STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR TEKEDA ALEMU, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP ON AGENDA ITEM ON AGENDA ITEM 19, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - 68TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NOVEMBER 4, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African group on this important agenda item. The Group associates itself with the Statement made by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China.

"The African Group welcomes the efforts made since Rio+20 to follow up on the implementation of the outcome document which in our view represents a major historical turning point in international development cooperation. The creation of the Open Working Group, the High Level Political Forum and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing affords us the opportunity to develop a universally applicable post-2015 development agenda catering to the interest of both the
present and future generations, and based on common but differentiated responsibilities.

We welcome the emerging consensus that the post-2015 development agenda should build on the foundation laid by the MDGs and complete the unfinished business and respond to new challenges. There is no doubt that eradicating poverty, especially in developing countries, particularly in Africa, remains the greatest global challenge. As reaffirmed in the Rio+20 outcome document, poverty eradication is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The Secretary General cannot be more consistent with the Rio+20 consensus when he said in his report contained in document A/68/321 that “Sustainable development and poverty eradication are now firmly recognized as the overarching objectives of development for the post 2015 period.”

The African Group recognizes, in this context, the efforts and progress that is being made in many of our countries and underscores the need for international partners to further support Africa by fulfilling all commitments, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, the UN Declaration on the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, as well as the 2008 Political Declaration on Africa’s development needs.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The African Group takes note of the Secretary-General’s report on mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development
throughout the United Nations system, welcomes the on-going initiatives in this regard, and calls on the UN system to undertake further efforts as agreed in the Outcome of Rio+20.

With respect to the High-Level Political Forum, the starting point for shaping its work should be building on the strengths of the CSD and addressing its shortcomings. It should promote political visibility and effectiveness. It should provide leadership role. It should follow up to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and brings cohesion and complementarity among the various follow-up processes, especially in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The Forum should enhance integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by engaging with the economic, social and environmental policymaking communities more intensively and for developing and implementing integrated policies and activities. Equally critical is its responsibility to ensure that the outcome of the Open Working Group in formulating the Sustainable Development Goals would be related to the outcome of the work of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. This is indeed critical.

On the protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind, the African Group stresses that climate change continues to pose a serious threat to our continent and to other developing countries that do not have the means or capacity to effectively adapt to and mitigate its effects. We therefore reiterate the need for developed countries to fulfill their commitment to mobilize 100 billion dollars per year for the Green Climate Fund by
2020. We also stress the urgency of reaching a legally binding agreement by 2015, and look forward to a successful outcome of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties in Warsaw, Poland later this month.

The African Group emphasizes the importance of technology transfer in the promotion of industrialization and structural transformation of our economies. Technology is key for implementation. It was an integral part of the Rio+20 outcome.

We therefore welcome the outcomes of the General Assembly workshops that discussed options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies, as well as the technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries. It is essential to take forward, in this Session, the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies, by developing a format and modalities of such technology facilitation mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group welcomes the implementation of the decisions taken at Rio+20 to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to enable it better provide the necessary global leadership on environmental matters.
On the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, addressing land degradation, drought and desertification should be a priority when dealing with several global policy challenges. Dry lands and degraded lands hold the key to future food security. Thus, fighting desertification, land degradation and drought provide the adequate answer to many questions and help addressing many global challenges. We cannot adapt to climate change or mitigate its effects without resorting to Sustainable Land Management. In this regard, it is critical to promote the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification through providing necessary resources for the implementation of projects to combat desertification in developing countries. In this regard, the African Group welcomes the decisions of the eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP 11) held in Windhoek, Namibia from September 16-27, 2013. We underscore the need to strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development, and call for prioritization of this issue in the elaboration of the sustainable development goals.

I thank you for your attention.