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Commission économique pour l'Afrique**

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Economic Commission for Europe**

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**Statement**

**By**

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**28 January 2008**

Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates and Participants,  
Dear Colleagues from ECE and the UN System,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like also to convey to all of you the warm greetings of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, the Executive Secretary of ECA, and his regrets for not being able to be here in person. He sends his appreciation to ECE for kindly inviting ECA to participate in this important Regional Implementation Meeting, and wishes you the most fruitful deliberations.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,

In its chapter eight entitled “Sustainable Development in Africa”, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) recognizes the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) as providing a framework for sustainable development on the continent. The Plan also recognizes that achieving sustainable development requires actions at all levels to create an enabling environment at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels for sustained economic growth and development.

In line with these provisions and as an input to the Sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16), ECA prepared, in addition to Africa regional reports on agricultural and rural development, land, and drought and desertification, but also a regional review report on “Africa”, which was reviewed at the Africa Regional Implementation Meeting held in October 2007, and which is posted at the web site: <http://www.uneca.org/csd>. This report provides an overview of Africa’s progress in implementing its sustainable development agenda, with special emphasis on the following issues: Sustainable Development Governance; Poverty Eradication and Socially Sustainable Development; Sustainable Consumption and Production; Natural Resource Base of Economic and Social Development; Means of Implementation; and Harnessing Inter-linkages for Sustainable Development. I will just highlight some of the key issues addressed in the report.

Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poverty eradication remains the greatest challenge facing Africa and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. 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. In this regard, the cluster of issues to be discussed during CSD-16 -- namely agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification and Africa’s sustainable development in general -- are among the key priorities of the African region.

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. Following the economic downturn during the eighties and early nineties, African countries have, in general, registered positive growth rates since 2000 and other improved

macroeconomic performances. However, except for a few countries, GDP growth remains below the annual 7-percent minimum target rate for poverty reduction, and mostly associated with enclave sectors – especially the extractive 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 transformation of the African rural sector.

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 overall 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, trade 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 achieving an optimal contribution of the food and agriculture system to broad-based economic growth, employment, food security, and poverty eradication. Such a desirable contribution of agriculture to growth and development not only requires major efforts at developing a vibrant agribusiness sector, but also depends to a significant extent on the effective integration of the economies and markets of the region.

In this regard, the African Union, with the support of the UN system -- ECA and FAO in particular – is undertaking decisive actions towards the creation of a Common Africa agricultural market and the development of regionally integrated value chains of selected strategic food and agricultural commodities. These actions aim at following up to and implementing some important resolutions and commitments of Africa's political leadership in support of the NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which was adopted by the African Union Summit of 2003 in Maputo, with the commitment from member States to allocate, by 2008, at least 10 percent of the national public expenditures to agricultural and rural development.

Indeed, the CAADP provides a framework for consensual policies and priorities for African governments, regional organizations, farmers, private agribusiness, and development partners, with regard to a renaissance of the African agricultural development agenda. With the explicit target of achieving an average annual growth rate of 6 per cent in agriculture, the Programme investment portfolio is thus articulated around the following four pillars: (i) land and water resources; rural infrastructure and trade capacities for market access; food supply chains and responses to emergency food crises; and agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption.

Within this framework, ECA has successfully advocated for an approach to a structural transformation of African agriculture primarily articulated around systematic efforts to develop coordinated value chains for selected strategic food and agricultural commodities within a regional integration perspective. The aim is to trigger a structural transformation that would enable African agriculture not only to capture the growing regional market – which, unfortunately, is presently too fragmented along national and sub-regional lines to

provide the right incentive sets for significant market-oriented, private-business operations – but also to become a key player in the global market place. The approach stresses the need to address, through serious efforts at agribusiness development, the central challenge of the double disconnection of African farmers, backward from the input/factor markets, and forward from the product markets. This approach was strongly endorsed by two Summits of the African Union.

First, the Summit **on Agriculture and Water** held in 2004 in Sirte, Libya, committed to:

- Support the development and production of strategic agricultural commodities in order to fully exploit the continent's special potentialities and comparative advantages while reducing the expenditure and dependence on imports;
- Promote the development/manufacturing of agricultural implements, livestock and fishery equipment to meet the continent's needs for agricultural production;
- Promote the strengthening/establishment of agricultural Centres of Excellence and tertiary and research institutions at continental and regional levels;
- Establish the African Common Market for Agricultural products and promote intra-African trade in agricultural and fishery products; and
- Develop a common and coherent policy framework for public-private cooperation that will attract increased private capital into the agriculture and water sectors.

