

Keynote Address By
H. E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of Liberia and Chair of the High-Level Committee (HLC)
On
“Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda”
At The Seventh Joint Annual Meetings of the ECA Conference of
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(As Delivered)

Excellency, Mr. President Goodluck Jonathan;
Mr. Jan Eliasson, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General;
Dr. Nkosazana Zuma, Chairperson, African Union Commission;
Mr. Carlos Lopes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive
Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);
Mr. Pierre Moscovici, Minister of Finance, France;
Dr. Donald Kaberuka, Chair of the Session and President of the African
Development Bank;
Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance, Nigeria;
Honourable Ministers;
Special Guests;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I, too, am honoured to be here to share with you our experiences and achievements in the process of formulating the post-2015 Development Agenda from an African perspective. As you may know, the African regional process has featured multiple regional and sub-regional consultations, technical meetings and meetings of the Sherpas of the High Level Committee (HLC) to articulate a Common African Position on the post-2015 Development Agenda (CAP).

The main objective of the continental and regional consultations was to produce a demand-driven agenda from multiple stakeholders in Africa. In this regard, the process entailed working with various partner institutions in inclusive events through which the viewpoints of a wide range of African stakeholders which included government, regional economic entities, civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia, youth, women, think-tanks and the private sector were captured. These consultations culminated in a draft Common African Position (CAP) which was presented to African Heads of State during the 21st Ordinary Session of the AU Summit in May 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Summit established a High Level Committee (HLC) of 10 Heads of State and Government which I was asked to chair. The regional deans identified the following two representatives on the HLC from each of Africa's regions:

- **West Africa:** Liberia and Guinea
- **North Africa:** Algeria and Mauritania;
- **Central Africa:** Congo and Chad;
- **East Africa:** Ethiopia and Mauritius
- **Southern Africa:** Namibia and South Africa

The Summit tasked the HLC to further refine the CAP and build consensus on the priorities that had been identified. The Summit also requested the African Union Commission (AUC) in consultation with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and relevant stakeholders, to engage member states and work with our Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) in Addis Ababa and the Africa Group in New York, together with partner institutions to ensure that the CAP fed into the post-2015 Development Agenda.

The HLC circulated the draft CAP to all Member States and RECs, and conducted consultations with the Group of African Ambassadors in Geneva in July 2013. The HLC also undertook a series of consultations in Washington D.C. with African Ambassadors and the World Bank Africa Group of Executive Directors and their alternates, and in New York, with Permanent Representatives at the United Nations, who will carry on much of the negotiations.

To implement the decision of the Summit, the AUC in collaboration with my office, first organized a series of technical meetings with partners and representatives of the Heads of State and Government in Monrovia, Liberia to discuss the Terms of Reference of the Secretariat, define modalities for supporting the work of the HLC in finalizing the common position and the formulation of a road map. The first meeting of the HLC, was held on 23rd September 2013 in New York, U.S.A in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly which approved the roadmap and the establishment of a technical working group that comprised the UNECA, UNFPA, NEPAD, UNDP and the AfDB to refine the draft CAP. A Secretariat dedicated to follow up and coordinate the HLC was set at the AUC, under the leadership of Dr. Anthony M. Maruping, AU Commissioner for

Economic Affairs, and the general guidance of Commission's Chairperson, Dr. Zuma.

Following the outcome of the New York meeting, the technical team and our Sherpas met several times to incorporate the comments received from various stakeholders and build consensus around the priority areas of the draft CAP and to fine tune and agree on the outline of the document.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The revised CAP was presented to African leaders at the January 2014 AU Heads of State and Government summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The African leaders welcomed the report of the HLC and adopted the CAP with the proviso that Peace and Security be transformed from an enabler to the status of a pillar. The HLC, in a meeting hosted by President Idriss Deby Itno in N'Djamena, Chad on February 28th 2014, endorsed the changes to the document requested at the Summit. The HLC members also discussed a strategy for advocacy, negotiations and forging alliances around the CAP during this meeting.

The Common African Position drawing from the African Union's 2063 long term agenda is a resolve to deliver on our various declarations and commitments on the social and economic integration, poverty eradication, and employment generation for our people. The CAP aims at re-orienting the development paradigm away from externally-driven initiatives toward domestically-inspired and funded initiatives.

It is thus based on six pillars: 1. structural economic transformation; 2. science, technology, and innovation; 3. A people-centred development; 4. Environmental

sustainability; 5. Peace and security; and 6. Partnership for development. At the core of each pillar, there is a strong commitment to good governance. These pillars are the indispensable building blocks for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its people and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

It recognizes that sustainable and equitable development can only be guaranteed when people are the means and the end of the economic growth process and that Africa is committed to remain focused on pertinent development issues by completing the unfinished MDG business by focusing on the quality aspect of service delivery in the areas of education and health; and by responding to the social and economic consequences of Africa's changing demographic structure.

The CAP is resolved to reverse Africa's dependence on a cluster of primary commodities and to create decent jobs and strengthen resilience to external shocks.

It aims to deepen and sustain the improved socio-economic performance of the continent by harnessing science, technology and innovation.

It postulates a sustainable development agenda for Africa anchored by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The CAP captures the commitment of African leaders to promoting effective, open and participatory governance at national, regional and international levels with acknowledgement that the achievement of development objectives requires peace and security promoted by measures to prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts; thus addressing the root causes of conflict, including economic and social inequalities.

The CAP, finally, recognizes Africa's priorities must be financed and to this end resource mobilization and innovative financing will need to be effected.

Now that Africa has developed a Common Position and is ready to speak with one voice for the priorities for the post-2015 era to be heard, the next step will consist of advocacy and negotiations. The success of this advocacy and the ensuing negotiations will depend on Africans – policy makers and all stakeholders – taking full ownership of this development agenda.

In addition to its task of leading the finalization process of the draft CAP, the HLC was also mandated to forge alliances around the CAP. Indeed, the regions of the world and major groups such as the G20, the G77, the BRICS, etc. have different interests to defend in the post-2015 development discussion. The battle could be tough, but Africa needs allies to support some of its major priorities, notably those in the economic area, pushing for the development of productive capacities, focusing on “the structural economic transformation objective”.

Furthermore, it is good to observe that the 19 areas of focus identified by the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs encompass most of African priorities. Notwithstanding this realization, we must forge ahead with advocacy and negotiations to ensure that Africa's voice is not only heard, but well taken and reflected in the successor to the MDGs.

In conclusion, **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**, the process of developing a common African position has been analytical and widely inclusive, consultative and interactive. The aim is to ensure our priorities are clearly articulated for both

inputting into the global process of developing the post-2015 Development Agenda, and most importantly, for underpinning African countries' future development plans and priorities. These development plans and priorities will guide our efforts to promote inclusive development on the continent and provide a basis for our engagement with our development partners.

The world has greatly evolved since the MDGs were first put forth at the beginning of the millennium almost 15 years ago. Africa faces new challenges but also has now great opportunities that can and must be translated into dividends for the benefits of our people. The creation of a common development agenda is a historic development and is a call to action for all of us.

As we embark on working on the post-2015 Development Agenda, we must not forget that we still have some time left to focus our energy and resources on those areas of the MDGs where there have been challenges which need to be completed.

By committing ourselves to implement the recommendations of this Common Position, we will not only transform the current realities of our people, but we will also fulfil a sacred duty of leaving a stable, peaceful and resourceful Africa to future generations.

We must all endeavour to have a better Africa to leave to our children and grandchildren than the one we inherited.

The people of Africa have spoken. We have listened and now is the time for action.

Thank you!