

Permanent Observer Mission of the
AFRICAN UNION to the
United Nations



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STATEMENT BY

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REPUBLIC OF MALAWI TO THE UNITED NATIONS
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN GROUP FOR THE
MONTH OF APRIL 2005**

**ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
AT THE**

**INFORMAL THEMATIC CONSULTATIONS OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON CLUSTER I
(FREEDOM FROM WANT)**

NEW YORK, APRIL 26, 2005

**Statement by the African Group on
Cluster I Issues of the Secretary-General's Report
"In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights
for All".**

Mr. Facilitator,

On behalf of the African Group, I wish to congratulate you and your Co-Facilitators for the efficient and effective manner that you have handled our discussions on the Cluster I issues of the Secretary-General's Report entitled, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All". The African Group associates itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the G77 and China and in this statement will focus on the Special Needs of Africa.

The Millennium Development Goals that were crystallized from the Millennium Declaration, while not encompassing all the complex issues of development, nonetheless address core problems confronting developing countries, and are therefore fully embraced by African countries as targets, the achievement of which, would contribute immensely to the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development on the African continent.

Mr. Facilitator,

The African Group notes with great concern that there has been insignificant progress in the achievement of the MDGs in Africa. This fact has been recognized by the Secretary-General in his report noting that "Africa continues to lag behind the rest of the developing world and that "sub-Saharan Africa is at the epicenter of the crisis, falling seriously short on most goals with continuing food insecurity, disturbingly high child and maternal mortality, growing numbers of people living in slums and an overall rise of extreme poverty despite some important progress in individual countries"

In this regard it is pertinent to point out that the precarious situation of African countries was duly recognized in the Millennium Declaration which expressed a clear commitment to meeting the Special Needs of Africa by taking special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced Official Development Assistance, increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment, transfers of technology as well as to help Africa build up its capacity to tackle the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases.

The African Group stresses that in the Millennium Declaration, the international community made a clear commitment to meet Africa's Special Needs and not merely to recognize them. Furthermore, the full implementation of the outcomes of major conferences and summits in economic, social and other related fields and more specifically the Brussels Programme of Action would accelerate the achievement of the MDGs for the Least Developed Countries of which 34 out of 50 are from Africa.

African countries should avail themselves of the opportunity of the High-Level Event of 2005 to seek the full implementation of commitments made and agreements reached at major conferences and summits in economic, social and other related fields. Each country has primary responsibility for its own development, however the role of the international community has to be emphasized, as any realistic effort to address the Special Needs of Africa requires partnership between developing countries and the donor community. Towards this end we would like to highlight the following issues in regard to the Special Needs of Africa:

NEPAD

Addressing Africa's Special Needs will require direct support for the programmes drawn up by African leaders within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. While there has been significant international recognition of the need to support NEPAD initiatives, limited resources have been allocated by the international community to projects and programmes identified in the various sectors. Such support would be crucial for the promotion of regional integration and cooperation and the achievement of the economies of scale, which are indispensable for successful development. It is essential that during this year's summit concrete commitments be made by multilateral and bilateral donors to support these NEPAD programmes in the bid to meet Africa's Special Needs.

HIV/AIDS, MALARIA, TUBERCULOSIS AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

While HIV/AIDS is of global concern, its effects in Africa are particularly devastating. In fulfillment of the Millennium Declaration, it is crucial that the international community commits itself to the provision of affordable and accessible treatment, including through the implementation of the commitments made at the Doha WTO Ministerial Conference. It is evident that in most developed countries where affordable treatment is accessible, HIV/AIDS is being kept under control. It is equally important that more resources be provided for prevention, research and medication that would combat and eradicate HIV/AIDS in Africa. Resource mobilization for UNAIDS and other UN funds and programmes in the fight against HIV/AIDS is key in the fight against the pandemic in Africa.

