



# ARC Briefing Note on the Outcomes of the eleventh African Union Summit

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## ARC BRIEFING NOTE ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE ELEVENTH AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT: 24 JUNE - 1 JULY 2008

The eleventh African Union (AU) Summit took place from 24 June to 1 July 2008 in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt. The Summit included sessions of the Permanent Representatives Committee (held from 24-25 June), the Executive Council (27-28 June), and the AU Assembly (30 June to 1 July). The main theme of the Summit was “Meeting the Millennium Development Goals on Water and Sanitation.”

The Permanent Representatives Committee considered a range of issues and draft decisions that were taken up subsequently by the Council and Assembly. At the close of its thirteenth Ordinary Session, the AU Executive Council had adopted 39 decisions on a variety of topics, including the: report on Assessing Progress Towards the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Status of the MDGs Africa Initiative; report of the First Joint Annual Meetings; and Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Energy on the Official Launching of the African Energy Commission.

The eleventh Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government agreed on 19 decisions and on two declarations – the Sharm El-Sheikh Commitments for Accelerating the Achievement of Water and Sanitation Goals in Africa; and Responding to the Challenges of High Food Prices and Agriculture Development.

This *ARC Briefing Note* summarizes the decisions and declarations agreed to by the Executive Council and Assembly as they relate to sustainable development.

*Editors Note:* IISD Reporting Services was not physically present at the AU Summit, and this *Briefing Note* was prepared based on the recently-released decisions and declarations adopted at the Summit. IISD’s coverage of previous AU Summit’s can be found at <http://www.iisd.ca/afrika/aauss/>

### A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE AFRICAN UNION

The AU is the principal organization for the promotion of socioeconomic integration across the continent. It includes 53 African countries as member states, while Morocco has special status. The Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) called for its establishment in the Sirte

Declaration on 9 September 1999, as a means to accelerate integration, so that Africa could play a significant role in the global economy, and to address shared social, economic and political problems. The Constitutive Act of the AU was adopted at the thirty-sixth Ordinary Session of the OAU / fourth Ordinary Session of the African Economic Community held from 10-12 July 2000 in Lome, Togo. The Constitutive Act entered into force in 2001. The AU’s objectives include: achieving greater unity and solidarity between African countries and the peoples of Africa; promoting and defending common African policy positions; encouraging international cooperation; establishing enabling conditions for the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations; promoting sustainable development and integration of African economies; and advancing the continent’s development through research in all fields, particularly science and technology.

The principal organs of the AU include the Assembly, Executive Council, Commission, Permanent Representatives Committee, Peace and Security Council, Pan-African Parliament, and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, as well as the Court of Justice, Financial Institutions, and Specialized Technical Committees, which include the Committees on Industry, Science and Technology, Energy, Natural Resources and Environment. The current AU Chair is Jakaya Kikwete, President of the Republic of Tanzania.

**ASSEMBLY:** The AU Assembly is composed of the Heads of State and Government of AU member states or their accredited representatives. The Assembly acts as the supreme organ of the AU and is mandated to: determine the common policies of the Union; consider and take decisions on reports and recommendations from other AU bodies; consider requests for membership of the AU; establish any organ of the Union; monitor the implementation of AU policies and decisions as well

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ensure compliance by all member states; adopt the AU budget; give directives to the Executive Council on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations and on the restoration of peace; appoint and terminate the appointment of judges of the Court of Justice; and appoint the Chair of the Commission, his or her deputies and Commissioners, and determine their functions and terms of office. The first Ordinary Session of the Assembly was held in Durban, South Africa, from 9-10 July 2002.

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:** The Executive Council of Ministers of the AU is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or other ministers or authorities designated by member states. The Executive Council meets at least twice a year in ordinary sessions. It can also meet in an extraordinary session at the request of any member state and upon approval by two-thirds of all member states. The Executive Council is mandated to coordinate and take decisions on policies in areas of common interest to the member states, including: foreign trade; energy, industry and mineral resources; food, agricultural and animal resources, livestock production and forestry; water resources and irrigation; environmental protection, humanitarian action and disaster response and relief; transport and communications; insurance; education, culture, health and human resources development; science and technology; nationality, residency and immigration matters; and social security.

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE:** The PRC consists of permanent representatives from all AU member states. It is responsible for preparing the work of the Executive Council and for acting on the Council's instructions.

