FROM RIO DE JANEIRO TO JOHANNESBURG

1. We, Ministers of African States, met in Nairobi, Kenya from 17 to 18 October, 2001, in the context of the African regional preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2 to 11 September 2002. The aim of the meeting was to assess the progress made, the constraints encountered, areas where further efforts are needed and the new challenges confronting Africa within the framework of the implementation of Agenda 21. In doing so, we took into consideration the concerns of our continent’s industry, and civil society, including NGOs, Trade Unions and youth.

2. We are convinced that the WSSD should reinvigorate the commitment of the international community to the goals of sustainable development and give effect to a new vision based on a concrete programme of action for the implementation of Agenda 21 in the next decade. To this end, we reaffirm that poverty eradication is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and reiterate our commitment to address all three components of sustainable development – namely economic growth and development, social development and environmental protection, as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars – in a balanced way, in conformity with the fundamental principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

3. ... We recall that success in meeting the objectives of development and poverty eradication depends, inter alia, on good governance both within each country and at the international level, as well as on transparency in financial, monetary and trading systems. We are also committed to an open and equitable rule-based, predictable and transparent trading system, as the number of undernourished people has increased, especially for females, who have come to play a crucial role and are increasingly acting as agents for change for sustainable development. However, only 58 per cent of the continent’s population has access to safe water.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS SINCE RIO

14. We acknowledge that since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, there has been increased awareness of the fragility of the African environment and its natural resources. Many countries have established and strengthened policy, legislative, and regulatory frameworks, including the ratification of regional and global environmental conventions, and the formulation and implementation of various environmental action plans.

15. We note that life expectancy in many African countries remains low despite some improvements since Rio. However, in some countries life expectancy has deteriorated. Whilst the overall literacy rate remains low, access to education has increased, especially for females, who have come to play a crucial role and are increasingly acting as agents for change for sustainable development. However, only 58 per cent of the continent’s population has access to safe water.

16. ... We further note that the level of food insecurity in Africa has reached a critical level, as the number of undernourished presently exceeds 200 million people, and 500 million hectares of land have been affected by soil degradation, including as much as 65 per cent of agricultural land. These unfavourable developments compound the problem of poverty in Africa, as the agricultural sector includes 70 per cent of the poor and represents 40 per cent of regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP), thereby making the full implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification an urgent priority in the post-Johannesburg era.

18. We observe that most African economies are declining both qualitatively and quantitatively. The rate of GDP growth in at least half of the region has stayed below 2 per cent per annum. Africa, unlike other regions of the world, continues to receive extremely low foreign private capital investment, declining levels of official development assistance, while facing an increasing debt burden.

19. We also note that wars, civil conflicts and the proliferation of small arms, and the continued presence of landmines, have hampered the efforts of many African countries to achieve sustainable development.