

STATEMENT BY THE AFRICAN GROUP TO BE DELIVERED BY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA H.E TEBOGO SEKOLO, AT THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNIDO FROM 30TH NOVEMBER TO 4TH DECEMBER 2015.

Mr President,

I congratulate you, on behalf of the African Group on your election as the President of this session of the General Conference. The Group would like to assure you of its support as you steer the conference to a successful conclusion.

The African Group thanks the Director General, Mr Li Yong for his opening address in which he highlights the key activities undertaken by UNIDO since our last meeting in Lima, in 2013. The Group further wishes to thank the Secretariat for the excellent arrangements for the conference, as well as the timely provision of necessary documentation.

The Group aligns itself with the statement of the G77 and China.

Mr President,

This Conference takes place at a significant historical moment. As we are aware, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, having been established in 1945.

For us in Africa, it is also the 25th anniversary since the launch of the Africa Industrialization Day (AID) by the United Nations General Assembly, advocating for an accelerated industrialization of the African continent.

2015 also marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action during the 1995 World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing, China.

Given this important point epoch in history, the international community is thus called upon to reflect on progress made over the last decades towards achieving what the drafters of the UN Charter pledged 70 years ago, which was “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

Indeed there is no doubt that there has been progress towards promoting socio-economic development and removing millions of people from poverty across the globe. However, much more still needs to be done and UNIDO’s role in this regard is more crucial than ever before.

It is in this context that the African Group welcomes the recent adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, the Group commends UNIDO’s role in the inclusion of a goal which focuses on inclusive and sustainable industrial development, Goal 9. It is the Group’s belief that this Goal has inserted inclusive and sustainable industrial development at the center of the global development agenda.

Mr President,

The African Group is pleased that under DG Li Yong, UNIDO continues to give priority to Africa. Despite steady progress recorded in social and economic development on the continent in recent decades, a challenge of underdevelopment still remains acute. As you are all aware, 34 of the 48 Least Developed Countries are in Africa. Unemployment, inequality and poverty still remain stubbornly high. The African Continent is ready to play its part as expressed through the recently adopted development framework for the continent - Agenda 2063: the Africa we want. However, we can only succeed with the support of the international community.

In this regard the Group welcomes the outcome of the recently concluded Least Developed Countries Ministerial Conference and commends UNIDO for its continued role in integrating the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPoA) in its programmes and activities.

Mr President,

The African Group believes that the introduction of the Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) launched by UNIDO in 2014 is an innovative programme delivery vehicle through which UNIDO can effectively support its members to implement their industrial development strategies. The Group particularly welcomes the fact that the first two pilot countries: Ethiopia and Senegal, are from the African Continent. Although the Group recognizes that it is still early days since the implementation of the PCP programmes in these countries, the Group looks forward to an assessment of the impact of this intervention at an appropriate time, with a view to share lessons learnt and best practices with other countries, both in the region and beyond.

The African Group wishes to underscore that the success of the PCP and many other programmes and projects on the Continent depends on our ability to mobilise the requisite resources. It is for this reason that the African Group welcomes the convening, in Addis Ababa in July this year, of the *Third International Conference on Financing for Development*. Similarly, the Group welcomes the hosting, in the margins of this conference, the Third Forum on “Financing for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development” by the Governments of Ethiopia and Senegal, supported by both UNIDO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Mr President

During the June session of the IDB a discussion ensued on the future of the Special Resources for Africa (SRA), in view of the declining resources of UNIDO. After extensive discussions and consultations it was agreed that the SRA should be retained with a budget of 1 million euros from the regular budget and to earmark voluntary contributions for the preparation of and support to programmes in Africa to match or exceed the previous levels of SRA. The Group looks forward to further discussions on how this facility can be enhanced with a view to ensuring sustainable and reliable funding for approved projects on the Continent.

Mr President

The Group expresses its appreciation to UNIDO for organising the high level event on 26 September 2015 in New York, titled 'operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in Africa'. This event was attended by high-level participants from the Continent, including Heads of State and Government. The African Group looks forward to enhanced cooperation between UNIDO and the African Continent, specifically in the context of implementing the continent's Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want. Specifically, this framework calls for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development and seeks to eradicate poverty in one generation and build shared prosperity through social and economic transformation of the continent. The framework further calls for an Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth.

Mr President

With regards to the documents submitted before this conference for adoption, the Group would like to comment as follows:

The African Group supports the adoption of the Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2016-2019. The Group is of the view that the programmatic objectives and priorities of the MTPF are aligned to UNIDO's core mandate of reducing poverty through inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

The African Group further supports the adoption of the Programme and Budgets 2016-2017, as recommended by the IDB. The Group notes the large sum of arrears still owed by former Member States and requests the Secretariat to continue approaching the concerned States to settle the outstanding amounts.

The Group further notes the impact of the withdrawal from some member states from the organisation and the impact on its budget. The Group wishes

to appeal to all the members to remain in UNIDO and strengthen this organisation so that it fulfils its historic mission.

Mr President, the African Group takes note of the DG's Action Plan on UNIDO's Field Policy and Network contained in the document GC.16/6. The African Group is of the view that the implementation of the proposed action plan should not negatively impact on the visibility of UNIDO and the TC delivery in the field.

In this regard, the Group urges the Secretariat to continue its efforts, in close consultations with Member States, especially those directly affected, and to align UNIDO's field capacities with its expected role in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the expansion of the Programme for Country Partnerships.

In conclusion, the Group takes note of the on-going United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) taking place in Paris. It is recognised that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate changes because of the range of projected impacts, multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. Such vulnerability impedes on the continent's industrial development prospects. We therefore, look forward to a positive outcome of this conference, which could be integrated, with the on-going work of UNIDO in mitigating the impact of climate change in Africa.

I thank you.