

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)

31 January 2008

Address to the Summit of the African Union

It is a great honour to join you today.

Let me first thank our hosts, the Government and people of Ethiopia, for their generous hospitality. As you celebrate the new Ethiopian Millennium this year, I wish you all a peaceful and prosperous future.

Let me also say a special word of gratitude to the Chairperson of the Union, His Excellency President [John] Kufuor, and the Chairperson of the Commission, His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konaré, for their dynamic efforts and outstanding leadership of the Union during such a challenging period. Thank you again, Chairman Konaré, for your inspiring speech. At the same time, I feel greatly disadvantaged to speak after such an eloquent and passionate speaker. I also appreciate the participation of H.E. Yoshiro Mori, Former Prime Minister of Japan, as the High Representative of Japan's Prime Minister. I hope the forthcoming TICAD meeting will be a great success.

One year ago, I informed this Assembly that tackling Africa's key challenges would be a top priority for me as United Nations Secretary-General.

Today, one month into my second year as Secretary-General, I have come here to reiterate my commitment to Africa's progress.

For the United Nations to be most effective -- and most useful to you -- we all need to work together more strategically. That is why I place so much value on the growing partnership between the AU and the UN. That is why I consider this meeting to be so crucial.

Sadly, I have to start the substance of my address to you with a reminder of the alarming developments in Kenya. More than 800 people have already lost their lives in the increasingly ethnic clashes triggered by the aftermath of the recent elections. Violence continues, threatening to escalate to catastrophic levels. Kenyan leaders, President Mwai Kibaki and ODM leader Raila Odinga, in particular, have the responsibility to do everything possible to resolve the sources of the crisis peacefully.

The Panel of Eminent Persons led by my predecessor, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, is tirelessly working to help Kenyan parties resolve the issues that divide them and unleashed the ongoing violence and bloodshed. I fully support Kofi Annan's efforts; he deserves the support of us all. I call on your Excellencies, African leaders, to urge and encourage the leaders and people of Kenya to calm the violence and resolve their differences through dialogue and respect for the democratic process.

In the meantime, increased emergency assistance needs to be provided to alleviate the suffering of Kenyans affected by the violence.

Close partnerships are crucial for addressing the continent's peace and security challenges. The United Nations and the African Union have a long-standing and fruitful collaboration in this field.

One month ago, our collaboration entered a historic new phase with the transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan to the AU-UN Hybrid Mission in Darfur, or UNAMID. This is an unprecedented joint operation. It reflects our shared determination to end the tragedy in Darfur once and for all.

We are determined to build on the foundation that AMIS laid down in Darfur. I pay special tribute to the AU, and to the brave men and women of AMIS, who stepped in when no one else would. Some of them lost their lives.

The challenges ahead in Darfur are enormous, and the continuing insecurity poses high risks to our peacekeeping efforts. Full cooperation of the Government of Sudan is critical. Likewise, timely provision of key assets such as helicopters and heavy transport equipments is essential.

I urge troop- and police-contributing countries assembled here today to speed up the required preparations, and arrive in the theatre of operations, as soon as possible. The people of Darfur depend on you.

Ultimately, the deployment of UNAMID will only be as effective as the political process it is mandated to support. Here too, the African Union and the United Nations are working closely together to bring a negotiated settlement to the Darfur crisis, and to support the long-term economic development of the region.

While international attention focuses on Darfur, it is vital that we fully support the broader peace process in Sudan. The United Nations, together with the African Union and other partners, is working hard to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

We look forward to continued collaboration as we strive to help resolve other conflicts on the continent, such as in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in northern Uganda and in Somalia. These efforts rely on the political will of the Member States. For example, the continuing role of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea in helping maintain stability in the border area between Ethiopia and Eritrea is critically dependent on the cooperation and goodwill of the two countries concerned -- as indeed is the final resolution of the dispute between them.

For the longer term, the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union has become an important umbrella for AU-UN cooperation across a wide range of sectors. Under the capacity-building framework, we are already developing coordinated support for an evolving African peace and security architecture. We are also stepping up efforts in mediation and conflict prevention.

