

DECLARATION ON LAND ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

WE, the Heads of States and Government of the African Union, meeting at our Thirteenth Ordinary Session in Sirte, Libya, from 1 to 3 July 2009;

REAFFIRMING the commitments we have made to poverty eradication with the view to raising the living standards of our peoples and the wellbeing of our future generations;

RECOGNISING the centrality of land to sustainable socio-economic growth, development and the security of the social, economic and cultural livelihoods of our people;

AWARE of the rich heritage of Africa's land and related resources especially its unique natural eco-systems;

FURTHER AWARE of the diversity and complexity of the systems under which land and related resources are held, managed and used;

NOTING the diversity of issues and challenges facing access to, use and management of land resources; and the threat relating to land and related resources including those arising from changes in the global, political and economic environment;

CONSCIOUS of the need for strong systems of land governance rooted in principles of sustainability in an effort to ensure preservation, protection and renewability of Africa's land and related resources;

FURTHER NOTING the steady progress which our countries have made in the initiation, review, revision or comprehensive development of land policies and their implementation in order to ensure that their various land sectors play an important role in development;

WELCOMING the joint initiative which has been taken up by the consortium of the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) with support from development partner organisations, in drafting a continental framework and guidelines on land policy development and implementation for use as a resource by AU member states in their efforts to improve the performance of their various land sectors;

ACKNOWLEDGING the comprehensive consultations and discussions that have been conducted and the experts inputs made in the course of the preparation of the continental Framework and Guidelines on land policy in all the five regions of Africa;

CONSIDERING the Report of the African Union Joint Conference of Ministers responsible for Agriculture, Land and Livestock held in (city, town) from 22 to 24 April 2009, and the recommendations therein endorsed by the Executive Council;

UNDERTAKE TO:

1. prioritise, initiate and lead land policy development and implementation processes in our countries, notwithstanding the extent of multi-stakeholder contribution to such processes involving civil society, private sector and other stakeholders;
2. support the emergence of the institutional framework required for the effective development and implementation of land policy and implementation;
3. allocate adequate budgetary resources for land policy development and implementation processes, including the monitoring of progress.

RESOLVE TO:

1. ensure that land laws provide for equitable access to land and related resources among all land users including the youth and other landless and vulnerable groups such as displaced persons;
2. strengthen security of land tenure for women which merits special attention.

REQUESTS the Commission in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities, UNECA, AfDB and other partners to:

1. endeavour to work towards establishment of an appropriate institutional framework to provide coordination of follow up activities and facilitate mutual learning by member states as they develop/review their land policies in accordance with the Framework and Guidelines;
2. take measures for the establishment of a fund to support follow up activities to promote land policy development and implementation;
3. undertake measures for the establishment of mechanisms for progress tracking and periodic member states reporting on progress achieved.

INVITES the Regional Economic Communities to:

1. convene periodic regional platforms to facilitate experiences sharing, lessons learning and dissemination of best practices in land policy

formulation, implementation and monitoring based on members states experiences;

2. appropriately capture and address issues of land policies within their respective common agricultural policy framework.

URGES Member States to:

1. review their land sectors with a view to developing comprehensive policies which take into account their peculiar needs;
2. build adequate human, financial, technical capacities to support land policy development and implementation;
3. take note of the iterative steps outlined in the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa for their land policy development and implementation strategies.

REQUESTS the Commission, in collaboration with UNECA and AfDB, to carry out studies on the establishment of an appropriate institutional framework that can support Member States in their efforts towards reviewing, developing and implementing land policies including mechanisms for progress tracking and reporting, as well as for the establishment of an African Fund for Land Policy, and report thereon to the ordinary session of the Assembly in June/July 2010.