



**Declaration of the Heads State and Government**  
**Chairpersons of Regional Economic Communities on**  
**the NEPAD Vision for Agricultural Development and Food Security in**  
**Africa**

**Abuja, Nigeria, 12 December 2002**

**Preamble**

We the Heads of State and Governments, and our representatives, in our capacity as Chairpersons of African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are assembled in Abuja under the auspices of the NEPAD for the purpose of agreeing on the way forward in implementing regional programs for food security in the context of the NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). We meet at a time of crisis, with Africa's economic growth stagnant; per capita income and food production in decline; and unacceptably high incidence of poverty, food insecurity and child malnutrition; growing dependence on food aid and food imports; as well as an increasingly marginal role for Africa in international trade. We believe that agriculture has potential to make a major contribution to reversing this state of affairs. In view of this, and:

1. **Recalling** the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its 37<sup>th</sup> ordinary session in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001 to adopt the New African Initiative, thereafter renamed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at the inaugural meeting of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee in Abuja, Nigeria on 23 October 2001;
2. **Strongly concerned** at the difficulties faced by all African countries, in particular the current food crisis in Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa and the situation faced by countries affected by violent conflict, civil strife, natural disasters such as frequent droughts and floods and exposed to the adverse effects of desertification;
3. **Concerned** further about the marginal position of Africa in the global economy and the great prevalence of food insecurity and poverty across the continent which undermine the dignity of Africa's people and weaken the basis for sustainable peace and security;
4. **Recognizing** the fundamental role and importance of agriculture as a source of food security and economic activity for Africa's people and convinced of its potential to help reverse economic decline;

5. **Further recalling** that during the *World Food Summit: five years later* held in Rome at which African Ministers for Agriculture met on 9 June 2002, under the umbrella of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa and endorsed the NEPAD Vision of Agriculture as presented in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, which seeks an early reversal of agricultural malaise and provides a framework for priority agricultural investments;
6. **Noting** with satisfaction the positive reaction of the international community during the *World Food Summit: five years later*, at the adoption of NEPAD and the inclusion of an agriculture and food security component;
7. **Concerned** at the current downward trend of the agricultural budgets of African countries and the decline in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and International Financial Institutions portfolios that are directly allocated to agriculture as a contribution to food security;
8. **Noting** that the workshop organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis-Ababa in August 2002 drew attention to the roles of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and national governments as NEPAD implementation bodies. Noting further the major role that RECs can play in promoting, coordinating and intensifying the unity and solidarity of African States in implementing programmes that would enhance food security, agricultural productivity and trade at both regional and national levels;
9. **Welcoming** the fact that a number of African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have taken a step forward by preparing Regional Programmes for Food Security (RPFS);
10. **Aware** of the potential that Africa's rich endowment promises and convinced that NEPAD offers a new opportunity to realise it:

### **Declaration**

11. **We hereby commit ourselves to:**
  - 11.1 The NEPAD vision that seeks to stop the demise of the African economy within fifteen years through establishment of an enabling environment for sustained development;
  - 11.2 Pursuing vigorous action for the implementation of the main pillars of action of the CAADP; as reflected in a Plan of Action that will be prepared at a later stage, in collaboration with RECs;
  - 11.3 Implementing Regional Programmes for Food Security in close coordination with corresponding initiatives at the national level;
  - 11.4 Promoting the recognition of agriculture as a priority sector in Africa including the allocation of increased funding in national budgets as recommended by the African ministers of agriculture at the follow-up session of the 22<sup>nd</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Africa (Rome, June 2002);
  - 11.5 Strengthening the capacities of RECs so that they can effectively serve as building blocks for the integration of the continent in the context of the African Union, and can play a lead role in implementing the programmes;

- 11.6 Taking all necessary measures to engage the private sector and to mobilize all the energies and resources of civil society in the implementation of NEPAD agricultural programmes.
12. **We urge** member governments to join in ensuring the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable agricultural development and to favour the rational use and protection of natural resources, in particular land and water, including by:
- 12.1 Maintaining a high level of political commitment to implementation of programmes in agriculture, rural development, and food security;
  - 12.2 Creating a suitable policy and institutional environment for sustainable agriculture;
  - 12.3 Mainstreaming gender and youth concerns in agriculture, nutrition and food security, and create an enabling environment for the enhancement of livelihood opportunities of young men and women;
  - 12.4 Combating the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS and malaria on agriculture, by all means at our disposal;
  - 12.5 Building human, institutional and resource mobilisation capacities;
  - 12.6 Establishing capacity to address disasters and emergencies which could otherwise threaten long term development;
  - 12.7 Protecting natural resources and encouraging the rehabilitation of degraded lands, in particular de-mining arable land;
  - 12.8 Encouraging the establishment of safety nets through school feeding programmes to guarantee nutritional requirements of the African child.
13. We note with appreciation the positive role that lead agencies such as ADB and FAO have played over the past year in support of NEPAD and call upon them to continue to support activities for promoting commitment to agriculture and food security. We encourage them and all other members of the donor community, especially African development partners, to render increased support to RECs and member countries in the preparation and implementation of short, medium, and long term bankable projects.
14. We encourage RECs to develop a dynamic partnership with farmers organisations networks and agricultural chambers in the preparation and implementation of Programmes reflecting the NEPAD vision.
15. We express our profound appreciation to His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo, the government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for their warm hospitality. We also thank the Economic Community of West African States for the excellent arrangements made for hosting the meeting and convening the other RECs.

**Done in Abuja, 12 December 2002**