

DECLARATION ON EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY
ALLEVIATION IN AFRICA

1. **WE**, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, meeting at the 3rd Extraordinary Session of our Assembly in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 8th to 9th September 2004, pursuant to a proposal to convene an Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa to address the challenges posed by pervasive and persistent poverty, unemployment, and under-employment in our countries;
2. **RECALLING** the decision taken at the 2nd Ordinary Session of our Assembly held in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2003 to convene, an Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, in 2004;
3. **ALSO RECALLING** the objectives of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as well as the Vision and Mission of the African Union;
4. **FURTHER RECALLING** the outcome of the Extraordinary Summit on Agriculture and Water Resources held in Sirte, Libya in February 2004 as well as all relevant declarations, decisions and policy guidelines that we adopted in the area of poverty alleviation and political and socio-economic development;
5. **AWARE** of the need to address social development, poverty alleviation and employment creation in a coherent and integrated manner;
6. **CONCERNED** that nearly half of the African population live below the poverty line and more than 140 million are working poor unable to provide their families with sustainable livelihood and that at the current economic growth rates, Africa is at risk of not attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
7. **EQUALLY CONCERNED** about increasing youth unemployment, lack of access to education and training, health, proneness to diseases and mainly HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other related infectious diseases and re-emergence of diseases hitherto eradicated/controlled;

8. **FURTHER CONCERNED** about the lack of social protection which affects particularly women, youth, persons with disabilities, the aged and children, and the exposure to poor occupational health and safety conditions of the majority of workers, particularly in the informal economy;
9. **TAKING COGNIZANCE** of the dialectics between the development of education and health sectors on the one hand and employment on the other; and **NOTING** that the positive results obtained at the level of the first sectors can be mitigated, indeed, reduced by the shortcomings of the second.
10. **CONVINCED** that widespread poverty, unemployment and underemployment compromise basic human rights and dignity of individuals and communities affected, and that they constitute a threat to social, economic and political stability;
11. **CONCERNED** about the fragmentation of social and economic policies and that employment creation has not always been considered as a major objective for sustained equitable economic growth and development, and for improving the living conditions of our people;
12. **RECOGNIZING** that while the current process of globalization presents both challenges and opportunities for Africa, it has so far marginalized the continent in a manner that exacerbates problems of poverty, unemployment, underemployment, indebtedness and vulnerability as well as lack of competitiveness;
13. **NOTING WITH GRAVE CONCERN** that Africa, in particular, Sub-Saharan Africa, is currently the region worst affected by HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and other related infectious diseases, and other pandemics which are negatively impacting on development, social cohesion, political stability, life expectancy and human dignity, thus imposing a heavy economic and social burden on the continent;
14. **DEEPLY CONCERNED** about the high incidence of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, especially in the urban informal economy and in the rural areas where more than 60% of the poor live and work;
15. **NOTING** that weak economic growth, poor economic management, corruption, social inequality and discrimination together with the quality of governance are, among others, the major factors that cause and/or exacerbate poverty and unemployment;

16. **NOTING ALSO** that socio-political conflicts, man-made and natural disasters are major impediments to Africa's efforts aimed at employment creation and poverty reduction.

17. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the need to strengthen social dialogue mechanisms and institutions as a means of realizing participatory democracy involving the social partners and civil society in policy making, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring and as a way of diffusing tension and conflict in our countries;

18. **PARTICULARLY CONCERNED** with the major challenges and obstacles to gender equality as well as with the low levels of women's representation in social, economic, and political decision making structures which still persist; and the increasing feminization of poverty, aggravated by discrimination and unequal opportunities and treatment, under-utilization of the entrepreneurial creativity and job creation potential of the African women;

19. **NOTING WITH CONCERN** that many of our youth who are an asset for sustainable economic growth, social development and political stability are unemployed, under-employed, heavily affected by the HIV/AIDS during their most productive years and generally living in poverty;

20. **EQUALLY NOTING** the alarming trend of child labour, trafficking and the phenomenon of child soldiers;

21. **ALSO NOTING** that the number of African workers who are compelled by economic, political and demographic factors to migrate within and outside the continent impacts negatively on the human capital stock that is crucial for economic growth and sustainable development;

22. **COGNIZANT** that the persons with disabilities who are discriminated against have limited access to education, training opportunities as well as to the labour market;

23. **NOTING** that the situation of refugees who, together with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), are subjected to the most severe forms of economic, social and political exclusion and thus poses a continuing threat to peace, security and stability on the continent;

