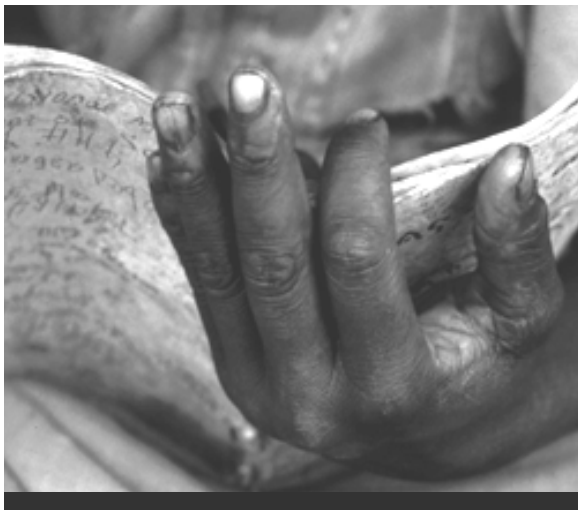




# Enhancing Support for a Continent's Development

To provide renewed impetus to African development over the next decade, the United Nations is launching the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. This multi-billion dollar programme of concrete actions will devote the bulk of its resources to expanding basic education and health care in the continent. It also aims to promote peace and better governance and, among other things, increase water and food security. Led by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Special Initiative — unique in UN history as its largest coordinated action — demonstrates the commitment of the UN system to dramatically reinforce and energize its support for Africa's development priorities and efforts.



Despite its abundant promise and potential, Africa has been beset over the past three decades by social and economic crises which have made it the world's foremost development challenge. Nevertheless, prospects for African development are now much improved, warranting a higher level of priority for Africa on the global agenda and renewed support from the international community. This timely reaffirmation of solidarity is particularly needed to consolidate the progress being made in several African countries, as well as to help find appropriate ways of assisting those countries that are riven by conflict and face added obstacles of incomparable severity on the path to social and economic advancement.

As the UN's most significant mobilization of international support for development in one world region, the Special Initiative contains practical actions, springing from priorities identified by Africa's leadership, which will make a major difference to the continent's future. The Initiative also aims to help rationalize development assistance to Africa and maximize its impact. Indeed, an effective partnership with donor countries and institutions is critical to the success of the Special Initiative. To this end, the UN system will mount a one-year campaign to secure the level of political mobilization required both within Africa and in the international community to surmount the obstacles to the continent's development.



## Components of the Special Initiative

The Special Initiative comprises 14 specific components for action, based on four cross-cutting themes derived from development priorities defined by Africans themselves. These components were chosen because of their clear potential for making a rapid, significant and durable impact. Each component has its own implementation schedule and financing context, as well as a relevant lead UN agency or agencies responsible for oversight and mobilization of funding.

While implementation will be led at the country level by African governments, the heads of UN agencies will also hold themselves mutually accountable for progress towards achieving the Initiative's goals. In addition to their roles in implementing the 14 components and maintaining their current programmes in Africa, individual UN agencies may also carry out related programmes which reinforce the Initiative and which are listed in an appendix to the Initiative document.

### Theme 1:

#### **Give Development a Chance**

The first theme consists of actions which are required to create a conducive climate for development. It recognizes that in countries torn by warfare, it is meaningless to talk of economic development without first addressing conflict resolution, national reconciliation and peace-building. To support the peace process in Africa, the Special Initiative will focus on three priorities:

- *strengthening the Organization of African Unity's capacity to engage in conflict prevention, management and resolution;*
- *strengthening selected organs of civil society engaged in peace-building and the promotion of human rights and democracy; and*
- *promoting the use of the mass media, particularly radio broadcasting, to support peace-building, both through the reinforcement of a culture of tolerance and through the education and empowerment of people to enable them to express their views and participate in the political process.*

While tangible backing from the international community remains vital for Africa's development efforts, budgets for external development assistance are under growing pressure in donor countries. In recognition of this situation, the Special Initiative seeks to encourage the release of more resources for development through a combination of action and advocacy that will involve African countries, donor countries and institutions, and the UN system itself.

The Special Initiative on Africa will assist in the mobilization of the continent's internal resources by helping to improve revenue collection as well as stimulating domestic savings and investment. The financial intermediation system will also be strengthened for better resource allocation. The Initiative will help to harness information technology for development

to improve internal links between African countries, its subregions and the rest of the world.

The Initiative also strives to galvanize external support for Africa's economic transition in the critical areas of debt relief, trade access and South-South cooperation. With the Secretary-General expected to utilize his moral authority to

## A "Test Case" for Cooperation

The UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa arose as a follow-up to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's discussions on the continent's development challenges in late 1994 with the heads of all UN organizations gathered in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

As "a test case for international cooperation and development and for the United Nations," the Secretary-General said, Africa has been singled out for special attention by the UN General Assembly and major UN conferences, most recently the July 1995 ECOSOC High-level meeting. Policy initiatives — the 1986-90 UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD), its successor, the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), and the System-wide Plan of Action for African Recovery and Development — have also been launched to provide a framework for accelerating Africa's development.