Second, the **Food Security Summit** held in Abuja in 2006 further committed to:

- Increase intra-African trade by promoting and protecting rice, maize, legumes, cotton, oil palm, beef, dairy, poultry and fisheries products as strategic commodities at the continental level, and cassava, sorghum and millet at sub-regional level;
- Accelerate the development of the strategic commodities by fast tracking the implementation of trade arrangements adopted in the RECs through lowering tariff barriers and elimination of non tariff barriers by 2010; and
- Promote public sector investment in agriculture related infrastructure, particularly regarding water, irrigation, electricity and roads through public-private partnership.

As mentioned earlier, ECA and FAO are providing technical support to on-going efforts by the AU Commission towards the effective implementation of these encouraging commitments. Critical issues such as those of the challenges and opportunities related to climate change and the growing biofuel sector are being addressed within a proposed regional framework for the development of the value chains of selected food and agricultural commodities of strategic domestic as well as global importance for the Africa region.

Chairperson,  
Distinguished Participants,

Land lies at the heart of social, political and economic life. 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. Reducing the transactions costs of attaining secure rights to land is key to reducing 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, financing, 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, particularly 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, if they lose out on development, African families lose, and indeed, the continent loses. In order for Africa to realize the full potential of all members of society, more must be done to ensure that land policy reforms are accompanied by the appropriate mechanisms that guarantee women's rights to land.

Many African countries have undertaken land reforms, which address, among others, land and natural resource rights and policies in the region, with the active participation of civil society organizations. In support of these efforts, the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank are jointly implementing a major regional Initiative aimed at developing a consensual Pan African Framework on Land Policy for Securing Rights, Enhancing Productivity and Improving Livelihoods. The Framework will provide guidelines for developing and implementing land policies that incorporate full consideration of principles of economic efficiency, social equity and environmental sustainability in the management of land resources. Sub-regional and regional assessments and consultative meetings are underway with the view to completing the land policy framework and guidelines for adoption by the African Union Summit in January 2009. Follow-up activities are being planned to assist member States mainstream the guidelines of the Framework in formulating, reforming and implementing their national land policies.

Distinguished Participants,

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. To address specifically the challenges that climate change poses for sustainable development in Africa, ECA has embarked in a strong partnership with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to develop and implement a comprehensive, 11-year Climate Information for Development Africa (ClimDev-Africa) Programme, which sets out to scale up the capacities of key institutions and stakeholders with a view to improving climate-related data and observation, information services, policies and risk-management practices in climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water, energy, health, infrastructure and human settlements. In addition, ECA is deploying efforts to establish an African Centre for Climate Change Policy Studies, with the view to providing rigorous analytical work for robust assessment of the economic, social and environmental impacts of climate change and the costs and benefits of the related adaptation with respect to national and regional-level development priorities of the continent. The provision of such compelling information would

facilitate the mainstreaming of climate-change adaptation strategies into national development frameworks, including the Poverty Reduction Strategies.

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, both within the region and at global level.

The JPOI states that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. The Plan calls for the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns by all countries, with developed countries taking the lead, while ensuring that all countries benefit from the process. The African 10 Year Framework Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (African 10-YFP) has been launched. The Task Force on Cooperation with Africa, and the Regional Steering Committee for the African 10-YFP have been established. An eco-labelling project is being implemented within the framework of the Programme. It is essential to maintain the political momentum and commitment for the effective implementation of the African 10-YFP.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,

To conclude, it is essential to sustain high growth rates to financially empower countries to alleviate poverty and adopt, in a holistic approach, multiple strategic interventions in a wide range of areas. Addressing Africa's sustainable development challenges requires an integrated, inter-linkages approach that recognizes the complexity of ecosystem dynamics and their interface with the equally complex social, economic and political dynamics inherent in human development and governance, particularly policies, laws and institutions. And such an approach calls for coordination of action across the relevant dimensions of sustainable development. Countries should strengthen governance systems at all levels, and reinforce institutional capacity, including human, technical and financial dimensions. Above all, there is need to engender effective action on the part of all stakeholders, including Governments, civil society, the private sector and development partners, with a view to accelerating progress towards meeting Africa's sustainable development goals.

I thank you for your kind attention.