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STATEMENT

BY

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ZAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN GROUP FOR THE
MONTH OF MAY 2006, ON BEHALF OF
THE AFRICAN GROUP

TO

THE 14TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD-14) ON THE REVIEW
CYCLE ON THE THEMATIC CLUSTER OF ENERGY FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT, AIR/ATMOSPHERE POLLUTION AND
CLIMATE CHANGE
APRIL 2006

Please check against delivery

New York, 1 May 2006

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group congratulates you and other members of the Bureau for your well-deserved election to preside over the deliberations of CSD-14. We thank the Secretary-General for his reports. However, we hope in the subsequent cycles of the CSD, the Secretary-General will submit reports on each thematic issue. The African Group associates itself with the letter dated 4 April 2006 sent by the Chairman of G-77 and China to the Chairman of CSD-14 raising various concerns.

The current review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) gives us an opportunity to focus on reviewing the progress made so far in a number of important areas: energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air/atmosphere pollution, and climate change. In this context, I would like to highlight the concerns of the African countries pertaining to these areas, including the overarching and cross-cutting challenges faced by them, as well as possible approaches to overcome these impediments.

Africa is the continent facing the biggest challenges in its efforts to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, sustainable development for Africa has been identified as a crosscutting issue to be considered in all the cycles of CSD. While the review exercise organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in preparation for the 14th session of CSD showed that the African countries have taken significant steps towards meeting their commitments for enhancing the achievement of sustainable development on the continent, it also highlighted the fact that many African countries are still facing serious challenges and constraints in meeting the targets and goals contained in Agenda 21, the programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

In addition to the steps taken by the African countries, the participants of the regional implementation meeting held in October 2005 acknowledged the valuable contribution of the entities of the United Nations system, as well as of the various international partners and organizations that support Africa's efforts in achieving sustainable development. At the same time, the review has shown that the international community needs to further strengthen their support to enable the African countries to effectively address the challenges they are still facing.

Mr. Chairman,

Access to energy resources, achieving industrial development, and how we address the challenges of the climate change and air/atmosphere pollution are some of the key preconditions to achieving the three pillars of the sustainable development, namely economic development, social prosperity and environment protection.

Although the African continent is endowed with considerable energy such as oil, gas and coal reserves, it still lags behind all the other continents in energy use. The average electricity access rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at about 23%, with big disparities between countries, as well as urban and rural areas. Inadequate access to modern energy is a serious impediment to poverty reduction and Africa's overall socio-economic development. The regional review process has identified some specific challenges to the African region, including largely untapped energy resource potential, low share of renewable energy, low private sector investment and participation in the energy sector, and underdeveloped infrastructure.

Industrial development, in particular through technologies and processes that use natural resources more efficiently, is a vital precondition to sustainable development. The challenges faced by the African countries in this area include a weak policy environment, limited access to latest technologies, inadequate levels of skilled work force. As latecomers to industry, African countries are facing additional challenges emanating from increasingly competitive environment. Most African countries have been unable to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the globalization process.

Africa also remains highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, particularly droughts and floods. The majority of African economies are heavily dependant on agriculture, with most of Sub-Saharan Africa relying primarily on rain-fed agriculture. Thus, disasters related to climate change have direct negative consequences on poverty reduction and food security in Africa, often leading to famine. The Secretary-General's report notes that the average annual number of food emergencies in Africa has more than doubled in the past two decades. The problem is further aggravated by the unavailability of water and deterioration in water quality, which increase vulnerability to diseases in affected areas. Floods, on the other hand, not only destroy crops, but also buildings and infrastructure. Unfortunately, it is often the poorest people who are most dependent on nature, and consequently suffer the most from the negative impacts of climate change. In order to move forward in this area, climate change mitigation and adaptation needs to be integrated into policy processes across a range of sectors, which requires further mobilization of human capacity and knowledge, institutions and governance, financial resources and technologies.

Mr. Chairman,

Inextricably linked to climate change, is the problem of air/atmosphere pollution that is caused by unsustainable patterns of energy resource production and consumption. Air/atmosphere pollution has had, and continues to have serious negative consequences on human health, ecosystems, infrastructure and climate change in Africa. A number of factors have constrained progress in this area in African countries, including weak national energy and public health policies, limited access to cleaner technology financing, lack of early warning systems and data collection capacities.

Progress in the areas of energy, climate change, sustainable industrialization and air/atmosphere pollution needs to be addressed in an integrated manner in combination with efforts aimed at a number of cross-cutting areas critical to Africa's development, most notably poverty eradication and health. As noted by the Secretary-General's report, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of halving extreme poverty by 2015. Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, malaria, Tuberculosis and other communicable diseases, natural disasters and conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

Looking at the four areas currently under review, we can see that means of implementation is of a particular relevance to the African countries. In this area we can identify a number of impediments, which are preventing African countries from achieving adequate progress in sustainable development. I would like to bring to your attention three of these: lack of financial resources; lack of appropriate technology; and human and institutional capacity constraints.

Lack of financial resources is a key constraint in most African countries, preventing them from achieving their sustainable development targets. This is equally relevant to all areas currently under review. This constraint could be addressed through a combination of measures by the international community, including enhanced efforts at achieving their commitments regarding increased development assistance and aid effectiveness, identification of innovative sources of financing and developing new financing mechanisms, as well as support to the African countries to create an environment conducive to foreign direct investment.

African countries also need support in the research and development and/or transfer of appropriate, affordable and environmentally sound technologies. In this regard, there is a need for enhanced cooperation for sharing of relevant experiences between the various regions of the world, including, in particular, South-South cooperation. The issues of lack of appropriate technologies and financing constraints are often interrelated. For example, as noted at the regional implementation meeting, the lack of finance is limiting the African countries' access to environmentally sound energy systems and cleaner technologies.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by stressing that the achievement of sustainable development goals in Africa requires an effective partnership between the African countries and their development partners. Enhanced and more effective development aid, market access, as well as support in capacity building and technology transfer, are vital preconditions for Africa's development. On our side, the African countries are committed to ensuring that the assistance received from our development partners is used in an efficient and effective manner. In this context, I would also like to stress the importance of supporting effective partnerships within Africa. As noted by the Secretary-General's report, regional

cooperation within the framework of NEPAD has brought good results. In this connection, it is important to increase support to regional development initiatives, such as NEPAD.

My sincere hope is that the current review session will provide the platform for the adoption of policy measures at the next policy session, which will adequately address the concerns and needs of the African countries and enable them to advance towards achieving their sustainable development goals.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.