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ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION
Fourth Ordinary Session
30 – 31 January 2005
Abuja, NIGERIA

Assembly/AU/5(IV) Add.1

AFRICA/ASIA SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
CONFERENCE

(Item proposed by the Republic of South Africa)

AFRICA/ASIA SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONFERENCE

1. The second Asian-African Sub-Regional Organizations Conference (AASROC II) took place in Durban, South Africa on 20 August 2004. A meeting of Senior Officials on 19 August 2004 preceded the Conference.

2. AASROC II was a follow up on AASROC I, which resulted from the initiative by President Thabo Mbeki in his address during the ASEAN Summit of November 2002 in his capacity as then Chairperson of the African Union, wherein he called on the ASEAN leaders to co-operate with Africa on NEPAD and on matters of common interest. In response to this call, President Megawati Soekarnoputri announced that Indonesia would host the first Asian-African Sub-Regional Organizations Conference (AASROC I) to coincide with the 48th Anniversary of the Asian-African Conference of 1955, as a platform for Asia-Africa cooperation. President Mbeki welcomed the announcement and promised Africa's support for the initiative.

3. During AASROC I the Ministers agreed on the principles for cooperation between Africa and Asia, as the first concrete steps towards forging a New Strategic Partnership. The conference also acknowledged NEPAD as Africa's programme for poverty eradication, socio-economic development and growth. In this context, it was acknowledged that African Regional Economic Communities, amongst others (therefore also AASROC) had a critical role to play in the implementation of NEPAD programmes.

4. As a follow-up, AASROC II focused on the contribution of Asian-African Sub-Regional Organizations towards a New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP), structures for cooperation, and levels, time frames and composition of dialogue on the areas of cooperation identified by AASROC I.

5. The conference confirmed three broad areas of cooperation, namely political, economic, social and cultural. These areas of cooperation must be developed within the context of the environment of globalisation and intra-regional cooperation. The NAASP must focus on practical, achievable, concrete areas where the initiative can add value as a process in a pragmatic fashion. The importance of issues of peace and stability and the notion of "the culture of peace", which create an enabling environment for development and economic cooperation, were also noted.

6. It was agreed that there should be an Asian-African Summit level meeting once every four years. Asian-African Foreign Ministers will meet every two years, while sectoral Ministers (such as Agriculture, Health, Trade, Finance, ICT etc.) will meet as required. Expert Working Group/Sectoral Committee meetings will be held as required at Ministerial level if necessary and, where

possible, on the margins of existing technical meetings in order to limit expenses and time spent away from capitals.

7. The Regional and Sub-regional Organizations should meet on an annual basis to allow for an exchange of best practices in conjunction with key international partners, project managers and investors. The AU Commission will serve as a coordinating focal point for the African RECs in this process. The ASEAN Secretariat and the SADC Secretariat will coordinate the organization of the first Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations meeting.

8. In order to afford peoples the opportunity to foster closer cooperation, arrangements will be made to facilitate interaction between civil society stakeholders in Africa and Asia, including the business sector, representatives from youth, gender, civic, disabled, cultural, labour and professional representative organizations, academics, scholars, think-thank and other research institutions.

9. The Conference decided to create an Asian-African Business Summit to operate on its own steam once established. The business Summit should focus on exploring business opportunities, promoting trade and investment, generating the required resources and identifying measures to strengthen the African private sector. Apart from bilateral business-to-business contact, the Business Summit should also stimulate regional and institutional interaction on these issues. For example, the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank should work together on Asian-African cooperation projects.

10. It was agreed that, wherever possible, meetings of the Inter-Governmental Forum, Sub-Regional Organizations and people-to-people be held together.

11. The Conference identified the need to streamline and align existing initiatives for coherence and maximum benefit and to avoid duplication, i.e. NAASP with TICAD, China-Africa Forum, India-Africa cooperation, Vietnam-Africa Forum, the Langkawi International Dialogue and the Smart Partnership Initiative. In this regard, the proposed Asian-African Business Summit should ensure that synergies are exploited with other existing Asian-African Business Forums, including under the TICAD process.

12. The Conference urged the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions for Africa and Asia to provide support to Governments, Sub-Regional Organizations and initiatives for promoting and strengthening sub-regional economic cooperation between Africa and Asia.

13. During the AASROC Ministerial Working Group Meeting on 24 March 2004, a number of study papers were commissioned and delivered at AASROC II. Further study papers were commissioned at AASROC II.

14. The Conference agreed that the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) be launched during the Asian-African Summit, which will be held in conjunction with the Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in April 2005.

15. The NAASP is a vehicle to enable the countries of the two regions to cooperate for their mutual benefit and is intended to promote peace, prosperity and progress in the two continents. The diversity in cultural, social and economic characteristics and development of African and Asian countries should be considered a strength of this partnership. Through this cooperation, the countries can draw lessons from each other's experiences in overcoming common political, social, economic and development challenges, in order to deliver the five basic human needs to our people, namely food, shelter, health, education and employment.

Plan of Action for 2005

16. In the effort to develop and expand the New Strategic Partnership between Africa and Asia, the Sub-regional organizations of the two continents can take an important first step by sharing their best practices and experiences in overcoming difficulties in the political, economic, social and development fields.

17. As a second step, the Sub-regional organizations could design programmes, or plans of action, for mutually beneficial inter-regional cooperation.

18. The partnership will seek to translate ideas into realities and guide Asia and Africa toward a better future based on their collective self-reliance and the support of Asia and Africa's development partners.

19. The Conference fully endorsed the holding of the Asian-African Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 22 April 2005 and the Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference of 1955, on 23 April 2005, in Bandung, Indonesia. It was agreed that Indonesia and South Africa should continue to coordinate the preparation process for the Asian-African Summit of 2005.

20. The schedule of meetings in preparation for the Asian-African Summit as follows:

- Asian-African Eminent Persons Group meeting: Jakarta, February 2004,
- Asian-African Sub-regional Organizations meeting: Cape Town, February 2005,

- Asian Consultative Meeting: Bali, 21 February 2005,
- Asian-African Senior Officials Meeting: Bali, 22-23 February 2005,
- Asian-African Senior Officials Meeting: Jakarta, 19-20 April 2005,
- Asian-African Ministerial Meeting: Jakarta, 21 April 2005,
- Asian-African Summit 2005: Jakarta, 22 April 2005,
- Golden Jubilee of the Bandung Asian-African Conference 1955: Bandung 23 April 2005.

21. As regards events related to the 2005 Asian-African Summit, the Conference approved:

- The organising of an Asian-African Business Summit in conjunction with the 2005 Summit, as a forum for dialogue and interaction between governments and business sectors;
- The holding of a symposium and exhibition on promoting renewable energy, and to form a "Community of Renewable Energy of Asia and Africa";
- The holding of an Asian-African workshop on the role of women and youth in furthering Asian-African cooperation. For this purpose, the participating countries will be encouraged to include women and youth in the delegation to the Summit;
- The hosting of an Asian-African cultural event and other related activities involving civil society stakeholders during the Summit.

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