

**DECLARATION OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON EMPLOYMENT IN
AFRICA**

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting at the Twenty-Seventh Ordinary session of our Assembly in Abuja, Nigeria from 3rd – 5th June, 1991, have undertaken a critical review of the Employment Crisis and Challenge Facing our Continent in the 1990s and beyond.
2. We have noted with deep concern that in spite of our strenuous and best efforts to promote development in our continent, and alleviate the employment crisis in our various countries, the urban and rural unemployment and underemployment rates have increased substantially throughout our continent during the 1980s. Besides the rising unemployment and underemployment, our human resources are also being lost, through the process of emigration and brain drain. We are aware that the increase in unemployment and underemployment have been associated with a decline in incomes and a general increase in the incidence of poverty.
3. We are conscious that the burden of the employment problem, has fallen disproportionately on our Youth in whom we have invested considerable resources in preparation for their full participation in our development process. We have also noted that the potential of our women, as important and active agents in socio-economic development, remains to be fully utilized.
4. We realize that the employment crisis is posing a serious threat to the future socio-political stability and development prospects of our various countries.
5. Fully mindful of our responsibilities to ensure accelerated development, maintenance of political and social stability and progress, and the safeguarding of a brighter future for our children and future generations, we rededicate ourselves to pursue vigorously needed policies, programmes and actions, to meet the African Employment challenge of the 1990s and beyond, so as to resolve the employment crisis in our continent.

6. We reaffirm our previous commitments to a determined implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), the African priority programme for Economic Recovery (APPER), and the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAFSAP), so as to ensure that the crisis of unemployment and under employment which looms in the 1990s will be confronted successfully.
7. More specifically, we commit ourselves to take necessary measures within the limits of our resources, to accelerate the rate of growth of our gross domestic product, to at least 5 per cent a year, as this is necessary to improve our employment situation. This growth objective may appear ambitious, when compared to our 2.3% per annum growth record of 1986-1990. However, a growth rate of 5% per annum could be attained especially if we persevere in our current economic reform efforts and programmes, and if our development partners in the industrialized countries intensify their efforts to substantially alleviate our external debt burden.
8. Our economic reform efforts and structural adjustment programmes in the 1990s, should depart in orientation from the orthodox adjustment programmes of the 1980s, as demonstrated in the African Alternative Framework on Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAFSAP), which we have already adopted and which we must implement more vigorously throughout the region.
9. We are aware that renewed economic growth will not be sufficient by itself to resolve the African employment crisis. Accordingly, our development strategy in Africa during the 1990s and beyond, will be more human centered, promote a democratic and participatory approach and be more environmentally sustainable. The development strategy will place a higher accent on the satisfaction of basic human needs and the restructuring of our production systems so as to meet these needs. Greater attention will be given to internal resource mobilization, fiscal discipline, a maintenance culture, and indigenous entrepreneurial development.
10. Our overall macro-economic and sectoral policies will be reviewed to ensure that our development projects, and the technologies we use, facilitate a much greater absorption of our abundant labour resources, while economizing on the use of capital and foreign exchange, which are in very short supply and constitute major constraints on our development efforts. Accordingly, in our allocation of resources, we shall accord higher priority to sectors and projects which generate more

employment. To this end, the rural sector, the urban informal sector, medium and small micro-enterprises, and employment intensive construction and production projects, will receive more attention than in the past.