**AU COMMISSION:** The African Union Commission (AUC) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the AU. Its functions include representing the AU in intergovernmental forums, elaborating draft common positions, preparing strategic plans and studies for consideration by the Executive Council, and promoting and harmonizing the programmes and policies of the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The Chair and Deputy Chair of the AUC are Jean Ping (Gabon) and Erastus Mwencha (Kenya).

The AUC comprises the Office of the Legal Counsel and the following Directorates: Conferences and Events; Peace and Security; Political Affairs; Infrastructure and Energy; Social Affairs; Human Resources, Science and Technology; Trade and Industry; Rural Economy and Agriculture; and Economic Affairs.

## REPORT OF THE ELEVENTH AU SUMMIT

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

This section summarizes the decisions taken by the Executive Council that relate to sustainable development.

**DECISION ON THE REPORT ON ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ATTAINMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE STATUS OF THE MDGs AFRICA INITIATIVE:** In this decision (X.CL/Dec.426 (XIII)), the Executive Council took note of and endorsed the recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission on Progress Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Status of Implementation of the MDGs Africa Steering and Working Group Recommendations. The Council also called upon member states and partners to support their implementation, and encouraged member states to align development strategies to MDGs.

**DECISION ON THE REPORT OF THE FIRST JOINT ANNUAL MEETINGS:** In their decision (EX.CL/Dec.431 (XIII)), the Executive Council endorsed the Report of the First Joint Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the UN Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The Council welcomed the establishment of the African Climate Policy Center, with the objective of providing policy guidance to member states, and requested the Commission in collaboration with ECA and other relevant partners to establish an African Cluster on Science and Technology to foster the implementation of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. The Council reiterated its appeal and called on member states to meet their own commitments to increase budget allocation MDG-sensitive sectors, in particular meeting the ten percent allocation to agriculture as agreed under the AU-New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the fifteen percent of budget allocation to health as agreed in the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDs, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases.

**DECISION ON THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF ENERGY ON THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE AFRICAN ENERGY COMMISSION:** In their decision (EX.CL/Dec.432 (XIII)), the Executive Council endorsed the Algiers Declaration on the official launching of the African Energy Commission (AFREC) and urged member states that have not yet done so to speed up the signing and ratification of the AFREC Convention. The Council also requested the Commission, in collaboration with the AfDB and other relevant partners, to mobilize the necessary resources and political support for the activities of AFREC.

### AU ASSEMBLY

This section summarizes the two declarations adopted by the Assembly that relate to sustainable development.

**SHARM EL-SHEIKH COMMITMENTS FOR ACCELERATING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION GOALS IN AFRICA:** In the Declaration (Assembly/AU/Decl.1 (XI)), the AU Assembly committed to: increase efforts to implement past declarations related to water and sanitation; raise the profile of sanitation by addressing the gaps in the context of the 2008 eThekweni Ministerial Declaration on Sanitation in Africa adopted by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW); and address issues pertaining to agricultural water use for food security as provided for in the Ministerial Declaration and outcomes of the First African Water Week. The Assembly also committed, *inter alia*, to:

- develop and/or update national water management policies, regulatory frameworks, and programmes, and prepare national strategies and action plans for achieving the MDG targets for water and sanitation over the next seven years;
- ensure the equitable and sustainable use, as well as promote integrated management and development, of national and shared water resources in Africa;
- put in place adaptation measures to improve the resilience of African countries to the increasing threat of climate change and variability to water resources and capacity to meet the water and sanitation targets;
- mobilize increased donor and other financing for the water and sanitation initiatives including national projects and rural water and sanitation initiatives, the African Water Facility, Water

for African Cities programme and the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility, as committed in the Group of Eight Industrialized Countries (G8) initiatives on water and sanitation;

- promote effective engagement of African civil society and public participation in water and sanitation activities and programmes;
- strengthen AMCOW as a key regional mechanism, and other regional stakeholders, as relevant, for promoting cooperation on water and sanitation;
- strengthen AMCOW's initiative on sustainable management of water resources, to implement its roadmap for the African Groundwater Commission; and
- call on African Ministers in charge of water and finance, in collaboration with the AfDB and development partners, to hold a meeting of Ministers of Water and Finance to develop appropriate financing policies.

