RELAUNCHING AFRICA'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CAIRO AGENDA FOR ACTION

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I. PREAMBLE

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, …, have undertaken an in-depth and critical review of the political, economic and social situation in our continent, as presented in the Report of the Secretary-General to the Special Session of the Council of Ministers on Economic and Social Issues in African Development.

2. Since the beginning of the 1990s, changes have occurred in the world, particularly in the political, economic and social arena. These include a growing tendency, especially in the developed countries, to establish, strengthen and enlarge economic groupings in the form of trading blocs such as the Single European Market; the conclusion of the Uruguay Round Agreements, the establishment of the World Trade Organisation; and the further advances in information science and production technology. These developments have been buttressed by the dominance of the free market economic system based on competition, efficiency and productivity. These criteria were emphasised in both the bilateral and multilateral conditionalities of the Structural Adjustment Programmes. Consequently, Africa must take new steps to ensure that it becomes an active partner in the world economic system. In this regard, Africa must adopt a new vision for its development and translate this vision into appropriate programmes. This approach will place Africa in a position to fully participate, as a credible partner, in the world system. In this new spirit, Africa will be able to promote its fundamental interests and concerns.

3. For many years, we have adopted at the national, regional and continental levels many plans, strategies and programmes for the development of our countries, individually and collectively. Unfortunately, these plans and programmes were not adequately implemented by the majority of our countries and in some cases were completely paralysed and jeopardised by incessant civil strife and natural calamities. To rectify this situation, African countries must take effective measures within specified time frames to ensure the satisfactory implementation and follow-up of decisions that we have made for the development of the continent. In this context, people should be the centre and object of development of our continent. To this end, governments should ensure the involvement of the people in the conception, implementation and monitoring of development plans, programmes and projects. Special attention should be paid to the full involvement of women in the social and economic development efforts. We should make all efforts to attract and retain African expertise and reverse the "brain drain" from our countries.

4. At the international level, numerous plans and programmes have been adopted by the UN General Assembly and other fora with the expressed intention of providing greater support for the development of Africa. Unfortunately, the achievements in this area have been unsatisfactory due particularly to the lack of adequate external resources.

5. We are deeply concerned that the socio-economic situation in Africa has remained precarious despite the many efforts made by our countries, individually and collectively, to lay a solid foundation for Africa's development. In all these endeavours, we have been guided by the principle of collective self-reliance in order to achieve self-sustaining development of our countries. We reaffirm our commitment to this principle.

6. These and other recent developments have prompted us to meet in Cairo in an Extra-Ordinary Session. It is an opportune occasion to seriously review, analyse and reassess the root causes of economic and social problems with a view to recommending remedial measures and lasting solutions that should be taken by African governments and peoples, with the support of the international community.

7. In assessing these problems, we are convinced that Africa's underdevelopment can be overcome. Africa is a resilient continent. Indeed, Africa is a continent in transition. It has immense human and natural resources. With a strong will, more determination, planning and vision, we can make Africa an economic power that it ought to be.

8. We reaffirm that Africa's development is first and foremost the responsibility of our governments and peoples. We are determined to lay a firm foundation for human-centred,

equitable and sustainable development on the basis of sound economic policies, social justice and collective self-reliance, in order to achieve accelerated structural transformation of our economies.

9. On the basis of the above considerations, while reaffirming our commitment to the Lagos Plan of Action, we have adopted the Cairo Agenda for Action which offers recommendations for consideration and action by our governments and peoples, as well as by the international community for re-launching Africa's economic and social development.

II. WHAT WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES

(a) Democracy, Governance, Peace, Security, Stability and Sustainable Development

10. We recognise and resolve that democracy, good governance, peace, security, stability and justice are among the most essential factors in African socio-economic development. Without democracy and peace, development is not possible; and, without development, peace is not durable. In this regard, we recall the relevance of the Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU of 11 July 1990 on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World. We are therefore committed to take the following actions:

(i) launch programmes to promote national unity especially through the politics of inclusion and a culture of tolerance among the various segments of our people and among the countries of Africa, based on the principles of respect for human rights and dignity, free and fair elections, as well as respect for the freedom of the press, speech, association and conscience;

(ii) ensure the speedy promotion of good governance, characterised by accountability, probity, transparency, equal application of the rule of law, and a clear separation of powers, as an objective and a condition for rapid and sustainable development in African societies. A policy of regionalisation and decentralisation is essential for ensuring the full participation of all the people, particularly the rural population at the grass-roots level, in their own development, and for promoting a feeling of belonging;

(iii) it is essential to clearly define the role of government and the private sector in development. Governments should make special efforts to encourage the participation of the private sector in the development process;

(iv) take measures for the eradication of the root causes of refugees and displaced persons in our continent as well as for their speedy return and re-settlement in their countries of origin and expediting the search for lasting solutions to this problem of refugees;

(v) give the maximum political and financial support to the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, for its effective peace-making operations, by involving all segments of the population and mobilising adequate official and private resources for the OAU Peace Fund.