Immediate attention should also be given to combating malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. It is also necessary for developed countries to urge pharmaceutical companies to make drugs for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis affordable and accessible in Africa.

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The African Group welcomes the efforts by those donor countries that have achieved the 0.7percent target of gross national income and 0.2 % of gross national income for LDCs as official development assistance and takes note with appreciation initiatives within the European Union and some other countries to set up timetables for fulfilling the 0.7 per cent target of gross national income for official development assistance. In order to address the Special Needs of Africa, the African Group encourages countries that have not already done so to establish timetables to fulfill these targets. This should also include improving the quality of aid, its effectiveness as well as donor coordination in achieving the MDGs.

Mr. Facilitator,

INNOVATIVE SOURCES OF FINANCING

It is evident that in order to meet the Special Needs of Africa, additional resources have to be mobilized. It is important to consider other innovative mechanisms for financing for development such as the front-loading of ODA as proposed by the Commission for Africa Report and the establishment of the International Financial Facility. It has to be noted that these sources should not replace existing commitments on financing for development, but should complement them. They should not burden developing countries either. In addition, the World Solidarity Fund established by the General Assembly constitutes an important mechanism for mobilization of additional resources for development and should be operationalized.

QUICK WINS

The African Group is of the view that Quick Wins would have a resounding demonstrative effect of the success that could be achieved in a genuine collaborative effort between developing countries and their development partners. In addition to anchoring the Quick Wins on long-term development objectives, strategies of ensuring sustainability and capacity building should guide their development. The criteria for the selection of countries for the implementation of the Quick Wins should be fair and transparent.

EXTERNAL DEBT

We concur with the Secretary General's call for 100% debt cancellation for highly indebted poor countries as well as debt reduction and cancellation for middle-income countries where appropriate to enable African countries to achieve their development objectives including the MDGs without increasing their debt ratios.

AGRICULTURE AND MARKET ACCESS

Productivity of agriculture in Africa is very low and needs to be raised through a determined policy to create an "Agricultural Revolution". Such an approach should go hand-in-hand with improved market access for agricultural exports from African countries and take actions to address supply side constraints as well as commodity prices.

Mr. Facilitator,

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The African Group believes that drought, desertification, deforestation and biodiversity are critical issues for African countries. To combat these environmental challenges in Africa, the international community should provide resources targeted at supporting relevant international Conventions and Programmes. It is equally important to provide resources to UN institutions mandated with addressing environmental issues.

The African Group would also like to take note of the recommendation for the establishment of a world-wide early warning system for all natural hazards and looks forward to the findings and recommendations of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat on existing capacities and gaps within the UN system.

We call for an early and full implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 to reduce disaster risk in the next 10 years. It is also pertinent to address other issues on disaster reduction in Africa in a comprehensive manner.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

To help boost economic development and to enable African countries forge solutions to their own problems, a significant global effort would be required to support research and development to address the special needs of the poor in the areas of health, agriculture, natural resources, environmental protection and energy.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are particularly lacking in Africa, though they could significantly contribute to the achievement of the MDGS. In this regard, the World Summit of the Information Society to be held in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005 constitutes an effective means to reduce the digital divide and to promote an accessible and balanced information society. The link between these objectives and those of the September 2005 Summit must be duly recognized. To fully utilize the potential of ICTs, the international community has to address the digital divide, including through voluntary financing mechanisms, such as the recently launched Digital Solidarity Fund.

POST CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

The African Group wishes to underscore the importance of providing appropriate assistance in response to a request by an LDC Government, and in accordance with the UN Charter, to help the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as supporting confidence-building, post-conflict peace-building, reintegration and reconstruction, thus paving the way for durable peace and sustainable development, as highlighted in the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs.

GENDER EQUALITY

The African Group reaffirms its commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming as one of the most effective drivers of development. In this context, the Group recalls the commitments made in the Beijing Platform of Action and the Cairo Programme of Action.

I thank you, Mr. Facilitator.