



**Remarks**

**by**

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General,  
Special Adviser on Africa and  
High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,  
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island  
Developing States**

**at the**

**Launch of Joint OECD – ADB Annual  
African Economic Outlook**

**23 May 2008**

**UNHQ, New York**

Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang,  
Mr. Peter Ondiege, Principal Research Economist, African Development Bank,  
Mr. Charles Oman, Head of Strategy, OECD Development Centre,  
Ms. Lucia Wegner, Senior Researcher, OECD Development Centre,  
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is happy to once again partner with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the African Development Bank (ADB) in launching this important report.

This launch is happening at a very important time for Africa, on the eve of TICAD IV, just a few weeks after the India-Africa summit; against the background of the China-Africa and the EU-Africa summits held in the last two years respectively.

Meanwhile, here in New York at the United Nations, we had a Security Council summit chaired by President Mbeki on regional cooperation between the UN and regional organizations with special reference to the African Union. Furthermore, the General Assembly is preparing for two high-level meetings; the first on Africa's Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward, to be held on 22 September 2008, and the second on the Millennium Development Goals to be held on 25 September 2008.

With all this as a background, it's very appropriate that the launching of this year's African Economic Outlook report is taking place at this time as it will further enrich the global discourse on Africa. We welcome OECD's work on Official Development Assistance, on better coordination between donors and recipients and on mutual accountability.

We also applaud the bold initiatives by the African Development Bank, and the critical role it is playing in carrying forward Africa's development agenda. On 23 April 2008, the AfDB and the San Pedro port authority (PASP) signed an agreement in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire for a grant of US \$1.8 million to finance preparatory studies of the PASP development project and the road interconnection linking Mali, Guinea, and Liberia. Moreover, on 5 May 2008, the AfDB and the Advans Bank Congo signed an agreement in Tunis, Tunisia for an equity investment of US\$ 1.1 million to enable Advans Congo to support small businesses in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These are just a few examples of ongoing work by the AfDB in Africa.

Now, a word or two on the report itself.

First, I welcome the fact that the theme of this year's African Economic Outlook focuses on Technical Skills Development. It also presents comprehensive analysis of the economic, social and political developments on the continent.

Second, it is refreshing and illuminating to note that for four years Africa has experienced record economic growth with the continent registering 5.7 per cent GDP growth and a per capita increase of 3.7 per cent in 2007. By all indications, the report notes that growth will only accelerate in 2008 and remain buoyant in 2009. However, growth will accelerate for net oil exporters and weaken slightly for oil importers while inflation will rise due to increases in the price of food imports and rising oil prices.

Third, the report states that reducing under-five mortality rates in Africa by two-thirds is urgent. This can be achieved if there is political will to do so. HIV/AIDS, malaria, lack of basic health services and continuing violent conflicts are the main reasons for the shortfall.

Fourth, the report stresses the need to invest in Africa's youth as African countries face high youth unemployment and skills shortages. The 2008 African Economic Outlook's review of 35 countries shows that technical and vocational skills development systems in Africa suffer from a shortage of qualified staff, obsolete equipment, ill-adapted programmes and weak links with the job market.

Fifth, the report has succinctly articulated the progress made by African countries to attract foreign investment. Private equity is not a new phenomenon in Africa but it has drawn increasing attention as an innovative vehicle for private-sector development on the continent. There has also been some progress towards democracy, despite some setbacks.

In all, the report shows that there is progress in Africa's development efforts, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Africa still needs continued and sustained support from the international community in order for it to meet the Millennium Development Goals as agreed upon by the international community, at large, during the Millennium Summit in 2000. Sustained efforts should also be made, in particular, to stem the current food crises that is disproportionately affecting the African continent.

With these few points, I am looking forward to the various presentations and discussions during this launch. OSAA, under my leadership, will work closely and effectively with the OECD Secretariat and particularly, with the African Development Bank in support of Africa's development.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming my personal commitment, and that of OSAA, to continue close collaboration with DESA under the effective leadership of my colleague, Mr. Zukang, in support of the African agenda.

I thank you for your attention.

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