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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON**

**BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP  
ON AGENDA ITEM 49:**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A-G)  
IN THE PLENARY  
OF  
THE SECOND COMMITTEE  
DURING THE 63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**ON 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2008,**

**NEW YORK**

**Mr. Chairman,**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 49, (a-g) titled: Sustainable Development. The Group aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 and China.

Allow me to thank the Secretary General for presenting the various reports under this Agenda item.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The African Group has consistently called for simultaneous action to address the challenges related to all the three pillars of sustainable development in a coordinated, integrated and balanced manner. We believe that at the national and international levels; the economic, social and environmental goals should be promoted in complementary and consistent ways. We support the views that, progress in the environmental pillar of sustainable development should complement simultaneous progress in the economic and social pillars.

There is no doubt that poverty is rampant in Africa because of structural weaknesses and environmental degradation. Environmental challenges and the impact of climate change have been a recent phenomenon that contributes further to the already difficult situation in African economies. We urgently call for sustainable solutions to the environmental challenges that include climate change, drought, desertification, hurricanes and cyclones. Attempts to promote solutions to the challenges of sustainable development, we must ensure that the priority problems of poverty, hunger,

environmental protection and under development remain at the center of our actions.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In May this year, the Commission on Sustainable Development deliberated on a thematic cluster of issues that is of crucial importance to developing countries - namely agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The discussions of the Commission, in our view, reinforced the intricate link among and mutually reinforcing nature of the issues in the thematic cluster.

In the same vein, this time round, the international community is facing new challenges such as energy, food and financial crises. The situation is becoming more complicated because the world has been considering various options to address the effects of climate change. Africa believes that despite the existing crisis, the world should not lose sight of the fact that sustainable development is a key to survival of mankind. We stress that efforts to forge more international cooperation to finance environmental programmes and projects as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation need to continue unabated. In the process of doing so, we believe that the continued focus on this area will energize African countries to address climate change and its adverse effects.

The African Group welcomes the focus on the special needs of Africa within CSD-16 cycle; the High-Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs and High-level event on Millennium Development Goals that took place in September 2008 at the United Nations. We hope that this will

translate into tangible benefits for the continent in terms of support to its sustainable development efforts.

The stakes are high for the entire world and it is important to involve all stakeholders in efforts towards sustainable development. The United Nations and the international community have courageously made commitments and formulated time bound goals and targets in the area of sustainable development. Due to changing circumstances in the global economy, there is need for a thorough review and renewed spirit of enhancing the implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development. The full and speedy implementation of the commitments and other outcomes of these fora is essential if progress has to be made.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The African Group continues to attach high priority to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. The vulnerability and challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are increasing, and without the support of the international community their sustainable development efforts will be placed in greater jeopardy.

A coordinated, coherent, and systematic approach, with the necessary financial and technical support from the international community is critical to the full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and Mauritius Strategy. In this regard, The African Group reiterates its call to the international community and in particular the developed countries, to honor their commitments contained in the Barbados

Programme of Action and Mauritius Strategy to increase the level of financial and technical resources available to The Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

**Mr. Chairman,**

We note with concern that natural disasters are increasing in terms of both frequency and severity. We recall the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and emphasize the full implementation of the provisions of the Framework aimed at building the resilience of nations and communities to disaster. The adverse consequences on the affected populations and the environment as well as social and economic development of affected countries are a long lasting phenomenon.

It is, therefore, important to examine the measures that need to be taken to improve the response capacity of affected nations and the assistance that can be provided by the international community in this regard. We further urge for financial support from developed countries to enhance the national capacities of developing countries to build resilience of nations and communities.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Africa faces increased risks from the negative effects of climate change, despite emitting the least greenhouse gases. We underline the urgent need to address adaptation to climate change, including financing needs related to such effects and appropriate international cooperation mechanisms and policies, as well as ensure the reduction of global emissions by at least 50% by 2050. In this respect, action by all countries particularly the

developed ones will be required, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

The UNFCCC, and its Kyoto Protocol, remains the central multilateral framework for cooperative actions to address climate change. Our discussions should provide impetus and political support to the ongoing processes by promoting global consensus on Climate Change and contribute to a successful conclusion of the forthcoming Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC, to be held in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Desertification and land degradation continue to pose a threat to sustainable development particularly in Africa. Desertification is a severe problem for developing countries on a whole, since it has far reaching social and economic implications.

Human factors such as overgrazing, deforestation, and overexploitation of land due to demographic pressure, compounded with climate change, are turning once economically productive areas into unproductive and barren lands and as a consequence, poverty is widespread in those areas. The fact that desertification costs the world about 42 billion dollars a year and that Africa alone is losing some 9 billion dollars a year. The Group calls for increased funding for the UNCCD to support implementation of its strategic plan as well as the National Plans of Action to combat desertification in African countries.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The African Group recognizes that biodiversity can contribute significantly to poverty reduction, and to this end considers it extremely important for the negotiations on the international regime on access and benefit-sharing to be completed within the established timeframe. Indeed, conservation of biological diversity cannot be achieved without the sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from genetic resources

The African Group considers it vital for greater progress to be made in the implementation of all three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and for the achievement by 2010 of a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity. This is in line with the commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. We remain concerned that current efforts are insufficient to achieve the 2010 target, and therefore extraordinary efforts must be taken to achieve this target, given its importance to achieving the MDGs, in particular the reduction of poverty.

The African Group considers the outcome of the Governing Council of UNEP at its 10<sup>th</sup> special session as critical to the future work of UNEP. This is particularly in regard to the decisions on the UNEP's Medium-term Strategy for the period 2010-2013.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Environmental challenges have continued to increase in number and complexity. On the other hand, the linkages between environmental sustainability and the economy have emerged as critical in policy and decision-making at all levels. We believe that UNEP, within its mandate

can provide leadership in responding to the current environmental challenges. We trust that the Medium-term Strategy for 2010-2013 will help in streamlining the activities of UNEP in a manner that guarantees effective focus on the environmental challenges and, on its overall mandate. The African Group further believes that urgent and effective implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building will be a good measure to judge our seriousness in translating our commitments into action, particularly as relates to addressing environmental challenges.

However, in order for UNEP to succeed, it is imperative that it be adequately supported through provision of financial and technical resources as well as capacity building. The African Group calls on the United Nations to increase its allocations to UNEP's regular budget as called for in a number of General Assembly resolutions; and further urge donors to scale up their support to UNEP activities and projects.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Before concluding, let me reiterate our strong expectation and hope that the challenges of global sustainable development will be addressed in an integrated and coordinated manner. Above all, eradication of poverty as an indispensable prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development in developing countries should be the overarching objective of our endeavours.

**I thank you.**

