

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

We, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, meeting at the 11th Ordinary Session of our Assembly in Sharm El-Sheikh in the Arab Republic of Egypt, from 30 June to 1 July 2008:

Recalling our decision to adopt the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) at the Maputo Summit in July 2003 as a framework for accelerating agricultural development; the Sirte Declaration on Challenges of Implementing Integrated and Sustainable Development in Agriculture and Water in Africa in February 2004; the outcomes of the Abuja Summit on Fertilizer;

Recalling further the Declaration of the Food Security Summit held in Abuja in December 2006 that called for a Green Revolution in Africa;

Welcoming the Declaration of the High Level Conference on World food Security convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its Headquarters in Rome, from 3 to 5 June 2008, and in particular the recognition of the need to increase food production in the world; the outcome of the 25th FAO Regional Conference for Africa, held in Nairobi in June 2008;

Concerned by the current crisis caused by the high food prices and its adverse impact on African countries, particularly the poor and vulnerable household segments of the population;

Welcoming the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis;

Recognizing that the high food prices will divert the meagre national resources from development activities to meet urgent food imports needed adequate nutrition;

Mindful that the major causes of the high food prices include rising demand for cereals particularly in rapidly growing economies; grain-based biofuels production and the ensuing competition between food security and energy needs; supply shocks due to the environmental negative impact including climate change, desertification and drought on our capacities to feed a growing global population; low farming productivity as a result of low investment in agriculture especially in Africa; higher energy prices leading to higher input and processing costs, particularly increased prices of fertilizers and transport;

Aware that the crisis can provide an opportunity to build a coalition of responses across the African continent, offering a vehicle for an African agricultural renaissance that raises small scale farmers' incomes, enhances livelihoods, nutrition and ultimately food security for Africa.

DECLARE our firm commitment to:

- 1- Reduce by half the number of undernourished people in Africa by 2015 and eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the Continent.
- 2- Take all necessary measures to increase agricultural production and ensure food security in Africa, in particular through the implementation of Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of NEPAD and the Maputo Declaration of July 2003.
- 3- Support the following thematic priority-options:
 - Increase food production and productivity for key commodities by improving access to agricultural inputs for diversified cropping and livestock production systems including targeted SMART subsidies (fertiliser, improved seeds, better access to technologies and innovations);
 - Improve production of fertilizers from existing plants and explore the possibility of establishing new ones based on the availability of raw materials in the region;
 - Support national and regional food initiatives to stabilize prices, and serve as emergency stock ;
 - Strengthen food security and agricultural information and early warning systems that are sustainable with key stakeholder participation;
 - Introduce and support agricultural insurance systems and micro credit;
 - Increase production by improved sustainable soil fertility management including conservation agriculture technologies;
 - Enhance food processing, credit systems, and use of improved storage, and minimize post harvest losses;
 - Promote indigenous crops and technologies for production and processing of nutrient-rich crops;
 - Improve logistics capacity to move emergency supplies and agricultural inputs.
4. Address the challenges posed by the high food prices through the following measures:

(a) Immediate/ short terms responses:

- Immediate assistance to the vulnerable segments of populations through targeted food assistance and safety net measures including cash and/or food transfers to combat hunger and malnutrition;
- Intensify agricultural production and productivity through the use of targeted input subsidies, particularly fertilizer and improved seed, and enhance access to water and small scale irrigation;
- Improve post harvest management to minimize crop storage losses and enhance processing;

(b) Medium to long-term responses:

- Invest in appropriate social safety nets and interventions that include both protective actions to mitigate short-term risks and preventative actions to preclude long-term negative consequences;
- Scale up investments for sustained agricultural growth including expanded public spending for rural infrastructure (roads, markets, irrigation and water harvesting techniques, etc.), services (micro-finance, market information systems, insurance programmes, etc.), agricultural research and technology development and transfer (increased productivity, post-harvest management, extension, etc.);
- Enhance sustainable land management practices including soil and water management and conservation;
- Enhance institutional and human capacities for agricultural development;
- Review bio-fuel policies to make more grains and oilseeds currently used for fuel available for food and feed.

WE CALL FOR:

- 1- A Global partnership that deals with the causes and repercussions of the current crisis, tackles the issue of food security within the more comprehensive humanitarian scope and its association with the inalienable human right to food and life, so as to support the efforts on the national, regional, and international levels to curtail the rise in food prices.
- 2- The successful early conclusion of the Doha Round to provide for rules-based, fair and free international trade particularly in food and agriculture commodities is an indispensable part of a long term solution. The substantial lowering of barriers to trade in agriculture products coupled with reductions in overall trade-distorting subsidies, particularly in developed countries will have an impact on food production and investment in agriculture in many developing countries, particularly in Africa.
- 3- The immediate launching of an International High level dialogue between food exporters and importers from developed and developing countries aimed at:
 - a. Concluding an international strategy for the short, medium and long-term handling of the current crisis.
 - b. Examining the speculation risks pertinent to agricultural commodity prices.
 - c. Reinforcing the efforts to promote the development of the agriculture sector in fields of land reclamation, boosting productivity, and encourages the infrastructure needed for transporting and stockpiling crops.
 - d. Energizing scientific research in the field of fertilizers and new seed varieties, one that scrutinizes the effects of genetically modified seeds on sanitary and phyto- sanitary, human, as well as animal health.
 - e. Confronting climate change challenges seriously and effectively in its relationship with prevailing consumption and production patterns, and their grave repercussions on drought and land desertification, and their direct consequences on the world's food security.
- 4- The setting of an international code of conduct that:
 - a. Reconsiders the current expansion in the production of biofuel as an alternative source of traditional energy.

- b. Sets the standards for the responsible utilization of grain based biofuel.
- c. Reassesses the actual social and environmental costs of biofuel, and restricts its production to agricultural waste and specific designated non food crops.
- d. Reconsiders the current subsidy offered to ethanol and bio-diesel producers, and subjects it to rules of world trade. This subsidization is creating hazardous distortion to the present international system of agricultural production and trade.

WE FURTHER CALL UPON:

- Multilateral and bilateral development partners, in particular those participating in the next G8 Summit in Hokaido to provide financial and technical support to assist African countries to increase substantially their food and agricultural production and productivity.
- The RECs to take proactive measures on their assistance to countries on the short term, as well as, medium-long term response by identification of the technical assistance required at the regional level.
- African Union Commission and NEPAD Secretariat to establish a taskforce supported by FAO, WFP, IFAD, World Bank, and RECs that can coordinate active and timely follow-up to actions in this declaration including; facilitation the coordination of development partners support for country level programming activities in connection with both immediate and longer term responses to the food price crisis and supporting the dialogue with development partners at national level on responses to the crisis.
- The African Union Commission, NEPAD Secretariat in collaboration with the FAO, WFP, IFAD, AfDB and the World Bank to develop a short term action plan to raise production substantially in the next two planning seasons.

We commit ourselves to mobilize all means to alleviate the suffering caused by the situation of rising food prices and to strengthen agricultural development raising production and productivity as a solution to the challenges facing Africa.

Sharm El-Sheikh, 1 July 2008

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