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African region statement to the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change

I. Preamble

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in preparation for the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held a regional implementation meeting in Addis Ababa, from 26 to 28 October 2005, to review progress on the implementation of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation) in the African region, pursuant to an earlier declaration made by the Commission's eleventh session, in order to allow effective consideration of regional and subregional inputs throughout the implementation cycle and to ensure maximum flexibility, the Commission decided to invite the regional commissions, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to consider organizing regional implementation meetings in order to contribute to the work of the Commission in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations and bodies as appropriate, as well as the regional offices of funds, programmes and international finance and trade institutions and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

2. The regional implementation meeting focused on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air/atmosphere pollution and climate change. An overall review of progress in implementation was undertaken, including the identification of opportunities, challenges and implementation constraints that African countries faced in those areas. While the review showed some progress in implementation, it also highlighted the inability of some African countries to meet their goals and targets. The review considered the concerns of African United

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Nations Member States, the regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, civil society and business.

3. Participants in the meeting benefited from and appreciated the participation and contribution of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

4. At the meeting appreciation was also expressed for the previous contributions of the Bretton Woods institutions and the African Development Bank, which were urged to implement specific activities that would support Africa's various programmes and plans for meeting internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and international agreements made since 1992.

5. At the meeting, participants reaffirmed that poverty eradication was indispensable for sustainable development and reiterated the commitment of African countries to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, including paying special attention to small island developing States, least developed countries and heavily indebted poor countries. It was affirmed that the achievement of the development goals was contingent upon an enabling international environment premised on the legitimate development priorities of developing countries that addressed the fundamental challenges of financing for development, globalization and market access in the sectors of export of interest to them.

6. At the meeting, it was recalled that success in attaining the objectives of development and poverty eradication depended, inter alia, on good governance within each country and at the international level, as well as transparency in financial, monetary and trading systems.

7. Concern was expressed that the limited progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (stemming from the lack of fulfilment by the international community of its implementation commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development) could hamper the achievement of sustainable development in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

8. Participants also expressed concern over the limited modern energy production and consumption and the extreme vulnerability to climate change, which critically impaired socio-economic development in Africa, and the inadequate contribution of the industrial sector, in particular mining, minerals and metals, to environmental sustainability.

9. Participants recognized the important role played by civil society and the private sector, and the need to ensure their full participation in achieving sustainable development. They called for enhanced partnership in the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and invited Governments to work together with civil society, major groups and the private sector.

10. Participants recalled the commitments that had been made by African countries, including those of the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. They also reaffirmed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the sustainable development framework for Africa.

II. Energy for sustainable development

A. Challenges and constraints

11. The meeting identified the following specific challenges and implementation constraints:

(a) Inadequate policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks and limited financial flow for the development and provision of sustainable energy, especially for the poor;

(b) Low energy production due to largely untapped energy resource potential, particularly renewables;

(c) Uneven regional availability and distribution of energy resources;

(d) Underdeveloped transportation, production, transmission and distribution infrastructure, and high up-front energy investment and use costs, constituting barriers to energy access by the urban and rural poor;

(e) Low private sector participation and investment in the energy sector;

(f) Inadequate access to energy in rural Africa as a result of the high costs of production, transmission, distribution and depletion of energy resources;

(g) Inefficient utilization and wastage of energy;

(h) High dependence on, and inefficient use of, biomass energy sources and the associated environmental, economic and social impact, especially on women and children, in the majority of African countries and small island developing States;

(i) Continued high rates of population growth, urbanization, precarious emergence of informal settlements due to migration and increase pressure on cities to provide sustainable energy due to motorization;

(j) Inadequate skills and education of the rural population holding back their participation in the implementation of energy programmes and projects;

(k) Lack of empowerment hindering the participation of local governments, regional councils, cities and community-level organizations, reducing the success of many energy projects;

(l) Supply of inappropriate forms of energy not responsive to the needs of the majority of people;

(m) The overall energy insecurity challenges faced by most small island developing States and their associated economic impact.

