

Address by Mr. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila
Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa
to the TICAD Ministerial Conference on Energy and Environment
for Sustainable Development

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I would like to begin by underlining the Secretary-General's message, namely, that the United Nations has been a proud partner throughout the TICAD process from its very beginning, and to assure you that the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa will continue to cooperate with the relevant departments and agencies of the Government of Japan, as well as all the other stakeholders, in support of Africa's development - through the TICAD process.

In this regard, I recall with appreciation the TICAD Ministerial Conference on the Consolidation of Peace in Africa, held in Addis Ababa in February 2006, where, for the first time, the TICAD process took up the critical issues of peace and stability in Africa, and their link to development. The Addis Ababa meeting provided an opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion with a large number of high-level African stakeholders in such peace processes as those in Liberia, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a follow-up, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, which I have the privilege to head, is preparing a policy dialogue on human security in Africa, to take place in the second half of 2007.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his message to this conference, highlighted the extent to which the lack of access to modern forms of energy is a major obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in Africa.

It is therefore timely and appropriate that this distinguished assembly of senior political figures and policy advisers from many African countries, from the United Nations, from development institutions active in Africa, and from a number of the continent's development partners, has gathered here to discuss energy and the environment in the African context.

It is my hope and expectation that this meeting will highlight the specifically African dimensions of the world's energy and environmental challenges, as well as discuss how best Africa's own efforts can be effectively supported. Hitherto, much of the international debate on energy and environmental problems has tended to focus on the preoccupations of the world's largest economies, and much less on the needs of the weakest and poorest. This meeting is therefore an important contribution towards giving the energy and environmental concerns of Africa the attention they deserve.

But in discussing these issues in reference to Africa, we must fully address the domestic energy needs of the individual African consumer, family or household, as well as the needs of the African manufacturer or industrialist. We must also take account of the link in Africa between energy consumption and environmental degradation, largely as a result of the lack of cheap, readily accessible energy alternatives for domestic use.

At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the good work of all our institutional colleagues within the UN system, including DESA, ECA, UNDP, UNEP, as well as the African Development Bank and the World Bank, in helping Africa in these two vital areas. A special word of appreciation goes to the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat, both of which have done a great deal to enable Africa formulate appropriate regional strategies (in the context of NEPAD), both in the field of energy and with regard to the environment. Efforts are now under way, in several African regions, to mobilise the resources necessary to actually implement some of the strategies, programmes and projects. In West Africa, several countries are working together to utilize natural gas from Nigeria, while in the SADC region, initiatives are being implemented to integrate various national electricity systems.

In the environmental field, African countries have drawn up a NEPAD Environmental Action Plan, and have launched a number of significant initiatives at the regional level, such as the joint efforts of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe in the management of game parks located along their common borders.

With such initiatives by African countries themselves, the international community should summon the necessary political will to help Africa in the implementation of the programmes and projects it has drawn up for itself.

I am hopeful that this meeting will make an important contribution in that process of mobilising the necessary political will in the international community.

Thank you.