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Briefing to the African Group

by

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman of the African Group,

Distinguished Members of African Delegations:

I am delighted to have this opportunity to provide the African Group with another briefing - - the second of this year - - on my activities as Special Adviser on Africa to the UN Secretary-General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity extended to me to provide this briefing.

Since my last briefing to you, on 13 February, a number of important events within the purview, or germane to the mandate, of my Office have taken place. These include:

? a “Special Meeting of the NEPAD Steering Committee”, which was held in Algiers, Algeria, on 20 March;

? a “NEPAD Brainstorming Summit” of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC), which was held in the same city on 21 March;

? a “Meeting of the Asia-Africa Business Forum”, which was held in Dar-es-Salaam from 12 to 14 February; and

? a “TICAD Ministerial Conference on Energy and the Environment for Sustainable Development in Africa”, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22 to 23 March.

I also represented the Secretary-General during the Golden Jubilee of Ghana’s Independence in Accra, Ghana, on 6 March, on which occasion I delivered to President John A Kufuor the Secretary-General’s message of felicitations.

And, as part of its responsibility to keep stakeholders informed, my Office organized a briefing for the “Friends of OSAA” on 15 March, which was attended by representatives of some 15 Permanent Missions.

Mr. Chairman:

As I informed the African Group during my last briefing, the 29 January Summit of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee did not resolve the question of the integration of NEPAD into the structures and processes of the African Union.

You will recall that, instead, members of the special committee that had been set up to finalize the proposal on integration of NEPAD into the AU structures and processes requested an extension of time. The NEPAD Steering Committee agreed to a proposal for a brainstorming session to be held in Algiers, Algeria, before the end of March 2007, for the purpose of elaborating a roadmap for the integration process.

On 20 March, in Algiers, the NEPAD Steering Committee held a special meeting, at which my Office was represented, to discuss a joint proposal prepared by the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat on the integration of NEPAD into the AU structures and processes.

The “Special Meeting of the Steering Committee” was followed by the “NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee Meeting and Brainstorming on NEPAD” on 21 March. The outcome of the brainstorming session was as follows:

? The Ad-Hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government endorsed the joint proposal submitted to it by the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat to fully integrate NEPAD into the AU and approved the implementation modalities and time frame for adjusting the management structure.

? It authorized the creation of a NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Authority to support the implementation of NEPAD through countries,

regional economic communities (RECs), development institutions and bilateral and multilateral organizations.

? It agreed that a Coordinating Unit consisting of AU Commission and NEPAD Secretariat staff members should elaborate a detailed roadmap on the integration of NEPAD, with clear steps, milestones and indicators. (The roadmap is to be drawn up by the Coordinating Unit as part of the preparations for the next meeting of the NEPAD Steering Committee to be held in July 2007 on the margins of the AU Summit.)

? It concluded that a transitional period of one year was needed for a smooth streamlining of NEPAD activities and processes with those of the African Union Commission.

? It requested that the AU Commission and the Government of South Africa take the necessary steps to facilitate the conclusion of a host agreement for the NEPAD Secretariat in the transition period and, later, a Headquarters agreement for the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Authority when the latter is established.

? It concluded that the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) should remain in its current setting in South Africa.

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The second set of meetings that I want to report to you about were held in the context of the TICAD process. The first is the meeting of the

Asia-Africa Business Forum, which was held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, from 12 to 14 February, and the second the TICAD Ministerial Conference on Energy and the Environment for Sustainable Development in Africa, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22 to 23 March.

(Parenthetically: You will recall that the process known as the Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development - - or TICAD process - - was established 15 years ago [in 1993] by the Japanese Government as a mechanism for increased Japanese engagement with Africa. Three TICAD summits have taken place so far, with a fourth scheduled to take place in Japan in May 2008.)

My Office was a co-organizer of the Ministerial Conference, along with the Japanese Government, the Government of Kenya, UNDP, and UNEP, and I participated in this meeting in a dual capacity as Special Adviser on Africa and representative of the Secretary-General.

The purpose of the conference was two-fold: to bring together the experiences and lessons learned in Africa and other regions, especially Asia, and to formulate policy recommendations for effective approaches to addressing key energy and environment issues in the context of sustainable development in Africa.

The meeting was well attended, with representatives from a large number of African countries, as well as regional institutions and the World Bank.

The Secretary-General sent a video message, which I introduced to the participants, highlighting the importance of the energy and environment issues, especially in achieving the MDGs in Africa.

The formidable challenges confronting Africa with regard to both energy and the environment were extensively debated but a great deal of emphasis was also placed on the many exciting innovations and creative solutions that were being implemented in various parts of the continent.

I will cite a couple of examples of such innovations and creative solutions.

? The attention of the ministerial conference was drawn to the NEPAD Short-Term Action Plan for Infrastructure (STAP), the blueprint for a major effort in building and rehabilitating Africa's infrastructure, which includes a substantial energy component.

? The conference focused on ways and means of raising the necessary resources to support the implementation of the NEPAD master plan for the energy sector in Africa, which had already been discussed by African Ministers of Energy.

? The conference also discussed UNEP's initiatives in support of NEPAD's Action Plan on the Environment Initiative (APEI), which had been prepared by African countries under NEPAD's auspices, as well as the funding needs for its implementation.

? The World Bank described its extensive commitments in Africa in support of capacity building for the energy infrastructure.

? The conference also helped focus attention on African regional and sub-regional initiatives to foster co-operation in the areas of energy and the environment across national boundaries.

A number of conclusions and recommendations of the conference are noteworthy. These include:

- Energy and environmental issues and the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are interrelated. Mainstreaming these issues in “Poverty Reduction Strategies” is a necessary condition for sustainable development, and, in particular, for the attainment of MDGs.
- Multifaceted and integrated approaches to solving problems relating to energy and the environment are necessary. The Conference took note of the outcomes of the most recent discussions in international fora, including the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), Forum of Energy Ministers in Africa (FEMA), and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD).
- The conference emphasized the importance of three key perspectives, namely, “Building Ownership”, “Promoting Regional Cooperation,” and “Deepening Partnership”, noting that these are closely interlinked and thus require a comprehensive and coordinated approach, taking into account the concept of “human security”.

- Expanding access and providing decentralized options as well as stimulating public-private partnerships were some of the strategic objectives identified for addressing the issues of energy access, renewable energy, and energy-saving technologies.
- The conference acknowledged the importance of sharing lessons learned from the past and ongoing experiences in African countries and other regions, and called for flexible strategies and long-term perspectives.
- TICAD co-organizers were requested to ensure that the outcome of this conference is fully reflected in the preparatory process of the upcoming TICAD IV, which will be held prior to the G8 Summit in Japan in 2008, as well as the upcoming relevant conferences, including the G8 Development Ministers' Meeting and the Forum of Energy Ministers of Africa.

In my private discussion with the Japanese co-organizers of this meeting, I pointed out to them the need to recognize that the international environment has undergone significant change in recent years. In the present environment, other major international players were intensifying their relationship with Africa, I emphasized. The entire TICAD process might therefore need to be revised, I suggested to them.

Mr. Chairman,

As I have always stated in closing, these briefings are provided in keeping with my determination to keep the African Group informed on a regular basis about the activities of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, with a view to ensuring that the Office continues to enjoy your full support.

My appeal for the African Group's support to the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is particularly fervent, as this is my last formal interaction with the full membership of the Group.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all of you, individually and collectively, for the support you have given me during my tenure as Special Adviser on Africa.

I thank you.