B. Progress and achievements

12. Participants noted the achievements made on various important energy issues in Africa, including in the areas:

Energy accessibility for poverty alleviation

(a) Increased recognition that the problem of access to energy in rural Africa required much more attention, means and renewed commitments by all stakeholders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals;

(b) Access to affordable and clean energy services for the urban poor largely residing within informal settlements had become more recognized as an important item of the human settlements agenda;

(c) Increased country-to-country and city-to-city dialogue and cooperation were being held on the issue of clean energy access for the urban poor;

(d) Energy access scale-up initiatives were leading to the design of new energy supply schemes integrating energy services to the development of productive and income-generation activities, entrepreneurship and the promotion of indigenous energy resources;

(e) Off-grid systems, based on renewable energy, had been developed in rural areas of many countries, and validated as an important option to increase energy access;

(f) Progress had been made in capacity-development and investments in mini-hydro power systems, with the identification of a large number of potential mini/micro hydropower sites;

(g) A subregional rural energy programme was well advanced in Economic Community of West African States and Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, with plans to harmonize national policies;

(h) Institutional and other barriers to the development of small and medium-scale energy enterprises had been identified and approaches for their removal were being implemented in some countries;

(i) In many countries, small and medium-size energy service enterprises had been established and a renewable energy market was being developed;

Changing patterns of energy consumption and production

(j) In many countries, national capabilities on forestry services and energy agencies for wood energy planning and policy development had been enhanced;

(k) Wood energy statistics and information had improved and been promoted as tools for the promotion of sustainable wood energy systems;

(l) Various practical actions, ranging from geographical mapping of renewable energy resources, development of energy and energy efficiency service enterprises, to activities aimed at identifying and removing barriers, had been undertaken to increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix.

Information-sharing on cleaner energy technologies

(m) Many network initiatives (e.g. the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, the Global Village Energy Project) had contributed to enhancing knowledge and capacity in many countries on cleaner energy technology options for energy production;

(n) Functioning networks for sharing information and knowledge on sustainable transport infrastructure investment, cleaner technologies and air quality management had been established between individuals, institutions and government representatives in many countries;

General and cross-cutting issues and means of implementation

(o) The United Nations system and the international community had increased their efforts through various mechanisms at the international level (e.g. the special office for NEPAD) and at the regional level (e.g. United Nations regional consultation meeting) to support African countries in implementing NEPAD;

(p) Financial investments in NEPAD energy projects had increased and were projected to grow further;

(q) Internal capacity of several development and commercial banks (e.g. the African Development Bank) and private investors to assess investments in the energy sector had improved;

(r) Several actions had been implemented to strengthen the capacity of energy planners and developers, education and research institutions and centres of excellence;

(s) Efforts to increase subregional and regional energy trade had been stepped up with the establishment of power pool arrangements in each subregion, and the signing of agreements for cross-border electricity, oil and gas exchange, in the framework of the major regional economic communities;

(t) Several actors, including the African Energy Commission, had made progress in the collection, management and dissemination of energy information in Africa.

C. Lessons learned and the way forward

13. Participants in the meeting identified the following lessons, best practices and the way forward:

(a) More actions and cooperation should be undertaken for sharing of relevant experiences between the various regions of the world and among African countries;

(b) There was a need to build capacity that was responsive and inclusive of social and environmental factors in investment decisions related to energy projects;

(c) There was a need for institutional capacity in energy planning, analysis and modelling using specific national and regional data to inform decision-making and policy development;

(d) There was a need for increased political will and leadership, as well as greater awareness, knowledge and consciousness of African policy and decision makers on emerging and sustainable energy issues to inform better policy and implementation;

(e) There was a need to integrate off-grid systems with the overall national energy systems and implementation strategies;