11. We are convinced that, the expansion of employment opportunities in the rural areas, which we shall make fore attractive, will contribute to the increased welfare of the majority of our people, lead to the attainment of our objectives of food self-sufficiency and stem the tide of rural to urban migration. We shall, therefore, take the necessary measures to accord higher attention to rural employment promotion – through increased agricultural production, as stipulated in the Lagos Plan of Action, the Final act of Lagos APPER and AAFSAP. We shall also improve rural employment prospects by promoting rural non-farm employment through an increased support of rural agro and cottage industries, the rural services sector and infrastructural development. We shall also encourage in general, rural medium, small and micro-enterprises and ensure the fuller integration of rural non-farm activities with national production, especially agricultural production and urban informal sector output.
12. We note that our formal sector has been making only limited contributions to employment creation for our ever increasing labour force. Our efforts towards the accelerated growth of our economies, testify to our desire to increase the employment contribution of the formal and modern urban sectors. Accordingly, we shall continue to explore every possible avenue to realize a faster pace of productive labour absorption in our formal sectors, in support of the second Industrial Development Decade for Africa.
13. We realize however, that the informal sector will continue to contribute to employment opportunities in the urban sector in the foreseeable future. We shall, therefore, intensify our efforts to increase productivity and incomes in this sector. To this end, we shall endeavor to facilitate greater access of operators in the informal sector, to the means of production such as land, capital and improved management, technology, and training and facilitate the marketing of their products. We shall improve and enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities, without dampening their spirit of self-reliance. We shall also improve the general enabling environment for this sector.

14. In our continuous efforts to promote employment, we are aware that all segments of our population need an improvement in their employment situation, and we shall strive to meet their needs. However, our special attention on this issue will go to the target group of the Youth, who constitute the bulk of the unemployed in Africa. Accordingly, we undertake to strengthen our specific policies and programme of employment promotion for this category of the population. Such policies will be increasingly based on providing training, credit facilities, supportive fiscal policies, and access to land, as well as technical and administrative support from our Governments.
15. Another aspect of policy support in favour of youth employment will be the elaboration and implementation of a more effective policy on education and training to ensure a better linkage between education and training on the one hand and the requirements of the labour market and nation-building, on the other. Our education and training policies will also be geared acquisition and strengthening of the entrepreneurial spirit.
16. Another target group, which deserves our special attention in our efforts to promote employment, consist of women, who constitute more than 50 per cent of our population. Although we have made much progress in our efforts to promote women's employment, and their contribution to economic production, we are aware that they still remain gravely disadvantaged when compared to their weight in society. We therefore, reiterate our resolve in the Lagos Plan of Action to give women's employment the priority it deserves. We shall also intensify efforts towards a more vigorous implementation of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies and the 1989 Abuja Declaration on Women in Development. as well as other relevant resolutions of the OAU and United Nations System.
17. Disabled persons also constitute a target group that has always engaged our attention. Accordingly, we shall intensify our efforts to respond to the needs of these vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and include them in the mainstream of our strategies for resolving our employment crisis.
18. We realize that the size and gravity of our employment crisis is closely related to the rapid rate of growth in our labour force which is three times the level in the industrialized countries, and about twice that of other developing countries. We,

shall therefore, review more carefully our population policies with a view to relating our labor force growth to the capabilities and growth rates of our economies, as well as according higher priority to improving the health status of our population, especially through primary health-care programmes.

19. We recognize the need to pay more attention to the possibilities of intra African cooperation in resolving our national employment problems. In this regard, we shall encourage greater labour market integration within the context of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community which we have signed.
20. We reaffirm our responsibility to resolve our employment crisis largely within our own resources. A higher priority to resolving our employment crisis, to which we have committed ourselves, will be translated into more resource allocation out of our own national budgets, for employment promotion activities. This will also require the strengthening of institutions charged with these issues, or the creation of such other institutions as may be necessary.
21. We request our development partners, both multilateral and bilateral, to reflect our priorities, as identified in this Declaration by increasing their support for human resources development and employment promotion programmes and projects. We appeal in particular, to such institutions as the African Development Bank, other African regional and sub-regional financial institutions, the World Bank and the UNDP, to increase their financial support to our human resources development and employment promotion efforts. finally, we further appeal to the United Nations institutions in general, and the ECA, the ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and the UNFPA in particular to play an important role individually, in concert and in close collaboration with the OAU Secretariat, in the implementation of this Declaration.

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