Mr. Chairman,

Before starting a review and evaluation of UNPAAERD proper, we will assess the stage in which UNPAAERD performed its functions. We will look at developments within Africa, and at the external environment in which Africa has been operating which can partially be influenced by us, the European Community and its Member States.

INTERNAL SITUATION OF AFRICA

In this evaluation of the developments in the internal situation of Africa, Mr. Chairman, we see a world of difference between on the one hand what is visible, tangible, measurable, and on the other the less tangible world of concepts, attitudes, policies, beliefs, and aspirations. The latter represents an undercurrent, a groundswell of change in Africa which forms the hope for the future.

Mr. Chairman, at first glance, looking at the visible world of figures and statistics and the grim reality of the poor behind these statistics there seems to be very little reason for optimism. In some respects it seems that the nightmare scenario is unfolding, although some countries, some regions within Africa managed to achieve positive results. The number of people living below the poverty line, the absolute poor, is still increasing in Africa. The number of people being displaced is still rising. The number of people suffering malnutrition or hunger is still growing. Population growth outstrips the increase in food production, Africa’s food dependency increases. AIDS is becoming an epidemic in parts of Africa, with dire direct humanitarian consequences and a negative influence on the development potential. All these negative tendencies are reinforced by large-scale civil strife.

This is happening even while Africa is depleting its natural resources. If this development is not checked incomes will be falling, food shortages will be increasing because natural resources are depleted. All this happens also while the external debt increases and the debt-servicing burden augments.

Reductions in population growth are registered but they are too small to represent a significantly better outlook.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, these negative figures and statistics should not lead us to the conclusion that the only news about Africa is bad news. On the contrary, it has been pointed out by many well documented studies over the past years that this nightmare scenario is certainly not inevitable and that a concerted effort can yield recovery and sustainable growth and development in Africa as well as elsewhere. And we note that over the past years a consensus emerged over what should be done, as a first vital step in the right direction, as the foundation for future success.
There is also a new awareness of the fact that Africa is primarily responsible for its own fate. This new awareness is reflected in increased demands on governments from African citizens to channel scarce resources to priority areas (reflecting human needs in terms of consumption and investment) to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure.

Part of this process is the growing indignity over the waste of scarce resources on military expenditure, civil strife and civil war, not to mention the waste of life and the unnecessary self-inflicted human suffering. Suffice it to mention in this respect the Horn of Africa, the Sudan and Liberia. Fortunately, on the other hand, there is a glimmer of hope, as in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chairman, we believe there is a broad consensus on the development strategy for Africa for the nineties as it also emerged, for instance, in the Africa Conference in Maastricht in July last year: that it should be put into a long term perspective, that it should be human centred, that sound macro-economic policies remain necessary, that it should take environmental considerations fully into account, that it should be growth based, that regional cooperation and integration should be promoted, and that sufficient attention should be paid to the demographic problems confronting Africa. Within this agreed framework, priorities for action for Africa and for the international community are clear.

Africans have decided that Africa needs to transform itself into a more pluralistic, open, democratic, participatory society; that regional peace and stability should be fostered; that regional integration and cooperation should be striven for. In all these fields Africa is taking the initiative. We mentioned the African Charter on Popular Participation; we mention the Kampala CSSDCA; we mentioned the OAU Summit; we acclaim the treaty on the African Economic Community of Abuja, signed last June. All this should make a major contribution to releasing and redirecting African resources for development and enhancing their productivity.