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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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AFRICAN UNION**

**DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE  
10<sup>TH</sup> AFRICA PARTNERSHIP FORUM (APF)**

**TOKYO, JAPAN: 7-8 APRIL 2008**

**Chairperson**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate the Government and the People of Japan for hosting the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum (APF) and also for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to the African Union (AU) delegation. Allow me also to take this opportunity to commend the role played by the Japanese Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for facilitating the participation of the African Union Commission (AUC) at this important meeting.

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Finding solutions to the agenda items for the 10<sup>th</sup> APF, namely, (i) boosting economic growth, with a focus on infrastructure, ICT, agriculture, and gender; (ii) climate change; and (iii) the Africa Action Plan is critical in our quest to reduce poverty, promote sustainable growth and attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the target date of 2015. You may wish to note the First Joint Conference of the Conference of African Union Ministers of Economy and Finance and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from March 31- April 2, 2008 and the G8 Development Ministers' Meeting held here in Tokyo, Japan, from April 5- 6, 2008 also discussed similar issues. I am, therefore, pleased that the APF also finds these issues to be important in addressing the socio-economic and political challenges facing Africa, including declining per capita real incomes, low levels of foreign direct investment (FDI), increasing food insecurity, high levels of external indebtedness, high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, and high unemployment.

Africa's economic performance has been very promising in recent times. According to the *Economic Report on Africa-2008*, a joint publication of the ECA and the AUC, Africa

recorded a growth rate of 5.8 percent in 2007, which was slightly higher than 5.7 percent for 2006. In 2008, the growth rate is projected at 6.2 percent. These growth rates, however, are below what is required to reduce poverty and attain the MDGs. Besides, these relatively high growth rates have not contributed significantly to employment generation for men and women and the youth in Africa.

Boosting economic growth and poverty reduction will require collective efforts by both African countries and development partners. Implementing sound macro-economic policies; increasing investment in infrastructure, including interconnectivity and information communication and technology (ICT), and ensuring economic empowerment of women and correcting gender imbalance are a must and should be accorded priority. In addition, African countries will need to increase investment in people; diversify their economies; increase investment in agriculture; and implement climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, among others.

In cognizance of the critical importance of these issues, African Heads of State and Government have taken a number of decisions, including adopting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Ouagadougou Declaration and Action Plan on Employment and Poverty Alleviation; and the Climate Information for Development in Africa (Clim-Dev Africa) as a plan on climate change and development in Africa. In addition, the African Leaders have adopted the Second Decade for Education in Africa, approved the African Health Strategy, and adopted the NEPAD Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan (I-STAP). The taking of these key decisions is a manifestation of political commitment of our Leaders at the highest level to address Africa's socio-economic ills and put the continent on a sustainable growth path. What remains, therefore, is the translation of this commitment into action, action and action.

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is essentially in view of the need to translate these commitments of our Leaders into action that I invite this meeting to have frank and candid discussions on the AU-NEPAD African Action Plan. The Action Plan, which outlines the flagship programmes and projects under the sectoral priorities of the African Union and its NEPAD Programme to be implemented in the short to medium-term, was presented at two previous meetings of the APF but it did not receive the attention and support that it deserves.

Following the agreement of the APF meeting held in Algiers, Algeria, in November 2007 for the AU-NEPAD African Action Plan to be re-considered by this Forum at this meeting, the African side will be re-presenting it, again, and expects that the meeting will go beyond taking note of it. Specifically, the African Union and its NEPAD Programme expects that this meeting will endorse the Action Plan as the basis for engagement and strategic partnership between Africa and her development partners, including the G8/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). I am strongly convinced that the Action Plan should be the basis for development assistance to Africa in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of aid. It is, therefore, my sincere hope that our cooperating partners will render their full support to the implementation of the AU-NEPAD Action Plan, which is at the core of promoting sustainable growth and achieving the MDGs in Africa

I thank you for your kind attention and wish the meeting great success.