The following text was delivered in French:

Excellencies,
Mr. President of Burkina Faso,
Mr. Chairperson of the African Union,
Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union,
Ministers, Ambassadors, Representatives of regional and international organizations, social partners,
Dear Friends,

It is a profound honour to be here with you.

Today for all of Africa, Ouagadougou is the capital of hope.

President Compaoré, thank you. This strong signal is due, first of all, to your vision and inspiration.

President Obasanjo, it is also thanks to your dedication, the commitment of your peers, and the conviction and energy of President Konaré, that a new chapter in the history of your continent has opened.

I would also like to thank President Kérékou for organizing a special gathering of several Heads of State and Government, on the occasion of the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission meeting in Cotonou to prepare for this Summit.

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, thanks to all of you, Africa affirms on this solemn day, its unwavering commitment to work out of poverty.
Through this Summit, you are sending a triple message:

- to your people, because you are listening to their demands;
- to international organizations, to respect your priorities;
- to donors, to support your decisions.

I

The following text was delivered in English:

Excellencies,
Friends,

This is a winning message of a self-assured Africa that is resonating around the world.

We are with you.

The network of the International Labour Organization brings together millions of organized workers and employers – the real actors of the production process – and a vital development tool, as the Social Partners Forum has shown.

We are a tripartite voice for social justice and social dialogue – a voice that respects and demands respect for Africa’s priorities.

I believe the best contribution from the multilateral system is a commitment to work together to support your decisions. In Maputo, you honoured the ILO with the trust to assist in preparing this Summit. We responded by conceiving with 15 other organizations an integrated issues paper that is before you. It can be done. We pledge to continue.

II

Our commitment stems from a simple truth: Africa is working.

The women, men, youth and unfortunately, even children of this continent, are working hard everyday.

There is no poverty of effort in Africa. There is poverty of opportunity.

The people of Africa do not want hand-outs, they seek a hand up to move from the creativity to survive to the productivity to develop. “Give me a fair chance at a decent job” – that is what people are demanding.

Your Summit is truly extraordinary because with the African Union as your political compass, NEPAD as the roadmap, and the social partners alongside, you are introducing a new, development logic.

You are making a fundamental point: poverty reduction will not succeed without jobs. And you are focusing on practical action. Agricultural and rural development: the foundation of a successful Africa. Labour-intensive infrastructure. Upgrading the informal economy. Capacity-building across the board, and many other key issues.
This is not a consensus defined by others. It is an African consensus. I would call it the Ouagadougou consensus.

I salute your leadership, courage and vision.

You are making employment and enterprise creation a central development objective on which all major policies should converge particularly sound macro-economic and social policies and an enabling environment for investment.

Work, after all, is more than a source of income. Work is a source of individual dignity, family stability, peace in the community, a democracy that delivers. Work is rights for labour. Work is social protection for families and communities. Work is social dialogue for lasting solutions. Decent work.

And that is the missing link. It is what African Finance Ministers declared in a pre-Summit statement when they “welcomed recent progress in the African economies, but deplored the fact that the creation of decent work had not followed the same path.”

III

Implementing your decisions requires international commitment to back your efforts.

There is an African proverb: “Fine words do not produce food.” Africa doesn’t need more lip service. Africa needs a listening service – partners who truly respect national ownership of development policies.

You are taking action on many issues of national governance including peer reviews and different forms of accountability. But good national governance will not succeed unless we have good global governance. We don’t have it today.

Africa has a right to expect an international community that recognizes your diverse national realities. There are no simple one-size-fits-all solutions. Understanding the specificities of each society is crucial.

Africa has a right to expect support for home-grown initiatives. Preventing child labour. Fighting HIV/AIDS and caring for those living with it. Focusing on young people, the future of Africa. And recognizing the vital role of African women. We must ensure gender equality – because when you empower women, you empower Africa.

Africa has a right to expect global fairness. I commend your decision to take up the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. I thank President Mkapa who so brilliantly guided the Commission he co-chaired with President Halonen of Finland.

We support Africa’s call for fairness. Fairness for the African cotton farmer and all farmers. Fairness in access to markets. Fairness for African enterprises to compete on a level playing field. Fairness for the definitive solution of the crushing debt issue – not to mention overseas development assistance.

On all issues that link Africa to the global economy, there needs to be special and differential treatment. But today it is the other way around. Too many African farmers struggle for survival –
while others are handed over a billion dollars a day in agricultural subsidies. It is clear who is getting the special treatment.

Africa has a right to expect an international community that respects your priorities. With this Summit, you have mobilized an amazing convergence of actors, institutions and political will. Now we need a convergence of national and international policies.

First, that means putting employment and decent work as a measurement in the success of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategies, and development cooperation, particularly as we review the Millennium Declaration next year.

But it also means international policy coherence on global growth, investment and employment. We all know that inequality is worsened when growth, which creates wealth, is not accompanied by decent jobs, which distribute wealth, fostering consumption, and driving investments. When that sound market cycle is broken in too many parts of the global economy, we are in trouble, as we are today. We are facing a global unemployment crisis.

A billion people unemployed, underemployed or working poor worldwide – plus all the unaccounted workers in the informal economy. This is probably the biggest security risk the world faces today. This problem will not be solved purely by national action – and clearly not by piecemeal, fragmented, parallel, and sometimes, conflicting advice or conditionalities that you receive today from international organizations.

We need a global approach. No institution has all the answers, but we all have mandates that oblige us to find solutions. By joining forces, we can forge a better path to a fair globalization.

IV

Excellencies,
Friends,

Your Summit is about unleashing the extraordinary potential of the African people.

You are sounding a wake-up call to the world. The present course of globalization and unemployment is not sustainable. Repeating the same policies and expecting different results is senseless.

The time for change has come.

I see here the strength, the hope, and energy to overcome. It is in the message of the social partners, in the statement of your finance ministers, in your determination to assure a successful follow-up. It is in the people of this mighty continent, it is in your winning attitude.

You are a new African movement in the making.

And the ILO pledges to stand with you, on your side, all the way, until the struggle is won.