**STATEMENT OF MAJOR GROUPS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON “Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all”.**

**AT THE 3RD AFRICA REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDIS ABABA, MAY 18, 2017**

We, representatives of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders met in Addis Ababa on 17th May 2017, ahead of the 3rd Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development themed *“Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all”.*

We highly appreciate and are encouraged by UNECA and the African Union Commission’s commitment to engage with major groups and other stakeholders; and their recognition of the role of Major Groups and Other stakeholders towards realizing Sustainable Development in Africa.

Regarding our participation at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, governments and Africa’s partners ought to do the needful by supporting the achievement of inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all. To realize that goal, we thus recommend the following:

**On eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa:**

1. The first step to effectively address poverty lies in understanding the concept of poverty as understood and experienced by the poor people themselves. In this regard, the inclusion of the “real poor” in decision making processes is indispensable. This entails unpacking and contextualising the SDGs and anchoring them on an African cultural perspective of poverty so that the developmental agenda resonates with people at the grassroots level.
2. To effectively address poverty, deliberate policies aimed at creation of decent jobs for all should be fostered, the increasing of household income should be targeted, the development of infrastructure prioritized while enhancing human capital, especially for the youth. The strengthening of labour productivity is important for expanding domestic markets to promote demand and inclusive economic growth. The involvement of the private sector in development should be done in tandem with the principles of development effectiveness while adhering to local and international labour standards. These measures should be augmented by the promotion of social dialogue, the strengthening of comprehensive social protection systems and the upholding of human and labour rights in the world of work.
3. In the spirit of “leaving no one behind”, priority should be given to addressing the pressing issues experienced by vulnerable groups like people with disabilities, older people, children without parental care, women, rural subsistent farmers, pastoralists, hunter gatherers and the youth. Governments and all service providers should ensure public and social services especially education and health are *appropriate, age friendly, equitable, non discriminatory, affordable and of high quality* so that these vulnerable groups are socially protected.
4. Ensure equitable access to natural resources while safeguarding our continent’s ecosystems in order to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

**On ending Hunger and achieving food security in Africa:**

1. Support smallholder farmers by enhancing the availability of flexible grants and loans, the knowledge and awareness about advanced practices in food security, environmental conservation.
2. The implementation of international and regional instruments such as the Malabo protocol, Maputo protocol, CFS, IAASTD, FAIRR and the Zero Hunger Challenge will go a long way in increasing food production and will support accountability and governance systems in the sector
3. Governments should work with the private sector, communities and peasant farmers to implement Agro-ecological systems approach to food production that are resilient and mitigate against climate change.

**On healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all:**

1. Member states must further ensure that the implementation of Goal 3 compliments African existing policies on health while paying special attention to the vulnerable groups.
2. We call upon African member states to increase domestic financing that strengthens health systems (health workforce, infrastructure and supplies) so that no one is left behind by ensuring both primary and secondary healthcare accessible and appropriate.
3. We call upon governments to increase the provision of sexual and reproductive health services for both in school and out of school adolescents and youth through comprehensive sexuality education.
4. We call upon countries to address the increasing burden of diseases, including non communicable diseases such as cancer and mental health issues, while paying special attention to high increase in HIV infection among our populations, especially the youth.

**On gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls:**

* We call on member states to harmonize the implementation of agenda 2030 and 2063 with existing national, regional and global frameworks including the Beijing Platform for Action, Maputo Protocol, and CEDAW.
* In the implementation of these continental and global goals, it is critical that we ensure meaningful and inclusive participation of women in the full data cycle (collection, analysis and dissemination) to ensure targeted intervention.
* We call on African member states to strengthen national efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of harmful practices against women and girls including child, early and forced marriages.
* We also believe that achieving gender equality will not be possible without concerted action to transform labour markets for women’s paid and unpaid work. Closing the gender pay gap requires a policy of ‘equal pay for work of equal value’. Minimum living wages and measures to promote women’s equal access to social protection can also help to address gender disparities in income and reduce poverty. The pursuit of gender equality requires measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life, and breaking down the rigid occupational segregation that has trapped millions of women workers worldwide in insecure, poorly paid and often dangerous work.
* We call on member states to implement the recommendations of the High Level panel on Illicit Financial Flows so as to protect states’ tax bases and in turn increase domestic revenue to unlock finances to fund SDGs.

**On building, resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and innovation**

* To achieve this goal, we call for a paradigm shift that fosters structural transformation and moves away from the neo-liberal economic agenda to an industrialisation process that is commodity based, one that promotes human-centred development, human capital development and technology skills transfer.
* On building infrastructure, there is critical need to build climate resilient infrastructure both in the cities and rural areas, that is gender sensitive and incorporates the needs for people living with disabilities and older people.
* The industrialisation process should be geared towards fostering the transition from informal to formal economy as prescribed by the ILO recommendation 204.

**On conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

* Institute an in-depth review informed by science, identify priority actions and take concrete actions to tackle the complex and interlinked threats and pressures facing oceans and marine areas while supporting full implementation of the polluter pays principle to ensure sustainable cleaning of water bodies without leaving debilitating effects.
* Put in place and enforce measures to stem the land based sources of marine pollution including from industry i.e. a ban on single use plastics which not only affect the health of oceans but ultimately affect human health and erode the livelihoods of communities.
* Expand the proportion of the ocean areas that is under marine protected areas in order to ensure the protection of ocean resources and marine biodiversity.
* For all these to happen, the involvement of coastal and fishing communities through participatory and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems and fisheries is critical.

**On urgent action to combat climate change**

African government should expedite the implementation of the Paris Agreement and involve other Non-state actors in the processes while ensuring that deliberate efforts are made to mobilize domestic and international resources needed for effective implementation.

To achieve this, major groups and other stakeholders require the following organizational arrangements and support in order to fulfil their role in realizing an effective and sustainable growth and prosperity for all:

* Member states to provide strong political will and participatory systems that encourage major groups and other stakeholders to be part of the priority setting and implementation in both SDGs and Agenda 2063.
* Member states to integrate major groups and other stakeholders in national multi-stakeholders coordination mechanisms, committees and commissions for agenda 2030 and agenda 2063 implementation, follow-up and monitoring.