(f) Policies, strategies, legal and regulatory frameworks that integrated the specificities of the African energy context, especially in rural areas, should be established by Governments to promote adequate and affordable sustainable energy services;

(g) Measures should be taken by African policymakers to create a legal, regulatory and institutional framework conducive to an attractive national investments climate for domestic and foreign investors;

(h) Frameworks and incentives should be encouraged, developed and strengthened to promote regional integration of energy projects, programmes and systems;

(i) International development partners, including the United Nations, should enhance their financial and technical support for the energy sector in Africa;

(j) Financial flow to the energy sector to support the implementation of the NEPAD energy initiative should be increased;

(k) Considering the largely untapped hydropower potential of Africa and the emphasis put by the NEPAD Energy Action Plan on the development of large hydropower plants, African Governments, with the support of the international community, should accelerate the development of environmentally and socially balanced hydropower projects in Africa;

(l) The Regional Economic Communities, with the support of international partners, should promote subregional and regional energy trade as a catalyst for development in Africa;

(m) The African Energy Commission should receive more support to accelerate the achievement of energy integration in Africa, through, inter alia, the development of up-to-date energy information systems, regional and national capacity-development on pertinent energy decision-making and planning tools. Member States were urged to ratify and put in place mechanisms to implement the African Energy Commission Convention;

(n) In order to improve the share of renewable energy in the African energy mix, African Governments should promote energy diversification and remove barriers for fairer competition between all energy resources;

(o) African Governments, with the support of the international community, should design and implement urgent appropriate measures in order to modernize and assure energy efficiency of the traditional biomass energy sector so as to reduce the negative impact of its heavy usage on human health, the environment and on other issues related to the Millennium Development Goals;

(p) National Governments, international development partners, regional and subregional decision makers should view the problem of access to modern energy in rural and peri-urban areas as inseparable from poverty reduction efforts and strategies and take urgent measures to address it in poverty reduction strategy papers and national sustainable development strategy in order to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Declaration;

(q) Governments were urged to intensify efforts to decentralize the decision-making process for energy investments and projects and promote more participation by local governments, regional, communal, and community-based organizations;

(r) All international partners, especially United Nations organizations, must make more efforts to create coherence, complementarities and effectiveness in developing the African energy sector. This could be achieved in the framework of a collaborative mechanism such as United Nations-Energy/Africa and other inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

III. Air pollution and atmosphere

A. Challenges

14. Participants identified some challenges to implementation, including:

(a) Poor understanding and forecasting of the various properties of the atmosphere and affected ecosystems and of the impact on health and its interaction with socio-economic factors;

(b) Lack of capacity and finance, as well as cultural barriers to access and use of environmentally sound energy systems to minimize atmospheric pollution;

(c) Unsustainable production and consumption practices in industry and transportation sectors;

(d) Inappropriate land-use policies and poor management of natural resources;

(e) Inadequate compliance with control measures identified within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer;

(f) Lack of programmes for and cooperation in systematic observation of air pollution, assessment and exchange of information;

(g) Poor and inefficient household energy-use practices and the associated indoor air pollution;

(h) Inadequate, underfunded and underdeveloped research infrastructure and skills.

B. Progress and achievements

15. Participants noted some achievements made by African countries, including the following:

(a) Implementation of the Southern African Fire Atmosphere Research Initiative, whose targets include gathering of data and information on smoke and gases released into the atmosphere by industry, biological sources and the burning of African forests and savannas;

(b) The International Geosphere Biosphere Programme, which supported many regional and global-scale studies focusing on emissions from Africa, through the International Global Atmospheric Chemistry core project;

(c) The System for Analysis, Research and Training, which establishes and fosters regional networks of collaborating scientists and institutions in developing countries;

(d) The establishment of the Global Atmosphere Watch station for sub-Saharan Africa, which provides measurements for long-term monitoring of greenhouse gases and aerosols and the complex atmospheric chemical reactions that determine the depletion, transformation, lifetimes and transport of these gases and particles that contribute to climate change. The station will contribute to the detection and interpretation of future changes in the chemical composition of the tropical areas within and outside Africa;

