Declaration adopted by African countries participating at the 4th World Congress of Rural Women

We, the people of the African Continent participating at the Fourth World Congress of Rural Women in Durban, South Africa, from 23 to 25 April 2007 and representing government, rural women organisations and civil society;

Welcome the growing awareness of African governments, civil society, organisations and the international community of the need for strategies and programmes to improve the situation of women in rural areas;

Note with deep concern that the economic and financial challenges (crises) in many African countries have severely affected the socio-economic status of women, especially those in rural areas, and the continuing rise in the number of rural women living in poverty;

Further note that these economic and financial challenges as they affect rural women are by and large as a result of inequities in trading regimes between the developed and developing countries;

Further note the adverse impact of gender inequality on the economic growth of the continent and the disproportionate burden of poverty on rural women.

Recognise the urgent need to take appropriate measures aimed at further improving the situation of women in rural areas;
Take note of the country and commission reports presented during the Conference, highlighting the challenges facing rural women.

We therefore urge African Governments through the African Union Commission, in partnership with the civil society and corporate sector to:

**ECONOMIC**

1. Undertake necessary measures to give rural women full and equal access to productive resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit/capital, natural resources, appropriate technologies, markets and information, and meeting their basic requirements in water and sanitation.
2. Initiate innovative credit delivery systems, establish market linkages, create and revitalise people’s institution including local self governance institutions.
3. Strengthen policies, programmes and partnerships to improve the access to land, water and other natural resources related to the livelihoods or rural women.
4. Support the increase in agriculture production to ensure food security through investments in rural physical and institutional infrastructure and the generation of employment, focusing on development of micro and small enterprises.
5. Initiate action to make an inventory of cost-effective and appropriate technologies within the continent and work towards evolving a mechanism for technology transfer by using the services of national, regional and international organisations.
6. Support a network for rural development managers with a special
focus on information and communication technology and rural industries.

**SOCIAL**

7. Invest in the human resources of rural women, particularly through health and literacy programmes and social support measures;

8. Address the issue of rural poverty in a comprehensive, integrated and holistic manner through mobilising political, economic and social resources for sustained development and by channeling the flow of national resources and international development assistance for this purpose,

9. Strengthen partnerships to eradicate diseases such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and all other diseases and ensure availability of primary health care to the women in rural areas.

10. Take note of the adverse impact of gender inequality on the economic growth of the continent and the disproportionate burden of poverty on rural women.

11. Protect and promote women’s full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by ensuring that gender equality principles get mainstreamed into the national development agenda and gender sensitization is carried out at all levels.

12. Take necessary legal, policy, administrative and other measures for the prevention and elimination of all forms of all forms of violence and other harmful practices against women.

13. Adopt affirmative measures including scholarships at all levels for female students in rural areas, promote non-formal education and literacy programmes for rural women, including the girl child, in order to address gender imbalances in education and training.
14. Develop technical assistance and capacity building programmes including exchange visits, skills, and competency training among agriculture and rural development facilitators.

15. Urge Corporate Sector to take up social responsibility initiatives by supporting development programmes in rural areas.

16. Call upon the women of the world, particularly in the developed countries, to pledge their solidarity and support to the cause of rural women and development on the developing countries.

17. Mobilise the women of the world to champion the cause of rural women and development, in international forums such as the United Nations, World Trade Organisations, Peace and Security Organisations, Aid and Development Organisations and other international, regional and national forums.

GOVERNANCE

18. Integrate the concerns of rural women into national development policies, strategies and programmes, in particular by placing a higher priority on resource allocation related to the practical and strategic interests of rural women.

19. Strengthen national machineries and establish institutions for mutual co-operation and collective actions among governmental bodies in various sectors and non-governmental organizations that are concerned with rural development.

20. Improve the representation of rural women in all structures of power and decision making including leadership positions institutions of governance, public and private sector and civil society organizations.

21. Increase the allocation of our national budgets to develop rural areas focusing on basic minimum needs, sustainable natural
resource management and environmental conservation.

22. Work towards exploring the possibilities of collaborative research on problems and solutions concerned with rural development and women by establishing partnerships for technology transfer and narrowing down the digital divide and technology divide.

23. Ensure adequate availability of young professional rural extension workers and creation of knowledge centres of the member countries.

24. Promote equality in the application of customary laws and rules relating to traditional leadership, especially to granting equal status to women chiefs.

IMPLEMENTATION

25. Engage rural women in development of the Plan of Action for the Implementation of these resolutions.

26. Set up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the AU for the purpose of the implementation of these resolutions.

27. Establish a Committee of African Women Ministers, leaders of civil society and representatives or rural women formations within the AU framework to meet biennially as a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of these resolutions on the economic growth of the continent and the disproportionate burden of poverty on rural women.

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We declare that we remain fully committed to the realisation of the aspirations of rural women as reflected in this Declaration. We will
continue to work together in the coming years to mobilise political and financial resources and to establish enduring procedures globally, regionally and nationally to monitor the implementation of the Declaration. We further call upon the peoples of the rest of the World to support the governments of the developing world in their endeavours to change the world for the betterment of all the peoples of the world, in particular rural women of developing countries.