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Statement by

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**Delivered at the International Conference on the Review of the Barbados
Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island
Developing States
(BPOA) held at the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre
in Port Louis, Mauritius,
from January 10-14, 2004**

Mr. President
Heads of State and Government
Honourable Ministers
Heads of Delegations
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, and the African Union Commission, I wish to thank the organizers of this very important International Conference on the Review of the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) for inviting the African Union Commission to attend this important Conference. The Commission feels greatly honoured to be invited to the Conference.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission would have liked to attend this Conference in person. But, owing to other demands, he has not been able and he sends his apologies. He, nonetheless, conveys to you fraternal greetings and wishes the Conference fruitful and successful deliberations.

Please permit me also to thank our host, the Government of Mauritius, for the warm reception accorded to our delegation and making available to this Conference these magnificent conference facilities.

I would also wish to join the various Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegation that have spoken before me to extend the Commission's sincere condolences to the victims of the tsunami in South East Asia. The African Union Commission deeply regrets the loss of life and property that hit these South East Asian countries following the devastating tsunami of December 26, 2004.

As some of you may be aware, the African Union Commission recently made a modest financial contribution to support the countries affected by the tsunami and it remains committed to working with the international community and all of you in supporting countries devastated by the tsunami. At this juncture, the African Union Commission wishes to thank you all for responding positively and timely to assisting our brothers and sisters affected by the tsunami in South East Asia.

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

The African Union Commission takes note that the results of the implementation of the BPOA have been mixed. We acknowledge that the SIDS continue to face problems with market access to the developed countries. We, therefore, call upon developed country partners to open up their markets to the SIDS, particularly given their special characteristics. We also call upon the World Trade Organization (WTO) to conclude the negotiations launched at the Doha as soon as possible. We further invite the WTO Members to fulfil the development dimension of the Doha development agenda, which places the needs and interests of developing countries at the centre of the Doha work programme.

At the same time, we acknowledge that increased market access alone will not suffice: There is need to address supply constraints in the SIDS. In this respect, the SIDS will need the cooperation and support of the international community. There is also need to enhance capacity for trade policy and negotiation in SIDS. The AU Commission takes note of the development of an integrated framework for trade related technical assistance and calls upon the international community to extend this to the SIDS.

Mr. President

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Trade liberalisation and globalization have resulted in the decline of manufacturing activities in developing countries and the marginalization of the SIDS. This has been as a result of low competitiveness of exports from the developing countries, including the SIDS, and low level of economic diversification. The African Union Commission agrees that trade liberalization and globalization lead to increased economic efficiency and improved competitiveness. However, it is of the view that trade liberalization and globalization ought to take into account the vulnerability of the SIDS and to adequately prepare these countries for the challenges posed by trade liberalization and globalization.

The Commission also believes that it is critical for the SIDS to speak with one voice and to establish an Observatory on Globalization. And in view of the revenue losses arising from trade liberalization, we call upon the international community and the SIDS to work together on establishing a compensatory financing arrangement for the SIDS.

Although a number of the SIDS are on course to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), enormous challenges lie ahead, including the emergence of HIV/AIDS as a major health issue in the SIDS. As a universally agreed agenda, MDGs bring unprecedented clarity to the shared responsibilities and objectives of all development parties: governments, international and civil society organizations and the private sector. It will, therefore, be important that governments, the international community and the private sector work together in ensuring that the SIDS continue to remain on course in meeting the MDGs. This calls for an integrated Global Plan.

In addition, the SIDS will need to take necessary steps in a number of areas, including maintaining a stable macroeconomic environment, deepening macroeconomic reforms and enhancing domestic competitiveness and efficiency, strengthening democratic institutions and public financial management, and investing adequately resources in human development. These steps should, among other things, create a favourable investment climate in the SIDS.

It needs to be pointed out that the support of the international community in these areas will be critical. In this regard, the African Union Commission calls upon the wealthy nations to deliver on their commitment, as reconfirmed at Monterrey to contribute 0.7 percent of their GNP towards development aid and to create incentives for increased foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to the SIDS.

Mr. President

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is clear that the successful implementation of the BPOA requires the support of the international community. We are of the view that a lot needs to be done to address sustainable development challenges of the SIDS and that the international community has not been able to provide adequate support. The African Union Commission, therefore, invites the international community to scale-up its financial and technical support to the SIDS for the implementation of the BPOA.

Finally, I wish to report at this Conference that the African Union Commission recently completed its Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan for 2005-07, which was endorsed in principle by the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government held in July 2004 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Vision, Mission

and Strategic Plan, among other things, articulates the need for the African continent to forge ties with countries in the Caribbean and Asia. We consider this as an important step towards developing economic cooperation with the SIDS. The African Union Commission, therefore, looks forward to working closely with the SIDS in the pursuit of their sustainable development goals and objectives .

I thank you for your attention.