(e) Increased adoption of improved wood fuel stoves and cleaner energy sources;

(f) The establishment of a regional network of African urban air pollution experts, and the World Bank's Clean Air Initiative that have contributed to information-sharing for policymakers and to raising public awareness;

(g) The launching of Air Pollution Information for Africa, a network of scientists, policymakers, industry and non-governmental organizations, formed to address issues related to air pollution in southern Africa;

(h) Introduction of policies, legal frameworks, financial incentives and subsidies demonstrating willingness and commitment by some African countries to deal with the problems of air and atmospheric pollution;

(i) The increased number of African countries that have taken concrete steps to phase out leaded gasoline and are piloting hybrid cars and biofuel in their transport sectors;

(j) The increased adoption of energy efficiency policies, strategies and practices;

(k) The development by a number of countries of an air pollution data collection and observation capability.

C. Lessons learned and the way forward

16. Participants identified the following key lessons and possible approaches:

(a) There is a need to increase the role played by government and industry in implementing policies to reduce air and atmospheric pollution, supplemented by the work of civil society, including through the implementation of environmentally sound technologies;

(b) There is a need to identify new means of financing to enable industry to gain access to state-of-the-art technologies and shift from using second-hand and unclean technologies;

(c) Microfinance institutions are interested in financing cleaner energies and technologies for households and small businesses;

(d) There is a need to significantly scale up best practices and tested air pollution reduction and mitigation options in all sectors;

(e) There is a need to scale up data collection and observation capacities and activities;

(f) While capacity has been built among African scientists through participation in international research initiatives, there is still a need to develop

strategies to increase and retain research capacity, skills and infrastructure in the area of air and atmospheric pollution;

(g) Localized air pollution projects are not always comprehensive and can sometimes transfer the pollution from one site to another. As such, an integrated and regional approach should be adopted when addressing air pollution issues.

IV. Climate change

A. Challenges

17. Participants identified challenges to mitigation and adaptation to the impact of climate change, including:

(a) The high vulnerability and low capacity to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change by African countries as a result of poor access to technology, high poverty levels and reliance on rain-fed agriculture;

(b) The inability among the poorest and the most vulnerable, particularly small island developing States, to develop social, economic and environmental resilience against extreme climate events;

(c) Inability and inadequate support to African countries to cope with the current climate variability, thereby limiting the capacity to build resilience to the impact of climate change;

(d) Inadequate integration and implementation of climate change concerns in national development policies and plans and local-level programmes;

(e) Operationalization of the Kyoto Protocol as a result of inadequate technical and institutional competence, and especially the lack of, and non-operational, designated national authorities in some countries; low awareness and poor competitiveness of African clean development mechanisms in projects due to high transaction costs; complex and stringent approval processes;

(f) Low levels of research, scientific capacity and intraregional cooperation on vulnerability, impact, mitigation, adaptation assessment and evaluation.

B. Progress and achievements

18. The meeting noted the achievements by African countries in addressing climate change:

Implementing obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol

(a) African countries have ratified and committed themselves to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, while more than 60 per cent of African countries have ratified the Kyoto Protocol;

(b) Initial national communications have been prepared and submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with most countries preparing their second national communications;

(c) There has been increased regional cooperation, including the development and implementation of the NEPAD initiative on climate change;

Mitigation and adaptation

(d) Enhanced subregional cooperation and establishment of the Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forums for early warning and improved information-sharing to reduce farmer and other vulnerabilities within the SADC subregion;

(e) Policy reforms to control environmental degradation (e.g. deforestation);

(f) Establishment and strengthening of policy research institutions (think tanks), such as the African Centre for Technology Studies (East Africa), the Environnement et Développement du Tiers-monde (West Africa) and the Zimbabwe Environmental Research Group (Southern Africa), to respond to climate change related challenges identified by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(g) Establishment, with funding from the World Meteorological Organization, of the drought monitoring centre in Nairobi, with sub-centres in Niamey and Harare for monitoring, forecasting and timely early warning in the region;

