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## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

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OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**ON BEHALF OF  
THE AFRICAN UNION**

**DURING THE**

**47<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
COMMISSION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**NEW YORK,  
4 FEBRUARY 2009**



Madam Chair,

It is an honour for me to address this session today and to extend my appreciation and support to the UN Commission on Social Development for having chosen 'Social Integration' as the theme of the meeting. I am addressing this August assembly, not only in my capacity as the Minister of Health and Social Services of Namibia, but also as the Chairperson of the First Session of the African Union Conference of Ministers in charge of Social Development, which was held in Windhoek, Namibia in October 2008.

I was mandated by my colleagues, the African Union Ministers in charge of Social Development to present the African Common Position on Social Integration as Africa's contribution to this August assembly. The other outcome of the Conference was a Social Policy Framework for Africa and a Declaration on Social Development. These policy documents have been endorsed by the just ended African Union Executive Council of Ministers and Assembly Heads of State and Government which took place in Addis Ababa at the end of January to the beginning of February 2009.

In their interventions previous speakers have eloquently referred to the social challenges which are facing our nations, in particular those in developing countries, and the need to build stable, safe, tolerant, inclusive, participatory and just societies for all.

The social problems, in Africa, are multifarious and have persistently been affecting more particularly the marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of our society. This has been compounded by globalization, the current economic and financial crisis, and climate change. These have had a devastating impact on the well-being of millions of African people - their livelihoods are threatened and they are becoming poorer.

The challenges of stable and sustained Economic growth and sustainable social development on the Continent have also been compounded as a result, further exacerbating the disproportionate imbalances in the distribution of economic resources.

This cycle only further excludes vulnerable groups from essential benefits and social services.

Madam Chair

It is time therefore for developing countries to take hold of this opportunity to effectively work their way out of hunger, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and carve out a long term process that involves setting concrete and actionable social development goals for truly enhancing the livelihoods of the African people. An improvement in the quality of life of the African people depends on radical social transformation which puts people at the centre of development and there is need to invest in them. It is surely a way to contribute in building an integrated, united, peaceful and prosperous Africa.

In addition, best policies, resources, complemented by political will are necessary in fostering social integration and promote sustainable social development.

Africa's development challenges cannot be met unless the countries work in effective partnerships with the international community. It is in this spirit and in keeping with the principle of the African Union's Constitutive Act to promote social integration and enhance the living standard of African people that the Ministers who participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> AU Conference on Social Development in Namibia welcomed the UN Commission's decision to hold a session on Social Integration. They resolved to speak with one voice and develop an African Common Position on Social Integration to constitute Africa's contribution to this Session on Social Development.

I am pleased to report that the Namibia meeting considered a number of pertinent social development issues such as social protection, social security, people with disabilities, the family, the youth, and older people. A roundtable discussion also took place on the theme of the meeting: "Towards a Sustainable Social Development Agenda for Africa".

It was noted that while significant strides have been achieved in certain areas of social and economic development such as increasing literacy rate, reduction of unemployment, reduction of HIV/AIDS prevalence, increasing democratization and reduction of civil strife, Africa is still faced with compelling and pervasive social challenges. Considerable gaps also existed in implementing the various social development policy documents.

It was with this concern in mind that the Social Policy Framework, which is an overarching policy structure to assist Member States in developing national social policies to promote human empowerment and development, was adopted. The

Social Policy Framework will be a tool to guide Member States in their quest to address the numerous social development challenges.

Madam Chair

In the African Common Position on Social Integration, Ministers reaffirmed their commitments to the global and continental instruments on social development and to creating “a more stable and safe society for all”. Among others, they also highlighted the need to promote and protect human rights; build inclusive societies based on values of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, tolerance and mutual respect; addressed the special needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; and the need to enhance social cohesion by promoting universal access to education and skills development, health, shelter and urban development, environmental protection, food and water security and appropriate nutrition, information and technology, and professional training, to enable access to decent employment opportunities and poverty reduction.

The document also outlines recommended actions to be undertaken by Member States, the RECs and other regional groupings, the UN Agencies, Multilateral and Bilateral Development Partners, and International NGOs.

The Ministers are confident that Africa can meet its social development challenges and attain sustainable social development of the continent, if African countries work in effective partnerships with one another, with the international community, with UN Agencies and civil society organizations. This partnership is vital because if we allow the development gap between Africa and other continents to continue to widen, sustainable social development in the continent will remain a dream and the African people will continue to suffer.

I have the honour, therefore, to submit the African Common Position on Social Integration to this august assembly and request that it be considered as one of the working documents of this session.

I thank you.

