex social and economic dynamics.

Chairperson,

Land lies at the heart of social, political and economic life. Land and natural resources are key assets for economic growth and development in Africa. In fact, most African economies continue to rely heavily on agriculture and natural resources for a significant share of GDP, national food needs, employment, and export revenue. Therefore, agriculture, natural resource use, and land-based activities are crucial for livelihoods, income generation and employment for the majority of Africans.

If the transactions costs of attaining secure rights to land is reduces will help reduce the cost of doing business for the corporate sector in the farming, agribusiness and agro-industrial spheres. Obviously, while secure land rights are necessary to achieve meaningful transformation of these sectors, other complementary elements such as technologies, credit, markets, and hard and soft infrastructure are equally vital.

Several factors including rapid population growth and urbanization, globalisation and market development have significant impacts on land resources. For instance, it is projected that the urban share in Africa's total population will increase from 38 percent in 2000 to 55 percent in 2030. This trend clearly puts greater pressure on urban and peri-urban areas, raising land values and increasing insecurity for the livelihoods of informal settlements.

Likewise, the most marginalized members of the African society, including women, are the very people that are tasked with harnessing land for food security and development, and also being the "keepers of the environment". Yet, the majority of African women do not own or control land and natural resources. Given that women comprise more than 50% of Africa's population. It is important to ensure that land policy reforms are accompanied by the appropriate mechanisms that guarantee women's rights to land.

Chairperson,

Drought and desertification continue to threaten the livelihoods of millions of people in Africa, increasingly making them unable to edge out of poverty. This trend is set to worsen with the onset of climate change, to which many countries in the region are most vulnerable. As such, drought and desertification are at the heart of development challenges in Africa and merit urgent attention in policies and actions at national, regional and global levels.

Combating desertification in Africa has tremendous benefits in enhancing the continent's progress towards meeting the MDGs, particularly in terms of eradicating poverty, attaining food security, fighting diseases and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The current trends in land degradation and high level of vulnerability of the region to the impacts of drought and desertification will be major impediments to achieving these goals, as well to ensuring

security and social stability at all levels, both within the region and at global level.

Chairperson,

In the area of international trade, Africa continues to experience poor market access and supply side constraints. The longer the Doha Development Round negotiations remain stalled, the more the disadvantage to Africa.

The Doha Development Round negotiations must resume at the earliest possible time, if we are to preserve the developmental dimension of the round.

Chairperson,

The Group is concerned that donors are not on track in meeting their commitments to double aid to Africa by 2010 relative to the 2004 level. In fact, there is a wide gap between donor commitments and actual aid flows to Africa. Moreover, the quality of aid is still below what is needed to ensure accelerated and sustained growth on the continent. We call upon our development partners to scale up efforts to meet their aid pledges to Africa.

Chairperson,

Progress on systemic issues has been limited. To-date, African countries still do not have fair representation in decision-making organs of international institutions for example the recent G20 meeting on financial crisis is a case in point. There is a serious democracy and governance deficit in these institutions whose decisions directly affect African countries and the lives of African peoples.

We believe, Africa's effective representation will ensure that these institutions are more responsive to the needs and concerns of African countries. They will become more accountable to all of us they are meant to serve. In this regard, we welcome the recent decision to create an additional seat for Sub-Saharan Africa on the Board of the World Bank. Africa also wishes welcome the conclusion of the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development which clearly recognised the need for supporting Africa's Development needs.

Chairperson,

On the ongoing global financial crisis, it certainly poses a serious threat to the development prospects of Africa. It threatens to reverse the hard won socio-economic gains made by African countries over the past few decades. Africa need to be represented in all subsequent meetings of all platform be G20, G8 and BWIs meetings.

Finally, the global economic slow down will lead to contraction of international demand for commodities. This may also exert downward pressure on lowering commodity prices, threaten tourism sector, reduce flows of FDIs and all transfers as well as leading to multiplier effects in the economy. Africa is predominantly dependent on commodities and tourism which now seem to be vulnerable. Tightening of credit will lower FDI flows to Africa, reduce access to credit and make credit more expensive. This may also curtail flow of remittances. We look forward to the convening of the UN conference on the financial and economic crisis and hope that we will reach an outcome that will place at its heart the plight of the poor.

I thank you all for your kind attention, and wish you a fruitful meeting.