

**YAOUNDE DECLARATION**

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in the Thirty-Second Ordinary Session of our Summit in Yaounde, Cameroon, from 8 to 10 July, 1996 at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Cameroon have, in the light of the general situation prevailing in Africa at the close of this century, continued to reflect on ways and means of smoothly ushering Africa into the 21st century,

2. We have noted, at the close of the 20th century, that of all the regions of the world, Africa is indeed the most backward in terms of development from whatever angle it is viewed and the most vulnerable as far as peace, security and stability are concerned

3. We are resolved, at this dawn of the 21st Century, to create, by the most appropriate means, conditions to enable Africa to take up the challenges facing it, which, if unresolved, could jeopardize the future of the continent for a long time to come.

**THE WORLD AND THE STATE OF AFRICA AT THE  
DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY**

4. Casting a retrospective glance into the past, we have noted that the world, which is about to enter the Third millenium, has throughout the century that is drawing to a close, overcome major hurdles and experienced remarkable changes.

Today, the world is undergoing a far-reaching transformation:

-since 1990, the international political system that prevailed during the second half of the century, has undergone fundamental changes;

- the world economy is dominated,as never before in the history of humanity, by a triad made up of Western Europe, North America and Japan. These regions possess both the greatest financial affluence and the main industrial conglomerates as well as the bulk technological innovations;**
- the growth of new communication technologies has accelerated the globalization process as far as large transnationals are concerned;**
- from specific development issues considered by the world conferences convened in the last five years, a series of formidable problems arising partly from these changes have emerged: the unacceptable dichotomy of extreme prosperity and abject poverty at the global level, the present alarming population explosion and its negative impact particularly on urbanization; the destruction of the ecosystems by the unrestrained utilization of national resources in developed countries and the prevalence of similar trend in developing countries;**

**5. During this century Africa has faced a wide variety of difficulties, but has on the whole made significant strides:**

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- thanks to the successes in of science and medicine, among others, over major endemic diseases and infertility, the continents population has increased so rapidly that its growth rate is now the highest in the world;**
- the significant achievements in education and training have reduced the rate of illiteracy and created professional and executive classes;**
- our countries have continued to acquire various kinds of**

**infrastructure and have become aware of the need to exploit the tapping of their immense natural resources;**

**-since their accession to independence, our States have sought to promote the socio-economic development of the continent by creating numerous specialized inter-African institutions;**

**-the total political liberation of the continent has just been achieved. This has been followed today by a transitional period characterized by the end of the one-party rule, the onset of democratization, the emergence of the state of law and the restructuring of our economies.**

**6. Nevertheless, in the light of the general evolution of humanity during this century and especially when compared to the other developing continents, such as Latin America and Asia, Africa is lagging far behind and may even be the most under-developed continent of the world as we do admit in our 1994 Declaration on Population and Development in Africa:**

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**Indeed, Africa has the lowest life expectancy, the highest infant mortality and illiteracy rates, the lowest GNP, in short, the lowest human development indicator. Furthermore, close to half of its population lives in poverty and misery, while unemployment and under-employment have become endemic, especially in urban areas. Food production can no longer meet the increasing needs of an ever-growing population.**

**Environmental degradation is worsening due essentially to deforestation, drought, desertification and urbanization which, according to recent UNFPA estimates, is the fastest in the world.**

**Additionally, the entire African economy is declining and increasingly losing its place in the global economy. Cooperation and regional economic integration are marking time, while official development assistance is decreasing and the external debt burden is becoming heavier. Also, capital flight is coupled with real brain-drain**

which, each year, strips Africa of tens of thousands of its sons and daughters, professors, scientists and other highly qualified human resources, which escape to the North as the continent progressively loses its cultural identity in the face of dominant foreign cultures.

Lastly, Africa, at present, holds the record of inter-state wars and conflicts which produce influx of refugees and displaced persons, and result in economic devastation, enormous loss in human life and a drain on its meagre resources.