#### **DECLARATION ON RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF HIGH FOOD PRICES AND AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT:**

In this declaration (Assembly/AU/Decl.2 (XI)), the AU Assembly committed to reduce by half the number of undernourished people in Africa by 2015, eradicate hunger and malnutrition in Africa and take all necessary measures to increase agricultural production and ensure food security in Africa, in particular through the implementation of AU-NEPAD CAADP and the 2003 AU Maputo Declaration.

The Assembly urged a global partnership that deals with the causes and repercussions of the current crisis, tackles the issue of food security within a more comprehensive humanitarian scope and the right to food and life. This partnership would support efforts at the national, regional, and international levels to curtail the rise in food prices.

The Assembly called for the immediate launching of an International High-level Dialogue between food exporters and importers from developed and developing countries aimed at: concluding an international strategy for the short, medium and long-term handling of the current crisis; examining the speculation risks pertinent to agricultural commodity prices; energizing scientific research in the field of fertilizers and new seed varieties that scrutinizes the effects of genetically modified seeds on sanitary and phyto-sanitary, human, as well as animal health; and confronting climate change challenges seriously and effectively, the relationship with prevailing consumption and production patterns, the repercussions on drought and land desertification, and the direct consequences on the world's food security.

The Assembly further called for an international code of conduct that would reconsider the current expansion in the production of biofuel as an alternative source of traditional energy and set the standards for the responsible utilization of grain-based biofuel. Such a code of conduct would also reassess the actual social and environmental costs of biofuel and restrict its production to agricultural waste and specific designated non food crops. It would reconsider the current subsidies offered to ethanol and bio-diesel producers and subject it to the rules governing world trade in order to avoid a hazardous distortion of the present international system of agricultural production and trade.

#### **SUMMIT-RELATED EVENTS**

A number of related events took place in parallel with the AU's Eleventh Summit. These events included the: meeting of the African Peer Review Mechanism; thirtieth Meeting of the African

Peer Review (APR) Panel of Eminent Persons; ninth Summit of the APR Forum of Participating Heads of State and Government; Coordination Committee; nineteenth Summit of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee; Peace and Security Council; Committee of Ten Heads of State on the UN Reforms; Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS; and Third Citizens' Continental Conference.

This section summarizes events related to the AU Summit theme of the MDGs, water and sanitation in particular, and sustainable development in general.

**COORDINATION COMMITTEE:** The meeting of the Coordination Committee of the AU, ECA, AfDB and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) took place on 27 June 2008, on the margins of the AU Summit. The Coordination Committee was holding its first meeting since the signing in January 2008 of the Protocol on Relations between the AU and the RECs. The Committee on Coordination, established by the Protocol, provides broad guidelines to the RECs on issues pertaining to continental integration, and aims at coordinating and harmonizing the macroeconomic and other policies of the RECs in key sectors such as agriculture, industry, transport, communication, energy, environment, trade, customs, monetary and financial matters. The Committee meets twice a year.

**“ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN AFRICA” – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MDG AFRICA STEERING GROUP:** On Tuesday, 1 July, the MDG Africa Steering Group launched its recommendations laying out practical steps, strategies and programmes needed to achieve the MDGs. The recommendations were produced and endorsed jointly by the UN, AUC, AfDB, European Commission, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank Group, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and World Bank Group. The MDG Africa Steering Group recommendations call for: targeted investments in agriculture to launch a green revolution in Africa; increased support for education and healthcare systems; major projects to fill critical gaps in the continent's infrastructure and trade networks; and improvements in national statistical systems so that progress on the MDGs can be tracked more effectively. In relation to climate change, the Steering Group recommended an explicit and comprehensive call to “climate proof” efforts to achieve the MDGs so that countries can guard themselves against increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, and changing weather patterns. Recommended measures include better seed varieties and irrigation, improved malaria control, and renewed investments in clean power generation and transportation.

**THIRD CITIZENS' CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE ON THE 11TH AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT:** The Third Citizens' Continental Conference on the eleventh AU Summit took place at the Pyramisa Hotel in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt from 22-23 June 2008. Over 100 African Citizens, civil society organizations and coalitions from the five geographical regions and the Diaspora participated in the Conference, organized by the Centre for Citizens Participation in the AU. Civil society representative launched a declaration containing forty-three recommendations covering: progress towards meeting the MDGs; the food crisis; the current state of the Economic Partnership Agreements; the AU's post-audit roadmap; the situations in Zimbabwe, Darfur and Somalia; the African Court of Justice and Human Rights; and international justice.