24. **CONVINCED** that high and sustained economic growth is a necessary but not sufficient condition to reduce poverty, and that sustainable development and poverty reduction also requires the development of cooperatives and adequate investment in productive sectors that enhance employment opportunities;

25. **PARTICULARLY RECOGNIZING** that the current efforts aimed at poverty reduction and employment creation being undertaken by our respective national Governments, employers and workers organizations, private sector, cooperatives, national regional, and continental NGOs, Africans in the Diaspora, civil society organizations (including youth, women, people with disability, religious and community-based organizations), with support from our Continental organization and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as the UN system, and other multilateral and bilateral development agencies, and international NGOs are inadequate;

26. **DEEPLY CONCERNED** that the previous commitments made by our development partners in global forums relating to new and additional resource allocation, debt relief and cancellation, increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows and harmonized Official Development Assistance (ODA) have not been fully met;

27. **GRAVELY CONCERNED** that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) does not give room for meaningful participation and control of the economy by indigenous people;

28. **CONVINCED** that such additional resource transfers are imperative to complement Africa's own efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving poverty by 2015 to achieve long term sustainable development goals;

29. **STRESSING** the importance of the World Solidarity Fund established by Resolution 55/210 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, to promote employment and to fight against poverty in the world and in Africa, in particular;

30. **SUPPORTING** the continuing efforts made by our Governments, social partners and civil society organizations to promote the decent work development agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO);

31. **HAVING UNDERTAKEN** a critical review of the employment and poverty situation in Africa with a view to finding ways and means of creating adequate productive and decent employment opportunities for all, as one of the effective means to alleviate poverty;

COMMIT OURSELVES TO :

1. **ACHIEVE** the objectives of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and its NEPAD programme, the Vision and Mission of the African Union, and all relevant Declarations, Decisions and Policy Guidelines within the framework of our Continental Organization as well as our other engagements within the framework of the United Nations in the area of poverty alleviation and employment creation;
2. **DEVELOP** integrated economic and social policies and **EFFECT** reforms at national, regional and continental levels to address structural constraints to investment and entrepreneurship, promote private-public partnerships, encourage corporate social responsibility, and create an enabling environment for increased production and decent employment opportunities to achieve socio-economic development;
3. **PLACE** employment creation as an explicit and central objective of our economic and social policies at national, regional and continental levels, for sustainable poverty alleviation and with a view to improving the living conditions of our people;
4. **SUPPORT** the continuing efforts made by our governments, social partners and civil society organizations to promote the decent work development agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO) through achievement of the following related strategic objectives: (i) promote and implement international labour standards and , fundamental principles and rights at work; (ii) create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent income; (iii) enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all; and (iv) strengthen tripartism and social dialogue;
5. **EMPOWER** the poor and the vulnerable, particularly in the rural communities and the urban informal economy, the unemployed and the under-employed by enhancing their capacities through education, skills and vocational training and retraining of labour force, access to financial resources, in particular micro-financing, land, infrastructure, markets, technology and services in order to meaningfully integrate them into the labour market;
6. **INTENSIFY** our fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and other related infectious diseases, and to develop and implement national legal and policy frameworks as well as preventive, affordable drugs, and care and support programmes to fight these diseases, thus providing a supportive workplace environment for all workers, and in particular, persons living with HIV/AIDS;

7. **SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENT** the recommendations of the World Commission Report on the Social Dimension of Globalization entitled: “A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities For All”, presented by H.E. President Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania during the Third Ordinary Session of our Assembly, and as considered at this Extraordinary Summit;
8. **ENSURE** equal opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized groups by:
- a) **EMPOWERING** African women through increased access to decent employment as well as innovative approaches to income generating activities, entrepreneurship, real business opportunities, productivity and access to resources and markets at the national, regional, continental and international levels,;
 - b) **DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING** strategies that give young people in Africa a real chance to find decent and productive work and encourage African Member States to support, and adopt the Youth Employment Network (YEN) Initiative and implement its recommendations therein with the support of the UN, ILO, the World Bank and other competent agencies as well as development partners;
 - c) **FACILITATING** the integration of the Africans in the Diaspora on the continent’s development efforts, including through facilitating the mobility of labour in regional integration activities, through targeted investments, job and wealth creation in collaboration with public and private sector as well as civil society;
 - d) **MITIGATING** brain drain through enhancing appropriate conditions and measures, ensuring the full respect for human and labour rights of migrant workers and the setting up or enhancing of development programmes in the countries of origin in order to provide employment and production opportunities as a compensation for the use of their expertise.
 - e) **IMPLEMENTING** the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and **URGING** the Member States which have not yet ratified or acceded to the Charter to do so as soon as possible, and to the relevant ILO instruments on child labour, and the recommendations contained therein, including through time bound programmes for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour;

