



ARC Briefing Note on the Outcomes of the Seventeenth African Union Summit

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BRIEFING NOTE OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE SEVENTEENTH AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT: 23 JUNE - 1 JULY 2011

The 17th African Union (AU) Summit took place from 23 June to 1 July 2011 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, under the theme “Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development.” The Summit included: the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), from 23-24 June; the 19th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, from 26-28 June; and the 17th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, from 30 June to 1 July.

The PRC considered a range of issues and draft decisions that were subsequently taken up by the Council and Assembly. The Assembly agreed on 23 decisions, one resolution and two declarations, including the Declaration on Creating Employment for Accelerating Youth Development and Empowerment.

This Briefing Note from IISD Reporting Services’ African Regional Coverage (ARC) initiative summarizes the decisions and declarations agreed by the Assembly and adopted during the AU Summit, which relate to sustainable development and the environment.

Editor’s Note: IISD Reporting Services was not physically present at the AU Summit, and this Briefing Note was prepared based on the decisions and declarations adopted at the Summit.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

The AU is the principal organization for the promotion of socioeconomic integration across the African 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 the establishment of the AU 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, as well as to address shared social, economic and political problems. The Constitutive Act of the AU was adopted on 11

July 2000, during the 36th Ordinary Session of the OAU/4th Ordinary Session of the African Economic Community, held from 10-12 July 2000, in Lomé, Togo. The Constitutive Act entered into force in 2001.

The AU’s objectives include: achieving greater unity and solidarity among African countries and people; promoting and defending common African policy positions; encouraging international cooperation; establishing enabling conditions for the continent to play its 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, PRC, 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. The current AU Chair is Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

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 AU’s common policies;
- consider and take decisions on reports and recommendations from other AU bodies;
- consider requests for membership of the AU;
- establish any organ of the AU;
- monitor the implementation of AU policies and decisions, and give directives to the Executive Council on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations, as well as 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.

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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL: The Executive Council of Ministers of the AU is composed of 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 extraordinary sessions 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 policy decisions in areas of common interest to 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, including acting as an advisory body to the Executive Council and making recommendations on areas of common interest to Member States, particularly on issues on the agenda of the Executive Council.

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 fora, 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. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the AUC are Jean Ping (Gabon) and Erastus Mwencha (Kenya), respectively.

REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH AU SUMMIT

The decisions and declarations agreed by the African Union (AU) Assembly and adopted during the 17th AU Summit, which relate to sustainable development and the environment, are summarized below.

DECISIONS OF THE AU ASSEMBLY: On the **theme “Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development,”** the Assembly decided that all Member States should advance the youth agenda and adopt policies and mechanisms for the creation of safe, decent and competitive employment opportunities by accelerating the implementation of the Youth Decade Plan of Action (2009-2018) and the Ouagadougou 2004 Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation. The Assembly also decided that: the Commission, with its partners, should elaborate a technical

and vocational education and training framework; Member States should provide to the AU Commission (AUC), adequate resources to advance the Youth Agenda; a training programme for youth volunteers should be organized on the margins of every June/July Summit; and the AUC should lead a side event on “Accelerating youth empowerment for Sustainable Development” during the UN High-Level Meeting on Youth in July 2011.

On the **transformation of the AUC into the AU Authority**, the Assembly requested the AUC to convene a sixth meeting of government experts to consider the remaining legal instruments, followed by a meeting of Ministers of Justice of Member States to consider and finalize the instruments related to the African Court of Justice and Human Rights, and the Pan African Parliament, for submission to the next ordinary session of the Assembly for its consideration.

On **establishing the Pan-African University**, the Assembly decided, based on the agreement between the North African region countries, to allocate the Pan African University Institute on Water and Energy Science, including climate change, to Algeria.

On the **Coordination of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) and Africa’s preparation for the Seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 17)**, the Assembly urged CAHOSCC to convene a meeting to consider and take forward the Updated African Common Position on Climate Change to COP 17, following the consideration and endorsement of the Common Position by the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) at its Extra-Ordinary Session to be held in September 2011. The Assembly called on African negotiators to concentrate on completing the negotiations on climate finance at COP 17 and build on the work of the Transitional Committee for the design of the Green Climate Fund and other experts, to ensure adequate resource flows to address Africa’s climate change challenges.