(h) Implementation of 11 projects to carry out assessment of impacts and adaptation to climate change and supporting many countries to prepare a national adaptation programme of action;

(i) Implementation of the project on strengthening the capacity of civil society in least developed countries for adaptation to climate change;

(j) Sixteen African countries have designated national authorities to approve clean development mechanism projects;

(k) Community development carbon fund projects have been developed in some countries through a special World Bank programme for Africa;

(l) Implementation of 18 Activities Implemented Jointly projects in some countries;

(m) Development of new, innovative and other technologies and methods to deal with challenges brought about by climate variability and change. These include the adoption of drought-resistant improved farming technologies and crop diversification, water conservation and harvesting technologies, use of efficient non-polluting energy sources and mosquito nets for malaria control;

(n) Many Governments have established disaster management centres, with households, communities and civil society organizations having developed a number of coping mechanisms in response to extreme climatic events.

C. Lessons learned and the way forward

19. The meeting identified the following key lessons and possible approaches:

(a) Climate change needs to be tackled in an integrated manner, an approach that should be promoted at all levels;

(b) Need for enhanced integration into and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation concerns into national development policy and poverty reduction strategy papers;

(c) In line with a national adaptation programme of action, there is need to develop human and institutional capacities to promote and aid adaptation to climate change at national and local levels where vulnerabilities are most pronounced;

(d) There is need to work with, and build the capacity of, civil society, community-based organizations and the private sector to strengthen the social, economic and environmental resilience of vulnerable local communities;

(e) There is a need for continued support for research and information collection and dissemination and strengthening of networking to raise awareness and inform policy formulation, planning, decision-making, investment and action;

(f) African countries have benefited mainly from capacity-building on the clean development mechanisms implemented through support programmes and pilot projects, rather than from actual high-impact project investments;

(g) There is, therefore, a need to increase African countries' access to the funds and benefit from the Kyoto mechanisms and Marrakesh funds by improving technical and institutional competence, establishing and operationalization of designated national authorities and reducing high transaction costs and streamlining approval processes;

(h) African countries need to identify and mobilize alternative local resources, including the introduction of incentives and disincentives for the private sector to invest in and support climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes;

(i) There is need to build scientific capacity and cooperation to deal with different aspects of climate change;

(j) There is need to enhance support and accelerate implementation of the NEPAD climate change initiative.

V. Industrial development

A. Challenges and constraints

20. The meeting identified the following challenges and constraints:

(a) Tariff and non-tariff trade barriers together with lack of local processing capability hinder market access and perpetuate Africa's condition as exporter of unprocessed raw materials;

(b) Lack of capacity, a conducive business and policy environment, financial and other support for growth, structural change and economic diversification of the small-scale and informal enterprises that dominate the private sector in Africa;

(c) Lack of appropriate industrial development strategies to facilitate and maximize the integration of the large-scale industries mainly concentrated in the extractive sector (e.g. oil, gas and minerals) with other sectors of local economies;

(d) Infrastructure, energy and water bottlenecks make the transition to sustainable industrialization more difficult;

(e) The management and deployment of local skill base and other exploitation of the potential of knowledge-based industries;

(f) Limited ability to tap into global production networks, such as participating in offshoring and outsourcing arrangements;

(g) Limited research and development, innovation, diversification and technology diffusion;

(h) Lack of a critical mass of companies and institutions willing to cooperate, network and share industrial development knowledge and information in pursuit of sustainable development, also obstructed by weak industrial associations;

(i) Limited government capacity to render and facilitate extension services, including those related to testing, metrology, certification, quality assurance and accreditation of industrial and micro and small-scale enterprise development processes;

(j) Due to their preference for sectors with faster returns (such as the services sector), the current banking and investment decisions and practices constrain industrial development of small and medium-sized enterprises;

(k) Inadequate harmonization of laws, regulations, codes and standards at national and subregional levels limits factor flows (financial, human and technical resources), which could help realize economies of scale, establish intraregional synergies and enhance competitiveness;

(l) Small local markets, lack of appropriate marketing channels and inadequate exploitation of information and communication technologies, regional trade, cooperation and integration to expand and establish new markets.