The United Nations is also striving to ensure more effective support to countries in their transition from war to lasting peace, including in Burundi, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau -- the first three countries on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

Let me now turn to the main focus of discussion at this Summit, the industrial development of Africa. Sustainable industrialization can and must play a role in promoting socio-economic advancement in Africa. There are ample reasons for optimism about the prospects for further growth and poverty reduction in Africa. Over the past five years, sub-Saharan countries have demonstrated impressive macroeconomic results.

Today, much know-how is readily available to rapidly increase productivity across many critical sectors, ranging from agriculture to energy. Now is the time to encourage entrepreneurship and partnerships. Now is the time to invest in a better future where people are empowered and rewarded for innovative solutions. Now is the time for donor countries to honour their commitments for increased aid and debt cancellation.

But business growth must also be rooted in practices that respect fundamental human rights, that ensure safe and decent workplace conditions, that protect the environment and advance good corporate governance. These are the universal principles promoted by the United Nations Global Compact, and enshrined in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). They ensure that the business community plays its proper role in the continent's development agenda, including in our work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As we pass through the midpoint in our great campaign to end world poverty, set forth in the MDGs, we know that sub-Saharan Africa requires a special effort. The Goals can still be reached in Africa -- but only if we act now.

That is why I committed to dedicate this year to the "bottom billion". They are the ones forgotten by much of the rest of the world, the nearly one billion people left behind by global growth. But they are not forgotten by you, because hundreds of millions of them live in Africa, eking out lives of hardship on less than one dollar a day.

It is unacceptable that nearly 10 million children die of extreme poverty every year. It is unacceptable that for billions of people, an ordinary glass of clean drinking water is a luxury. It is unacceptable that more than one million people die from malaria every year, mostly in Africa.

I convened the MDG Africa Steering Group last September, to mobilize the United Nations system and its multilateral and regional partners, to scale up the implementation of the MDGs in Africa.

Through the Steering Group, we will strengthen international support to African Governments in health, education, agricultural, infrastructure and statistical systems. We will strive to ensure that aid long-promised but undelivered is fulfilled and is predictable, so African Governments can plan for greater investments in achieving the MDGs. And we will bolster the support for multilateral institutions for the preparation and implementation of national development strategies. This initiative will need the strong support and ownership of African States.

Together with the President of the General Assembly, I will convene a high-level meeting on the MDGs in September to find ways to reinforce the partnership between developed and developing countries. Last year, we used a similar forum to galvanize world action on climate change. This year, we will do the same for the bottom billion. We need your full support. I also look forward to working with you to make the High-Level Meeting on NEPAD in September a great success.

And as we strive to build peace and promote development around the world, we must devote equal energy to the third area of our work: promoting human rights.

For the poorest of the world's poor, economic and social advancement should be considered an innate human right. And to fight poverty in Africa, we must confront discriminatory practices and gender inequalities that perpetuate poverty. This year, I launched a global awareness campaign for the sixtieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us continue to join our efforts and pool ideas to make the Universal Declaration a reality, and to ensure dignity and justice for all.

On my way to this Summit meeting, I visited Rwanda, where the international community learned a painful lesson. We should not repeat such atrocities. I am fully committed to keep the momentum that you the leaders have made at the 2005 World Summit and will spare no effort to operationalize the responsibility to protect.

All our best efforts in peace, development and human rights will be undermined if we do not effectively address the threats posed by climate change.

Whether it is desertification, scarcity of water resources, or decreased agricultural productivity, Africa is particularly vulnerable. I am determined to ensure that the United Nations system as a whole delivers effectively on its mandates in the area of climate change, particularly in Africa.

Already, the impact of global warming is creating new humanitarian emergencies in many parts of the continent. We must all work together with a shared sense of urgency to tackle this pre-eminent challenge.

African nations are also becoming significant donors to the World Food Programme and the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund. The percentage of contributions to WFP from African Union members has more than doubled in the past two years. This trend, like Africa's generosity towards

refugees and your major contributions to UN peacekeeping operations around the world, reflects the increasing commitment of Africa to help serve humanity, in a spirit of global solidarity.

2008 will be a crucial year for enhancing UN-AU cooperation towards achieving our shared goals -- from peace and security to regional integration, and from human rights to development. I and the entire United Nations system are determined to work more closely with you for the mutual benefit of our two organizations and the Member States -- and above all, for the people of Africa.

In that spirit, I wish you a productive and successful Summit.