- f) **CREATING** a conducive environment, and **ENSURING** protection, assistance and support for integration or voluntary repatriation and reintegration, as appropriate, for refugees and asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and migrant workers as well as victims of human trafficking within the framework of national legislation and international instruments;
- g) **IMPLEMENTING** the African Decade of Disabled Persons, and to this end **DECIDING** to develop policies and national programmes that favour the full participation of persons with disabilities and their families in social, political and economic development;
- h) **IMPROVING** the living condition of the aged, through better social protection services including improved pensions, health and other social security schemes;

9. **PROMOTE** social dialogue and partnership among governments, social partners, civil society and the private sector, at the enterprise, sectoral, national, regional and continental levels and, to **SUPPORT** the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union and the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the AU as principal fora for discussion, partnership, exchange of views between Governments, social partners and civil society for the promotion of productive employment and poverty alleviation;

10. **PURSUE** a well developed programme of mass awareness and information dissemination of employment policies and programmes as key factors towards achieving the goals of reducing unemployment and poverty alleviation;

11. **INCREASE** our domestic financial, human and material resources, and seek external support and resources from development partners and Africans in the Diaspora to fight poverty and its manifestations;

12. **ENHANCE** the capacity of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to promote the productive employment dimension within the framework of regional and inter regional cooperation;

13. **STRENGTHEN** the capacity of the African Union Commission with human and financial resources, with the support of relevant and competent organizations and agencies, in the Commission's endeavor to support Member States, at their request, in the development of national plans of action for the implementation of the strategies for promotion of productive employment and poverty alleviation;

14. **INCLUDE** initiatives on employment creation and poverty alleviation as indicators in the NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) ;
15. **PROMOTE** an effective and speedy implementation of actions and programmes agreed upon in the framework of NEPAD and to **MAXIMIZE** their impact on the Continental efforts geared towards poverty reduction and productive employment creation, particularly in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture and rural development, environmental conservation, cultural industries, transportation, fisheries, forestry, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry, trade and tourism which have a high potential for enhancement of productive capacities; job creation and poverty alleviation;
16. **PURSUE** dialogue with our development partners in the true spirit of partnership for an international enabling environment, promotion of a fair globalization, fair trade including the removal of subsidies, and financial rules to support Africa's development, and **CALL ON** them to urgently honour their commitments to attain the level of ODA of 0.7% of their GNP, improve the terms of trade and increase market access of Africa commodities and industrial products as well as levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows, debt relief and cancellation, repatriate illegally acquired funds stashed in foreign banks to their countries of origins and other measures to support Africa's development efforts and poverty alleviation;
17. **CREATE** instruments that will facilitate joint ventures between Foreign investor and indigenous entrepreneurs to allow effective and meaningful participation by the nationals in all sector of the economy;
18. **URGE** the UN, international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral institutions, regional and continental development banks to adopt greater policy coherence and increased support to the employment agenda within the context of our national PRSPs and other development strategies;
19. **FUTHER URGE** the UN Organs to speed up the operationalization of the World Solidarity Fund and **APPEAL** to the international community, governments, donors, foundations, the private sector and the civil society to contribute to the Fund for the attainment of the MDGs, particularly the alleviation of poverty;
20. **OPERATIONALIZE** the Digital Solidarity Fund in line with the decision taken at our Third Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, in July 2004 on the Digital Solidarity Fund and to **REITERATE** the appeal made to the local communities, the civil society organizations, and the private sector to contribute to the Fund ;

21. **IMPLEMENT** the commitments in this Declaration through the Annexed Plan of Action and Mechanism for Follow-up and Evaluation;

22. **DESIGNATE** Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the principal bodies responsible for the implementation of this Declaration and the Plan of Action; the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission as the coordinator of the implementing mechanism;

23. **REQUEST** Member States, in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), to submit biennial progress reports on the status of implementation to the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission and the Commission of the AU to prepare a comprehensive Evaluation Report in 2009 and 2014.

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