

**Statement by**

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**of the**

**Permanent Mission of Madagascar to the United Nations**

*On behalf of the African Group*

**During the**

**Inter-governmental Preparatory Meeting for the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the**

**Commission on Sustainable Development**

**3 MARCH 2005**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**It is a great honour for me to make this statement on behalf of the African Group in my capacity as the Chairperson of the Group at this Inter governmental Preparatory Meeting on CSD13.**

*The clusters under discussion during this cycle, human settlement, water and sanitation are at the core of any development strategy for Africa. In this regard, we thank the Secretary General for the reports prepared for this session.*

The African group would like to associate itself with the *statement made* by the Permanent Representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. Chairman,**

As we prepare for the policy decisions we will take on human settlements, water and sanitation, it *will be important to* note that in the programme of work of the CSD adopted at CSD11 the sustainable development of Africa was identified as a crosscutting issue with provision made for its consideration in all the cycles of work of the Commission, The reports prepared for CSD13 show that while African

countries have been making progress, overall 'they still lag behind other regions in the provision of access to water, sanitation and human settlements.

In addition, the findings of the UN Millennium Project 2005 Report also show that Africa is lagging behind other regions in meeting its targets. It is however important to note that African countries have made initiatives targeted at achieving the goals of access to safe water, provision of human settlements and addressing sanitation.

*Within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) we have identified action plans on this three clusters that are vital in comprehensively implementing the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements.*

### Human Settlements

Mr. Chtdrman,

Rapid urbanization has posed several challenges to African countries including increasing the poverty levels in African cities. 72 per cent of urban residents in Africa live in slums without equitable access to land, adequate shelter and basic services such as water, sanitation, health as well as infrastructure.

To address the challenges of urbanisation African countries need assistance to put into place integrated development policies for urban development to address poverty in a comprehensive way. Such integrated prolicies'should look holistically at the provision of services *such as water, sanitation, education and health, These multisectoral approaches also need to be sensitive to the needs of the poor. Policies should seek to increase the productivity of African cities so that they can reduce unemployment. We also stress the necessity of policies for the promotion of small and medium enterprises.*

Thus 'urban development in Africa will require increased global cooperation through the provision of official development assistance.

The report of the Secretary-General makes the point that bilateral development agencies and regional and multilateral finance institutions can assist in financial sector development and capacity building in financial management. It identifies grant support, equity investments and

loan guarantees as some *of the specific forms of financial assistance that can mobilize domestic capital for human settlements development and slum upgrading.*

We emphasize that the African Development Bank and other regional finance institutions should play a key role in the financing of *regional projects,*

African countries<sup>4</sup> also need assistance with the development of appropriate financing mechanisms that can increase lending especially to the poor. Microcredit schemes should be one of the financing options for the poor. There is also *need to establish a housing financing mechanism to support the development of cities in Africa.*

The African Group *notes with concern* that the debt burden will make it impossible for African countries to meet the targets of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, We therefore call for the cancellation of African debt.

The international community should provide African countries with assistance with slum upgrading. Secure tenure is essential to the empowerment of slum dwellers based on the needs of the poor. This should include a range of options that are not limited to formal titles. In this regard, there is a need to support the Slum Upgrading Facility of the UN-HABITAT. It is also imperative to provide UN-Habitat with adequate and predictable resources with emphasis on non-earmarked resources to enable the Programme discharge its mandate.

It will also be important to ensure increased financial assistance to capacity building and increased technical expertise. The transfer of technology is also important for African countries including collaborative research. We emphasize the role of South-South cooperation for the promotion of sustainable development.

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is also an important dimension of the provision of shelter in the context of national development strategies.

The institutional capacity of regional organizations also needs to be enhanced in addressing the challenge of providing shelter to African populations, In this regard we also call for the international community to support the NEPAD Cities Initiative.

Mr, Chairman,

The Habitat Agenda *recognised the* importance of the inter-linkages between the urban and rural areas. The relationship between increased agricultural productivity, urban development and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. In addition, effective rural-urban linkage development programmes can, contribute to the reduction of migration from rural to urban areas. In all this issues the role of civil society and community. based organisations in human settlements development needs to be recognised.

Sanitation

Mr, Chairman,

The target set at the WSSD for sanitation enabled the recognition of sanitation as an important development priority in its own right, This was an important step, as sanitation needs to be an integral part of national development policies.

Sanitation coverage in Africa is still low especially in informal settlements and the rural areas, As the Secretary-General's report shows, only 31 per cent of rural inhabitants in developing countries are estimated to have access to any type of improved sanitation. It is also important to promote demand for sanitation services through education and hygiene campaigns. Public education programmes need to be developed *with* communities and these should also be culturally sensitive.

The report of the Secretary-General also notes that the rate of recent progress in extending rural sanitation has been slow in Sub-Saharan Africa and it calls for a *dramatic escalation* of efforts with an increased *commitment from* the donors to provide assistance. The report also recognizes that most developing countries cannot achieve the sanitation targets without the cooperation and support of the international community, We therefore support the Secretary General's proposal for increased ODA that can target sanitation directly.

In. addition we also wish to reiterate that debt relief will also help African countries to free resources for the provision of basic services such as sanitation.

in this regard we also wish to draw attention to the findings of the Millennium Project Report that external financing is important for developing countries in the development of sanitation infrastructure,

We support the call of the Millennium Project that external finance should be provided in the form of grants. While the private sector plays a role we agree with the Millennium Project that in many developing countries with high levels of poverty the private sector does not provide a source of new financing for water and sanitation.

We also wish to highlight the African Development Bank's rural water supply and sanitation initiative that aims to expand rural water and sanitation coverage in sub-Saharan Africa to 80 *per cent* by 2015, **This programme however needs to be supported by the international community,**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**In urban areas, international assistance will need to focus on wastewater treatment due to its high cost and its requirement for advanced technical skills, Capacity building *in this* area, focusing on both the human and *institutional* development is thus of crucial concern to African countries,**

Technology transfer for the provision of sanitation should be highlighted, The African Group also stresses that South-South cooperation should be enhanced in the area of technology transfer.

The African Group emphasizes the need for the development of an institutional follow-up on sanitation issues within the United Nations system. This would enhance the monitoring of progress and also provide an institutional framework for addressing sanitation as development.

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