7. As we already stated in our 1990 Declaration "on Africa's political and economic situation", Africa's plight is not, since independence, imputable to lack of ideas, anticipation, proposals, individual and collective efforts on the part of our countries, plans, strategies as well as decades devoted to Africa by

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the international community. Rather it is largely attributable to the lack of an enabling environment, adequate development strategies and particularly to the failure of our countries to provide good governance and make proper macro-economic and sectoral options.

8. Against the background of the afore-mentioned and other lessons drawn from modern history, and weakened by our inability to provide better living conditions for our peoples, we are convinced today that there is an urgent need to rescue the continent from decline and thus generate a new collective dynamism which can lead to a genuine, self-sustaining and self-reliant development.

9. In this context, Africa will basically have to meet not only the main challenges on which the international community pegs the survival of our planet and that of humanity, but also to solve other immediate and more specific problems, the prime responsibility for which lies first and foremost with our governments and peoples. The search for efficient means to meet these challenges and the implementation of the strategies formulated so far will depend largely on the place carved for Africa within the world of the 21st century.

**RESCUING AFRICA FROM DECLINE**

## Stemming the Debt Crisis

10. Despite the various and numerous initiatives taken by the international community to alleviate the external debt burden of Africa (bilateral, multilateral and private), the level of indebtedness remains one of the main obstacles to the recovery of our economies.

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11. We hope our efforts in embarking on macro-economic and political reforms geared towards achieving greater equilibriums and creating an enabling economic environment for both local and foreign direct investments would be supported by a substantial reduction in the debt and a major inflow of debt-free financial assistance.

12. We wish to reiterate that the practical and durable solution to the debt crisis must henceforth be found through a systematic re-appraisal and review of all measures intended for its servicing and through a concerted search for new, appropriate solutions commensurate with an equitable promotion of economic and social progress in all parts of the world.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

13. Regional cooperation and economic integration constitute one of the basic key measures for the socio-economic development of our countries. They are equally very essential not only for the self-fulfillment of the continent but also for securing an appropriate place in a world economy characterized, inter-alia, by a generalized wave of fundamental economic restructuring of economic entities spaces, oriented towards achieving a real continentalization of markets, and intensification and liberalization of trade and commerce.

14. Since regional cooperation and economic integration help to promote the growth of economy of scale, they constitute the best means for Africa to regain its lost external competitiveness, to strengthen its capacity of negotiation in world affairs, to effectively open up its economies, to rapidly launch its industrial growth and enter the world market through diversification of exports, comparative advantages other

than commodities and ultimately mitigate its marginalization.

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15. In this regard, we reaffirm the pertinence of the Lagos Plan of Action, the April 1980 Final Act of Lagos and the Abuja Treaty as an appropriate framework for implementing the African strategy of economic, social and cultural integration.

16. We hail and support the measures taken by our Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank to harmonize and coordinate their activities in order to foster integration.

17. Finally, we recognize the urgency for developing an integrated transport and communications infrastructure to speed up the continent's physical integration.

### The State and Development

18. While we acknowledge the benefits of market laws and mechanisms, as well as private initiative in the current context of profound economic changes in the continent, and in reference to the successful experiments in some South-East Asian countries, we uphold that the selective, guideline and encouragement measures by public authorities can, without necessarily departing from liberalism, be very instrumental to the development process. Any future development strategy should allow for a serious study of this issue.

### Promotion of Sustainable Development

19. Sustainable development aims primarily at ensuring a better standard of living for present and future generations; it is founded on democracy, human rights, good governance, human resource promotion, economic and social development, environmental protection, all with the human being, as the focal point.