B. Progress and achievements

21. The meeting identified the following achievements at the country level:

(a) Rural development has been fostered in some countries through the establishment of agro-processing and micro and small-scale enterprises by facilitating access to finance and technology transfer, capacity-building for the development of growth-oriented and competitive micro and small-scale enterprises, with increased empowerment of women;

(b) Metrology, standards, certification, testing and quality assurance institutions have been strengthened in some countries;

(c) There has been progress in the provision of energy, including the development of renewable energy technologies and implementation of energy efficiency programmes;

(d) Establishment of national cleaner production centres;

(e) Development of industrial environmental policy, regulation and guidelines, including the adoption of corporate social responsibility codes in some countries;

(f) Establishment of national industrial information networks, capacity-building on information technology and promotion of linkages between research and development institutions and industry;

(g) Development of policies for investment promotion and foreign direct investment, including the launching of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization-Africa Investment Promotion Network and various other national and subregional investment promotion efforts.

C. Lessons learned and the way forward

22. The meeting identified the following lessons learned:

(a) There is a need to ensure that chemicals are produced, transported, used and disposed of throughout their full life cycle within a sustainable development context that is protective of human health and the environment, including, inter alia, compliance with the provisions of the Basel, Stockholm and other related conventions; the implementation of national laws and policy instruments in the context of national environmental management regimes must also be enhanced;

(b) There is a need for broader adoption and implementation by industry of values consistent with corporate social and environmental responsibility, such as those embodied in the Global Compact Initiative, and to explore an International Organization for Standardization standard on corporate-social responsibility;

(c) There is a need to identify gaps in, and enhance, policy integration and institutional coordination, including among entities responsible for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements at various levels;

(d) There is a need to promote global cooperation and partnerships for the development and implementation of cleaner production processes and adoption of new and safer technologies;

(e) There is a need to develop country-specific technical assistance programmes that will respond to the unique needs of each country and region.

VI. Conclusion

23. Participants in the regional implementation meeting reaffirmed the commitment of African countries to taking concrete action to meet Africa's challenges in the fields of energy, industrial development, atmosphere/air pollution and climate change, with a view to achieving sustainable development, through the implementation of internationally agreed development agreements, including Agenda 21, the Millennium Declaration, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other international conferences in social, economic and related fields.

24. Participants underscored the importance of the political leadership of the African Union structures and, in particular, the pivotal role of NEPAD as the framework for achieving set objectives.

25. Participants acknowledged that though progress had been made in meeting some of the targets, including through the elaboration and implementation of poverty reduction strategy papers and national sustainable development strategies, more action was needed, particularly, in putting in place enabling policies and

strategies, increasing political will, scientific capacity development, and developing intra and interregional networking and cooperation.

26. Recognizing the critical need for additional financial and human resources and the importance of partnership, participants underscored the need for the mobilization of adequate resources, both internally and externally, and for strengthening of partnerships for the implementation of programmes and projects in the fields of energy, industrial development, atmosphere/air pollution and climate change.

27. Participants recognized and expressed their appreciation for the role played by the United Nations system through its various specialized and intergovernmental agencies and organs, as well as for the various international partners and organizations that support Africa's efforts and actions in achieving sustainable development. Participants also expressed their appreciation for the commitments made by the Group of Eight in support for Africa's sustainable development agenda.

28. The participants endorsed the outcome of the meeting for presentation as Africa's contribution to the fourteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, scheduled to be held in New York in May 2006.