On the **Great Green Wall Initiative**, the Assembly called on the AUC to play a coordinating role in mobilizing resources and providing support to the executing agency of the Great Green Wall. The Assembly further requested the AUC and the executing agency to monitor and evaluate the project and report regularly.

On the **Rio+20 common position and strategies to face the green economy and an institutional framework for sustainable development**, the Assembly urged Member States to take note of the schedule of negotiations for the Rio+20 Conference and the preparatory meetings at the regional and global levels, to ensure the active participation of African negotiators and experts, and also that Africa’s interests in green economy issues within the context of sustainable development

and poverty eradication, and institutional frameworks for sustainable development, are defined and taken into account. The Assembly invited Member States to work towards a Common African Position, to be finalized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 2011. It also approved the proposal to have an African spokesperson at the international preparatory meetings and mandated the Republic of Congo to coordinate at the political level, Africa's preparation for Rio+20, in consultation with Member States.

On the **Jacques Diouf Prize on food security**, the Assembly approved the joint proposal by the Republic of Mali and the Republic of Malawi to create a "Jacques Diouf Prize," deciding to award it every two years to a Member State or institution that has made an outstanding contribution towards achieving food security, particularly through improvement of small-scale farming and elimination of postharvest losses in rural communities, agriculture innovation and environmental sustainability.

On the **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC)**, the Assembly reiterated the urgent need for Member States to adequately fund the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) and its programmes to ensure the delivery of its mandate, given the current financing constraints.

The Assembly requested the AUC and NPCA, in conjunction with the UN Economic Commission for Africa and other partners, to recommend appropriate mechanisms on domestic resource mobilization and present to the next HSGOC for consideration.

The Assembly welcomed the outcomes of the G8-Africa Partnership Summit held in Deauville, France in May 2011, relating to shared values and responsibilities in consolidating the continent's good progress in peace and security, and economic growth with mutual accountability as the main pillars of the partnership. It further: reaffirmed its full support for the G20 Seoul Development Consensus on Shared Growth; reiterated Africa's call for adequate and effective representation in the G20; and emphasized the desire to continuously and constructively engage the G20 High-Level Infrastructure Panel on creative financing and investment options for the continent's infrastructure projects. The Assembly also recognized the opportunity provided by upcoming global processes to convey the African position on development policy issues, including climate change and aid effectiveness.

DECLARATION ON CREATING EMPLOYMENT FOR ACCELERATING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT: The AU Heads of State and Government, highlighting the rise in unemployment and under-employment in

Africa, particularly among the youth, and recalling, *inter alia*, the African Youth Charter, the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation, the AU Social Policy Framework, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), welcomed the outcomes of the G20 Summits in London and Pittsburgh, on strong, sustained and balanced global growth.

They committed to:

- reaffirm previous commitments aimed at accelerating job creation, poverty reduction, social protection and the social development of Africa, as well as accelerate efforts to reduce unemployment and under-employment of Africa's youth and women, and thereby attain all MDGs by 2015;
- reduce youth and women unemployment by at least 2% annually over the next five years, as contained in the Youth Decade Plan of Action 2009-2018;
- maintain, extend and harmonize Labour Market Information Systems in support of employment policy formulation, implementation and evaluation;
- improve and increase the responsiveness of education and training systems to current and future labor market needs, in order to address the pervasive structural skills mismatch;
- provide stewardship as national governments and achieve policy coherence in National and Regional Certification Frameworks for Education and Vocational Training, as well as the development of integrated and cross-sectoral national and regional youth employment action plans;
- accelerate appropriate social protection coverage expansion for youth, women, the informal economy, and rural workers and members of their families, in order to reduce poverty and vulnerability;
- call on Member States which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the African Youth Charter;
- request the AUC to work with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Regional Economic Communities and international partners on a comprehensive youth employment pact;
- request the AUC, in collaboration with the AfDB, to advocate for effective implementation of the G20 commitments on labor and social protection made during the London and Pittsburgh Summits, for the benefit of African countries;
- urge the AUC, in collaboration with the AfDB, to prepare and submit to the next ordinary session of the Assembly, the modalities for funding the Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation; and
- request the AUC to annually report to the Assembly on progress made in the implementation of this Declaration.