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**20. Convinced that the human person should consequently, and at all levels, be the object of our preoccupations and initiatives in matters of sustainable development:**

**-We reaffirm the relevance and currency of the analysis of the human and social situation on the African continent which we made at our 30th Summit in Tunis in June 1994 and was reflected in the "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa;**

**-We also reaffirm the relevance of our analysis of the agricultural situation on the African Continent as reflected in the "African Common Position on Food Security and Agricultural Development";**

**-We renew our African and international commitments on issues of social development as expressed respectively in our "Declaration on Social Development" appended to the "African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa" and in the "Declaration on Social Development" adopted in March 1995 at the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development;**

**-We call on our partners in the international community to honour the commitments which they made at the World Summit on Social Development, particularly by mobilizing substantial financial support needed for promoting development and improving the quality of life in the world at large and in Africa in particular.**

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### **Management and Conservation of the Environment**

**21. Environmental safety on our planet is the biggest challenge of the Third Millennium. Africa is playing an active role towards attaining**

this goal, as rational management has become a major component of development policies in Member States.

22. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development recognized the convergence between the need for environmental protection and equity in international economic relations. However, while solidarity between countries of the North and Member States is rather tepid as reflected by the sharp decline in official Development Assistance as well as multilateral assistance to the financing of sustainable development, world economic imbalances continue to worsen. Hence, the need to honour the commitments made under the Rio Agreement and restore balance in international economic relations.

23. Concurrently, beyond the initiatives already undertaken by Member States, we must:

- pay special attention to the protection and sustainable management of biodiversity in Member States by adopting appropriate measures regulating access to and utilization and marketing of our biological resources;
- examine all aspects of the possibility of obtaining patents for our genetic resources by including therein the protection of traditional expertise;
- formulate appropriate national legislation in order to protect our countries from the risk of biotechnological disasters, and lastly;

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- encourage regional cooperation in all areas pertaining to the environment as recommended in the Africa's Common Position on Environment and "Development adopted in November 1991 at the Second African Regional Ministerial Conference" held in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Peace and Security

24. Peace and development are indivisible. Indeed, none is possible without the other.

25. We must release Africa's negative image as a hotbed of clashes and conflicts, and restore the lost dignity of our peoples by stirring to spare them the untold suffering brought about by conflicts. This is so because future generations and history will judge us very severely if, individually and collectively, we were to shy away all the time from our responsibilities in the face of escalating armed conflicts in Africa and at the same time lack the political will to respect ceasefire and peace agreements.

In this respect:

- We Welcome the creation in June 1993 of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution which is already contributing significantly towards improving the Organization's capacity to prevent conflicts and maintain peace in Africa;

-We hail in advance the imminent institution within the said Mechanism of our early warning system (EWS) on conflictual situations in Africa, convinced that its establishment should be able to further improve the action of the Organization in

the area of preventive diplomacy by making it possible,

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notably through pre-emptive action in gathering and analyzing pertinent data, not only to establish the existence of a threat to the peace, but also to look for a quick way to remove the threat. We exhort all potential data collectors to communicate same information in time and provide the OAU Mechanism regularly with any at their disposal on warning signs of imminent conflict.

-Considering the urgent need to institutionalize the Mechanism as one of Permanent Organs of our Organization, we request the Secretary-General to propose to an appropriate Council Session in the nearest future the

**modalities of that incorporation;**

**-We equally commit Member States to urgently examine all concrete, pragmatic and feasible recommendations of the Secretary-General aimed at further strengthening the present operational capacity of the Mechanism; making its decisions more binding; providing it with adequate financial capacity; improving cooperation and coordination between the Mechanism and the UNO on the one hand, and African Sub-Regional Organizations on the other; codifying and subsequently using traditional African methods of conflict resolution; associating, where possible, the civilian society and its offshoots with the conflict resolution process, notably by systematic recourse to eminent African personalities.**

**26. As advanced under disarmament, we welcome with satisfaction the recent signing by African States of the "Pelindaba" Treaty Establishing an African Nuclear Free Zone. Similarly, we are committed to ratify it as we have quickly realized that its subsequent implementation will certainly be an important milestone in the disarmament and denuclearization process of Africa.**

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**We also express satisfaction with the fact that major nuclear powers are signatories to this agreement.**

