

DECLARATION OF TUNIS

THE HIGH LEVEL SYMPOSIUM FOR AFRICAN EMPLOYERS ORGANISATIONS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTERPRISES IN AFRICA

(24 - 27 October 1994)

We, Presidents and Chief Executives of African employers' organizations, meeting in *Tunis* on *26 October 1994* under the aegis of the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), the Pan-African Employers' Confederation (PEC), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Labour Office (ILO), acknowledge that our organizations have a duty to contribute to the progress of our continent by participating in the elaboration of strategies for sustainable development.

Political instability and natural disasters have been very detrimental to the development of many African countries, while in others armed conflicts have had a heavy toll in human lives. Moreover, certain of our countries continue to be seriously afflicted by the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

In the economic field, not only are our countries suffering from unbearable in-debtedness, a lack of technological know-how, insufficient infrastructure and low productivity, but most of them are also affected by sharp fluctuations in exchange rates and in the prices of primary products.

On the social scene, the economic crisis has, in many African countries, had negative effects on employment as well as on living conditions and the provision of educational and health services, particularly among the poorest segments of the population.

We reiterate that the social progress and the well-being of the population can only be the result of economic growth.

In order to achieve economic recovery, we believe that, first of all, the political conflicts must be resolved and peace, justice and stability restored.

We are convinced that African countries possess real assets, primarily in their natural and human resources, which they should put in fuller utilisation for their economic and social development.

We stress the importance of the market economy and private enterprise as unique means of promoting effective development and truly productive employment.

We, therefore, urge our governments to institute, with courage and determination, the reforms necessary to establish a climate of confidence which will promote the mobilization of domestic resources and encourage direct South-South and North-South foreign investment in the private sector.

To this end, we call for an urgent redefinition of the role of the State, so as to shift the major responsibility of enterprise activities to the private sector.

With the aim of enabling African enterprises to be competitive, we insist on the need to accelerate the process of privatisation, to relax and simplify the administrative, fiscal and social regulations, and to ensure greater labour market flexibility under the structural adjustment programmes being carried out in most African countries.

While recognizing the role of the informal sector as a source of employment in African countries, we recommend that incentives be put in place to encourage informal sector operators to graduate into the formal sector so as to contribute to financing the State and providing social protection.

In view of the size and complexity of the task, we stress the fact that, for any programme of structural adjustment to be successful, it must be carried out in full consultation with the economic and social actors.

In full recognition of the primary responsibility of governments and of the contribution of workers' organizations, we are convinced of the pioneering role that employers' organizations and enterprises can play in the elaboration and implementation of development strategies and in the full integration of African economies in the globalization of the world economy.

It is, therefore, essential that employers' organizations be recognized and accepted as full partners in the economic and social development of African countries.

With a view to strengthening and harmonizing action of our organizations in economic and social development, we have identified the following common priorities :

- the institutions needed to enhance policies of reconciling the process of democratization and economic liberalization;
- the development of an entrepreneurial culture and spirit;
- the creation of an enabling environment for the development of enterprises and employment generation;
- assistance to enterprises in dealing with the adverse effects of structural adjustment programmes and the liberalization of trade;
- the policies needed to expand internal markets within the African continent;
- greater participation in social dialogue;
- upgrading human resources by developing links between education and enterprises;
- Africa's role in the world economy in the 21st Century, including in international organizations.

In order to be able to contribute to achieving these priorities, we believe that African employers' organizations will need to be assisted in continuing to develop their institutional capacities and strengthen the services to their members.

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations embodied in this Declaration, we invite the employers' organizations in Africa to draw to the attention of their respective governments the recommendations embodied in the present Declaration. A committee appointed by and acting on behalf of the Pan-African Employers' Confederation, in conjunction with the IOE and the competent services of the ILO, will be entrusted with reporting to the next Pan-African Symposium for Employers' Organizations on the progress made and results obtained.