But in recognition of the need for more concrete actions to fulfill the agreements reached at these and other forums, the ACC set up a Steering Committee on the Initiative, co-chaired by Mr. James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Organized in five working groups — on water, food security, governance, social and human development and resource mobilization — the Steering Committee was responsible for shaping the Initiative's components.

Its membership was drawn from across the UN system: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

By participating in the Special Initiative, the organizations of the UN family have collectively declared that not only is the development of the African continent their highest priority, but that Africa's prospects are positive and deserve additional support.

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accelerate concrete actions in these areas of activity, the Special Initiative will:

- *encourage multilateral and bilateral creditors to reduce Africa's external debt burden and make it more sustainable; encourage African countries to manage their debt more effectively; and encourage the UN system, with the Secretary-General's leadership, to have a more integrated and active strategy on African debt;*
- *help lessen Africa's aid dependency by expanding trade access, diversifying export opportunities, boosting the inflows of foreign direct investment, and increasing the continent's capacity to compete in the international economy;*
- *enhance South-South cooperation and partnerships in trade, finance, production and services, particularly through stronger private sector linkages.*

## Theme 2:

### **New Hope for the Upcoming Generation**

A major thrust of the Special Initiative, and its largest resource commitment, is to greatly increase the provision of basic education and health care in order to ensure that African children have vastly improved opportunities for productive and rewarding lives.

Accomplishment of these goals will also help empower women, an effort which will have a clear impact on development through more manageable population growth rates and enhanced human welfare.

The Special Initiative, therefore, will conduct a 10-year campaign to ensure basic education for all African children. There will also be a special emphasis on educating girls and women as part of the effort to make Africa's education system equitable, accessible, relevant and of high quality. The World Bank will lead the financial mobilization for this component which, at between \$12.5 bn and \$15.5 bn, is the Initiative's largest. But progress in this component will require a significant reallocation of resources as well as a long-term commitment by African and donor governments to the principle of education for all in a continent where up to half of all adults are illiterate and lack the basic skills needed for more rapid development.

As part of a decade-long strategy to reform the health sector, the Special Initiative will put particular emphasis on boosting the capacity of Africa's health systems to reduce, on a sustainable basis, the most common causes of morbidity

and mortality. This means increasing the coverage, quality and access to primary health care services and specially targeting the most common preventable and/or treatable diseases. These include malaria, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and major childhood illnesses.

The Special Initiative also addresses poverty reduction by promoting employment and sustainable livelihoods. The major thrust in this area involves efforts to upgrade the informal sector, which employs about 60 per cent of Africa's labour force, the majority being women. The Initiative will support increased access to technology, skills development, entrepreneurial training and micro-credit. It will also promote a participatory approach to developing sustainable livelihoods in environmentally marginal areas, especially rural communities in arid and semi-arid agro-ecological zones, building on local knowledge and community-based action.

## Theme 3:

### **Strengthening the Capacity for Governance**

It is widely recognized in Africa that better governance will enable Africans to fulfill their political, economic and social aspirations, and the continent's leaders are taking steps in this direction. With additional support needed to accelerate this process, the Special Initiative aims to help expand capacities for transparent, responsible and effective governance by strengthening Africa's civil service to better manage development. It will also help build independent judicial systems, support the functioning of parliaments and electoral processes, make public administration

more accountable, and increase the flow of public information on development policies and programmes.

A second component is strengthening civil society. The dramatic growth of pluralistic forces in Africa has been one of the most promising developments of recent years. The Initiative will help reinforce the role of civil society and its capacity to participate in development. It will also help selected civil society organizations engage in peace-building, conflict resolution and national reconciliation, with a special focus on women's organizations. Three sub-regional centres are envisaged to promote conflict prevention and resolution, linking public and private organizations within Africa to the UN and to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) addressing issues of human rights and social justice.



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### Theme 4:

#### **Urgency on Survival Issues**

The interrelated issues of food production, population growth and protection of Africa's fragile environment from further damage present a formidable challenge. Food and water security are also key elements to be tackled. Africa has been a net food importer since the early 1960s. Hunger and poor nutrition are widespread, especially among women and children, and food insecurity is most severe in the rural areas where 90 per cent of Africa's poor live. The Special Initiative will address food security and drought management by promoting:

- *control of land degradation and desertification;*
- *soil quality improvement through plant nutrition management and fertilizer use;*
- *food security, with a special emphasis on women. This will involve advocating for the reform of laws that contribute to the subordination of women, and enactment of new laws and changes in practices regarding land ownership and access to credit and extension services.*

The second component of this theme is ensuring sustainable use of and equitable access to freshwater in Africa, as well as household water security for drinking and sanitation for at least 80 per cent of the population. The Initiative will back these two efforts with freshwater assessments to provide accurate information on the quantity and quality of water as a prerequisite for its future development. Finally, improved water management practices will be fostered to assure adequate water for food production. This will include encouraging irrigation development and adoption of appropriate technologies.

