

**Inter-Ministerial Summit on
“Rural Development : Afro-Asian Perspective”
12th January 2007**

NEW DELHI DECLARATION

We, the Ministers representing the member countries of Afro-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) gathered at the Ministerial Summit on Rural Development at Delhi, hosted jointly by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and AARDO, strongly reiterate our commitment to promote sustainable rural development, which includes, *inter alia*, the attainment of food security and eradication of poverty by strengthening the pro-poor initiatives and people's participation.

We recall our commitment to achieve the internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and agree to carry forward the spirit of cooperation for rural development, to begin with, among AARDO member countries and strive to enlarge our cooperation with others in the years to come.

We recognize the importance of bringing the regions closer by utilizing the advantages derived from the commonalities and diversities. We emphasize both the collective responsibilities and the important role of all stakeholders in exploring innovative and effective ways and means to strengthen cooperation between Asia and Africa. Keeping this in view we will strive to bring more countries within the fold of AARDO.

We appreciate the initiative taken by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India in collaboration with AARDO to organize the Retreat on Rural Development at Hyderabad, which facilitated the drafting of the Declaration and in particular, the contribution of the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, India in shaping the declaration.

We emphasize the importance of multilateral approach to international relations and the need for inter-country, inter and intra-regional cooperation to find solution to our common problems.

We, therefore, adopt the following Declaration :

1. We resolve to eradicate poverty in all its forms through well-designed policies supported by adequate resource allocations, mutual cooperation and collective actions.
2. We pledge to address the issue of rural poverty in a comprehensive, integrated and holistic manner through mobilizing political, economic and social resources for sustained development and by channeling the flow of national resources and international development assistance for this purpose. We shall also endeavour to initiate innovative credit delivery systems, establish market linkages, create and revitalize peoples' institutions including local self governments.
3. We resolve to fight against diseases like HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Avian Influenza and ensure availability of medicines at affordable prices to the poor in rural areas.
4. We reaffirm our commitment to eliminate various disparities in development and to improve the access to land, water and other natural resources related to livelihood of the rural poor especially, women, youth and vulnerable groups. To achieve the above, we pledge to develop suitable policies for management and use of land and water.
5. We recognize the need to simplify legal procedures and implement human rights, right to food, right to work and right to well-being under a citizen-centric governance framework, along with policy advocacy and legal aid for the poor on a priority basis.
6. We take note of the adverse impact of gender inequality on the economic growth of Afro-Asian region and the disproportionate burden of poverty on women.
7. We shall strive to adopt measures to reduce workload on women and drudgery, expand gainful employment opportunities for women and ensure equal pay for work of equal value.
8. We pledge to 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.

9. We resolve to take necessary legal, policy, administrative and other measures for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence and other harmful practices against women.
10. We resolve to improve the representation of women in all structures of power and decision-making including leadership positions in institutions of governance, public and private sector and civil society organizations.
11. We pledge to address gender imbalances in education and training. We shall adopt affirmative measures including scholarships at all levels for female students, promote non-formal education and literacy programmes for rural poor including the girl child and women.
12. We pledge to ensure availability of gender segregated data and training of the data users for its proper analysis and its use for planning, monitoring and evaluation of all development programmes.
13. We recognize the important role played by women in agriculture and the great support provided by them to sustain the family. We, therefore, pledge to take measures that would ensure that rural women are accorded full and equal access to and control over land and other productive resources including credit, technologies, market and other services.
14. We pledge to strengthen people's institutions and community based organizations to promote active participation through sharing of best practices and experiences.
15. We resolve to develop technical assistance and capacity building programmes including exchange of visits for infusing professionalism among agriculture and rural development functionaries.
16. We shall urge Corporate Sector to take up social responsibility initiatives by supporting development programmes in rural areas.
17. We agree that a major share of aid flow should be allocated to develop rural areas focusing on basic minimum needs, sustainable natural resource management and environmental conservation.

18. We reaffirm our commitment for food and nutrition security by increasing agriculture productivity, production and access.
19. We resolve to develop rural infrastructure-physical and institutional; generate employment, focusing on development of micro and small enterprises and rural credit and micro-finance institutions.
20. We agree to initiate action to make an inventory of cost-effective and appropriate technologies within the region and work towards evolving a mechanism for technology transfer by using the services of national, regional and international organizations like Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Africa (CIRDAfrica), Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and Pacific (CIRDAP), Afro Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO), International Centre for Agriculture Research for Dry Areas (ICARDA) and Arabic Centre for Study of Semi-Arid and Desert Areas (ACSAD) and others.
21. We recognize that the current global scenario and the prevailing conditions in Asia and Africa necessitate the need to actively pursue a common view and collective action to ensure the equitable sharing of the benefits of globalisation.
22. In order to ensure larger benefits from external trade, we resolve to:
 - a. promote bilateral and multilateral trade by offering greater market access for rural products;
 - b. develop product specific business alliances for product designs and development with focus on rural producers; and
 - c. evolve an Afro-Asian market intelligence system to monitor the global product developments and price trends.
23. We shall work towards exploring the possibilities of collaborative research on problems and solutions concerned with Afro-Asian region by establishing partnership for technology transfer and narrowing down the digital divide and technology divide.
24. We agree on developing network among rural development institutions, universities, research organizations and centres of excellence in Afro-Asian region.

25. We pledge to:

- a. promote studies on Afro-Asian issues with focus on innovations, incubation of development ideas and extension;
- b. ensure adequate availability of young professional rural extension workers and creation of knowledge centres in each of the member countries; and
- c. support a network and consortium for rural development management, research and consultancy with special focus on new and emerging technologies including biotechnology, information and communication technology and rural industries.

In accord with the approval by acclamation at New Delhi on this 12th Day of January 2007, and in witness of our pledge and commitment, we have individually affixed our signatures to this Declaration.