

Mr Chair, Honorable Ministers and Heads of delegations

Title: Investing in Africa to Achieve the MDGs and Sustainable Development

We thank the Chair for adequately reflecting our concerns and propositions in his Chairman's Summary released yesterday. Over the last week, we have had a chance to review progress made in achieving MDGs, and we all agree that the picture is far from rosy. Our discussions brought out some very real challenges facing Africa, and again this morning in the G77 statement, **IMPLEMENTATION** was named as the **Achilles Heel** in achieving sustainable development.

We know that implementation has left much to be desired while we consider the main themes of this review session – agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa – all in the context of the major crises we are facing today - the food crisis, the energy crisis and international financial monetary crisis. All this is happening with the backdrop of Climate Change, which is having a major impact on the globe as we speak.

In spite of all this, we are duty-bound to try and carry out our respective responsibilities. One could say that in Africa the last few years have seen the reinforcement of the democratic processes in many countries. This has led many countries to decentralise their responsibilities to the **local level** so as to enhance the active participation of their communities in decision-making processes.

But these efforts need to be strengthened through more responsibility being delegated down to where action should take place – i.e. to local authority level. But this should be done responsibly, in a way that will ensure sufficient technical and financial resources are made available.

There is an urgent need to ensure that substantial levels of resources are channelled to help Africa meet its most important challenges of today, which are food security and the access to water and sanitation. We all know that agriculture is the backbone of Africa's economy, it is the highest employer - yet Africa is unable to feed itself. This HAS to change right away if Africa is to achieve progress towards the most important objective of the MDGs, which is halving poverty by 2015.

We feel obliged to emphasise the reality of the massive rural-urban migration taking place across Africa, due to encroaching desertification and other factors. This trend is set to accelerate as global change forces people to move to perceived "safer" urban areas. This of course, impacts directly on the ability of cities to deliver and maintain infrastructure and basic services, and again, I am afraid, the resources, capacity building and transfer of technology from national and international partners are often not forthcoming.

We are talking about a **human tsunami in the making** if we do not focus our combined attention immediately towards capacitating and enabling local authorities to tackle sustainable development head-on, where it matters most

– at the local level. Local Governments across Africa are eager and committed to rise to the challenges of implementation, so we invite you to stand up and be counted.

I thank you.