## Mobilizing support for the Special Initiative

The 14 components of the Special Initiative on Africa are of two types: those which require substantial resource mobilization and implementation actions, and those which call primarily for a strengthening and rationalization of existing efforts. While the cumulative financial resources required for implementation of the Special Initiative are substantial — estimated at close to \$25 bn over a 10-year period — the lion's share of this amount will come from a reordering of priorities in African national budgets and reallocations of existing levels of multilateral and bilateral official development assistance (ODA).

To this end, the Special Initiative contains three innovations which will facili-

tate development cooperation, increase aid effectiveness, and provide a framework for the resource mobilization necessary to implement the Initiative. First, goal-oriented regional forums of multilateral and bilateral donors are planned to help mobilize funds for Africa's larger development priorities, such as education and health. These forums will complement individual country programmes, and could involve interested private sector and NGO representatives as well as donors.

A second innovation involves committing African governments and donors to preparation of goal-oriented investment

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*The Special Initiative includes innovations to facilitate development cooperation, increase aid effectiveness and mobilize resources.*

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programmes which directly address the major strategic objectives in each country. Donor support that is channelled within these confines will have a much more significant impact, and donors will be more likely to carry out joint activities. A third initiative will seek to broaden Consultative Group and Roundtable meetings to include non-traditional participants.

Although individual UN agencies will play a major role in the financial mobilization efforts for each of the Special Initiative's components, the involvement and support of bilateral and multilateral

donors is key. The mobilization exercise should contribute to the rationalization and redirection of existing UN and external resources, as well as helping to channel new resources to Africa's priority areas. The exact mix of new and existing resources will be determined on the basis of regional consultations and national programmes.

### **Africa at a turning point**

Africa has reached a critical turning point in its history. After having suffered through a long period of economic stagnation and decline — indeed, the 1980s have been termed a "lost decade" for development — Africa's prospects are mixed. It is the only region in the world where poverty is projected to increase over the next decade, and its annual population growth rate is the world's highest. Civil conflict continues to exact a massive human toll in a number of countries.

However, there are also many positive indicators. Far-reaching economic reforms adopted across the continent have begun to yield positive results in some countries. Nearly half of all African countries have been implementing structural adjustment programmes for more than a decade, seeking to correct economic imbalances and encouraging faster growth of the private sector.

Over the past few years, growth rates in three countries have exceeded 8 per cent per annum; in eight others, they averaged between 6 and 8 per cent, and a dozen more attained levels of from 3 to 6 per cent. A climate conducive to increased domestic and foreign investment is being created. Capital markets are being formed and African entrepreneurship is expanding. There is also agreement that progress

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in human development, measurable by concrete social indicators, must be the end result of reform efforts.

Just as significant, Africa's leaders have taken action to address the devastating impact of conflict on development, working to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of some of the region's most intractable wars. The



end of long-running conflicts in Angola, Mozambique, and potentially Liberia, the demise of apartheid in South Africa, and the accession to power of democratically elected governments in many countries have provided new hope to the continent's peoples. This, and the emergence of a strengthened civil society, augur well for a stable and prosperous future.

But major challenges remain. Africa's crippling debt burden — which reached \$313 bn in 1994, equivalent to 234 per cent of its export income and 83 per cent of GDP — continues to be a major impediment to growth and a disincentive to domestic and foreign investment. Africa also faces new challenges, brought about

by economic globalization and the expansion in world trade, which must be addressed if the continent is not to become even further marginalized from the global economy.

### A development consensus

In light of Africa's need — recognized by the international community — to take charge of its own development and set its own agenda, African leaders have affirmed, through the Organization of African Unity's 1995 Cairo Agenda for Action, that it is time to move towards the concrete implementation of those development strategies agreed upon in various international forums.

The Cairo Agenda identifies a set of issues — governance, peace and stability; food security; human resource development; resource mobilization; regional economic cooperation and integration; and structural transformation of Africa's economies — as key priorities for immediate action.

The Special Initiative has built on this consensus, identifying actions which support Africa's priorities and which will provide a real stimulus to the continent's growth.

This monumental effort to enhance Africa's development possibilities will require strong international support in order to achieve its goals. A one-year mobilization of political support for the Special Initiative will be undertaken, in which its key emphases will be publicized and the case for support to Africa will be made. The campaign will also demonstrate the UN's lead role in devising new ways to foster African development.