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Statement by
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on behalf of the European Union
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Mr. Chair!

It is an honour for Slovenia as the current EU Presidency to present this intervention on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.*

Sustainable development in Africa

Distinguished delegates,

1. Africa is an increasingly important political and economic partner for the EU. The creation of the African Union (AU) and the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the work undertaken in the context of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism, significant economic growth, peace processes and democratic consolidation in many countries all contribute to a more optimistic view of Africa's future. However, enormous challenges still remain in coping with political, security, social, health, environmental and economic issues, as has been adequately addressed in the UN Secretary General Report. Sustainable development must, therefore, remain a key objective for the African continent and the international community but also for the global framework for development strategies and policies.
2. The EU strongly endorses the UN Secretary General's recommendations to further improve the implementation of the commitments of the Agenda 21 and of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
3. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Africa needs our special attention and support. In the coming years, the overarching political framework for EU-Africa relations will be the new Africa-EU Joint Strategy adopted at the Second EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in December 2007. Through sectoral Africa-EU partnerships, the EU and Africa will work together on peace and security, democratic governance and human rights, trade, regional integration and infrastructure, the MDGs, energy, climate change and other sustainable development issues.
4. However, addressing Africa's sustainable development challenges requires not only an integrated and interlinked approach, as well as effective action by 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.
5. Moreover, in its cooperation with Africa, the EU underlines the importance of addressing key cross-cutting and interlinked issues, in particular health, protection and management of natural resources,

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, education and, allow me, Mister Chair, to highlight gender, which is a priority for the EU. Gender equality is a fundamental human right, a question of social justice and also a core value of the EU, including EU development policy. The promotion of gender equality and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and their empowerment in all aspects of political, social and economic activities are goals in their own right and are also instrumental and key to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Globalization and Africa

6. Trade is crucial for sustainable economic development. Well-designed trade and investment policies and agreements play an important part in ensuring that trade leads to economic development that enhances all round sustainability. Africa suffers from limited internal markets, inflated exchange rates, infrastructural bottlenecks, low productivity and barriers to regional trade. In Africa clear prospects exist to enhance regional trade and to benefit from comparative advantages in production on the continent. Improved economic governance and a better investment climate are essential and critical to build Africa's economic strength and allow it to find its place in the global market. Due regard to the implementation of social and environmental standards will be an essential part of that process.
7. Regional integration is very important for Africa's global competitiveness and for moving away from commodity dependence. Larger regional markets will stimulate intra-African trade and improve investment prospects. The EU is committed to assist poor countries to better integrate into the global economy through trade and economic cooperation. The EU has strongly supported putting development at the heart of the multilateral trade negotiations. Furthermore, regional integration is a key concept and objective of the EU development policy and it plays a crucial part within the context of the Africa-EU Joint Partnership. It also is a crucial part of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with African regions and will enable to maximise the potential of the EPAs. The EU hopes to conclude the negotiations on full (rather than the current interim) EPA form with African regions during 2008.
8. The EU has already approved its Aid for Trade Strategy which will increase its collective expenditure on trade-related assistance to EUR 2 billion per year from 2010 and promote both quantitative and qualitative improvements in wider Aid for Trade. As defined in the EU Aid for Trade Strategy, the EU is also ready to support ACP countries in the implementation of EPAs. The EU has also opened up its market to all imports from least developed countries through the "Everything but Arms" initiative. Non-Least Developed Countries enjoy substantial preferential access through preferential agreements, with ACP countries that have concluded EPAs enjoying close to 100% openness.
9. Furthermore, diversification and value added processing of export products are major elements of Africa's industrialization and trading transformation process. The EU-Africa Action Plan sets out concrete actions aimed at allowing diversification away from simple processed products, as well as at enhancing the competitiveness of African agriculture and agri-food industry.
10. Finally, as the improvement of economic governance and the investment climate are essential elements to build Africa's economic strength and to allow the continent to move away from continuous donor support and find its place in global markets, cooperation between Africa and the EU in this field and within the context of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy will aim to promote stable, efficient and harmonised legal frameworks for business, free of unnecessary administrative red tape, as well as to promote Corporate Social Responsibility.

Governance, Peace and Development

11. The promotion of democratic governance and human rights constitutes a central feature of the Africa-EU dialogue and partnership. The AU is putting into place a new pan-African governance architecture and Africa is developing its public and private institutional capacity at all levels – national, regional and continental. In this context, the EU is committed to supporting institutional development, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.
12. The AU and regional organisations are key players in improving peace, security and stability in Africa. During the recent crises, the AU has demonstrated leadership in restructuring its own peace and security architecture. The EU supports the AU also by financing the AU-led peacekeeping missions through the African Peace Facility. Using this instrument, the EU aims to strengthen the AU and regional organisations in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

13. In order to further improve cooperation, the EU and Africa have launched a strategic partnership, covering conflict prevention, crisis management and stabilisation efforts in Africa and worldwide. The partnership also aims to ensure predictable funding for Africa-led peace support operations.
14. The EU highlights the need for comprehensive approaches to the challenges confronting Africa, including cross-cutting development issues, such as security implications of natural disasters, migration, access to sustainable energy and water, protection of civilians and democratic governance.
15. The purpose behind the adoption of an Africa-EU Joint Strategy was to take the Africa-EU relationship to a new, strategic level with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation at all levels. By doing so, to strengthen and promote peace, security, democratic governance and human rights, fundamental freedoms, gender equality, sustainable economic development, including industrialisation, and regional and continental integration in Africa, and to ensure that all the Millennium Development Goals are to be met in all African countries by the year of 2015.

Thank you.