**27. The progress accomplished in the denuclearization of Africa should also be pursued more than ever before in the limitation and reduction of conventional arms according to the specific nature of our region. This is a prior condition and an important objective for a lasting solution to peace, security and stability. Consequently, we are determined to conduct an in-depth study of the question of reducing the armament burden in all its aspects, including the**

**proliferation and dissemination (illicit and clandestine traffic of arms) of low-calibre war arms in the conflict zones and its vicinity. Our reflexion should also focus on the possibility of using a certain percentage of the deviants from this disarmament to increase the financial capacity of the Mechanism.**

28. In order to initiate a regional dynamism to enhance mutual confidence and security through greater transparency in the international transfer of conventional arms, we have decided to set up within our Organization a Regional Register on the transfer of Conventional Arms.

### Promotion of African Culture and Cultural Industries

29. Culture is one of the qualitative components of development and is complementary to such other quantitative components as those pertaining to the economic domain. It is therefore a truism to say that the kind of development we want for the 21st Century will also depend on the dynamism

of our continent's culture. Consequently, the continent's place in the concert of nations of tomorrow and beyond and the pull it will have on the other regions will depend on its cultural development; for there is no doubt that the continent's culture will go a long way to enable other peoples to better understand the African identity in all its dimensions and thereby change the negative image commonly portrayed of the continent.

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30. The creativity of our peoples, the liveliness and richness of African cultural heritage and values should contribute to this development, especially by discarding the small-scale production methods currently in use and evolving towards the large scale production of the continent's cultural artifacts, improving their circulation and controlling their exploitation networks.

31. But the advent of the age of technological explosion, rapid computerization and the breath-taking advancement in communication industries bolstering the trend towards cultural hegemony have confronted

Africa with the fundamental problem of aligning its culture with technological know-how.

32. We are convinced that the preservation of African traditional values is perfectly computable with the assimilation of advanced scientific and technological Know-how. However, the perpetuation of these values is today threatened by the on-going process of cultural standardization. We must therefore adopt appropriate strategies to safeguard Africa's traditional values.

The OAU very quickly gave this issue serious thought. For decades, it made and is still making tremendous efforts to foster the continent's cultural development dynamics. The Organization's most significant initiatives in this area include the Cultural Charter of Africa and the Plan of Action of Cultural Industries adopted respectively at our Summits in Port-Louis, Mauritius in 1976 and Dakar, Senegal in 1992.

33. While reaffirming its relevance, we reiterate our support for the Dakar Plan of Action on Cultural Industries. At the same time, we request the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of setting up a plan-African Institute of Culture and Arts, with the double purpose of training experts for the management of cultural industries at all levels and serving as the centre of support for African Cultural Artistic Creation.

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34. It is in only this way that Africa can survive culturally and continue to contribute to the culture and world civilization.

#### HUMAN RESOURCES AND BRAIN DRAIN

35. We must formulate strategies to limit brain drain which greatly compromises, in the medium and long term, the continent's chances of achieving sustainable development and to encourage the return of the said human resources to Africa.

36. We mandate the Secretary-General to prepare, as soon as possible, an appropriate comprehensive report to enable us take relevant , well-informed decisions in this regard.

37. Owing to increasing world interdependence at the turn of this century, the world is bound to have one and the same future, and Africa and the other continents are compelled to share a common destiny.

38. The gravity of the Economic crisis that Africa is now experiencing is an indisputable fact that gives no room for optimism. a large fraction of the international community is therefore justified in concluding that Africa is an afflicted continent. We however think that a positive and durable solution will be found to this transient situation at the

beginning of the next century thanks to strict compliance with our commitments during our most recent Summit, and more particularly those of this Summit which is holding in Yaounde.

39. Africa is indeed decided to meet the challenge of its own decline. This is Africa's greatest resolve today for the next century, after a resounding success in its total political liberation in half a century. It has abundant potentials for achieving this objective.

**ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND  
GOVERNMENT**

**Thirty-Second Ordinary Session**

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**Yaounde, Cameroon**

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**YAOUNDE DECLARATION**

**(AFRICA: PREPARING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY)**



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