(b) Food Security

11. Africa is essentially an agricultural and pastoral continent. Yet, food and agricultural output has declined substantially since the 1960s. Consequently, most of our countries are net food importers. While civil strife, drought, desertification and other environmental factors have contributed to the decline in food production, policies which did not give enough attention to food crops are an important part of the explanation.

12. An improvement in agricultural performance is required to provide food supplies essential to raising nutritional standards and to feeding the rapidly growing population without excessive dependence on external sources. The benefits of economic growth should be expanded to the whole population particularly in the rural areas where poverty is more pronounced. In this regard:

(i) agricultural promotion should not be excessively centred on traditional export commodities. Food crops, especially those produced and/or consumed by poor people should be given special attention;

(ii) Appropriate measures should also be made to develop and extend livestock and fisheries as part of the overall food security strategy and the African Regional Nutrition Strategy (1993-2003);

(iii) efficient and standardised means of stock-piling of surplus food should be devised for use in times of famine, drought and other hardships;

(iv)   appropriate means should be made for the national management of the water resources and the preservation of water against pollution;

(v)   reforestation programmes should be vigorously pursued as a means of checking the rate of desertification of arable lands and preserving their fertility; and

(vi)   current initiatives to formulate a framework for the development and operationalisation of a Common African Agricultural Programme (CAAP) should be finalised as soon as possible.

(c) Capacity Building and Human Resources Development

13. The development of human resources is fundamental to the sustainable and equitable development of Africa. The primacy of human resources development must therefore be maintained in all African member states economic and social policies. In this connection, the educational and training systems which remain the key to economic and social development should be adapted to the needs of our societies, with emphasis on technical, scientific and technological education, thereby ensuring that education and training are commensurate with the exigencies of the labour market. Priority focus should be given to increasing Africa's capacity to implement its development plans. Human resource development also entails the elimination of gender-based discrimination. Necessary legislation needs to be passed at national level to remove all such discriminatory practices that exist to provide for the protection of the girl child and women in Africa while extending to them equal opportunities as regards health, education, employment and other civic rights. In the same vein the situation of children should be seriously addressed in compliance with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well as the Consensus of Dakar.

14. Member states should give priority in their development programmes to the basic needs of the people by developing appropriate infrastructure (such as rural roads, potable water supply…), meeting basic food requirements, providing primary health services, education and skills and generating productive and remunerative employment opportunities as a means of eradicating poverty. African countries should endeavour to implement the African Common Position on Human and Social Development; the OAU Declaration of 1991 on the Employment Crisis in Africa; the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development; the Programme of Action of the ICPD (1994); the Plan of Action for the Promotion of Cultural Industries (1992); the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government on Health as a Basis for Development (1987); as well as the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (1995). African countries should also endeavour to protect their cultural heritage as provided for in the African Cultural Charter (1976).

15. Africa's low science and technology base is highly inadequate for the requirements of modern development processes such as agriculture, health, etc. There is therefore an urgent need to build up and strengthen Africa's capacity in the field of science and technology, if Africa is to be efficient and competitive in its production and thus participate in the increased flows of advanced technologies and globalisation of production processes. African governments are therefore called upon to:

(i)   give high priority to building national and regional capacities in the area of science and technology as the basis and means for all development activities and hence create conditions for more vigorous adaptation and application of science and technology for sustainable development. Each member state should therefore devote a minimum of one per cent of its GDP to the development of science and technology and foster co-operation between national and regional institutions. Special attention should be given to the strengthening of the existing centres of excellence and other specialised technical institutions;

(ii)   formulate effective national policies for education and training in science and technology for development, with emphasis on liberalisation of technology flows, including advanced technologies and the promotion of indigenous technologies. To this end, African experts should be encouraged to remain in Africa and contribute to its development.

(d) Structural Transformation of African Economies

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Environment

16. Equally important are the environmental factors in African development. The rate of degradation of Africa's environment and loss of genetic resources and biodiversity threaten the very survival of the peoples of Africa. The rapid population growth, increased poverty, displaced people as a result of conflicts, coupled with frequent droughts, have increased pressure for improved management of the environment. African countries are called upon to give priority to the elaboration of the Protocol on Environment as called for in the Abuja Treaty and establish a national coordinating machinery to ensure integration of environmental issues into national development programmes, as defined in Agenda 21 and the African Common Position on Environment and Development.

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