

UN System-wide  
Special Initiative  
*on* **AFRICA**



## Secretary-General launches new programme to boost African development

*New York, 15 March 1996* — Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, along with Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, and heads of UN agencies in Geneva, Nairobi, New York, Paris and Rome, today launched the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, a multi-billion dollar programme of concrete actions to accelerate African development. The unprecedented Special Initiative aims over a 10-year period to greatly expand basic education and health care, promote peace and better governance, and improve water and food security. It also involves a year-long mobilization of political commitment and support for Africa.

Participating in the launching ceremony for the Special Initiative at UN headquarters were Mr. James Gustave Speth, UN Development Programme Administrator and co-chair of the Initiative's Steering Committee, along with the heads of all New York-based UN agencies, in the presence of the UN ambassadorial corps. A live satellite link-up to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, seat of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), enabled Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, current chairman of the OAU, and Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, OAU Secretary-General, to provide an official response on behalf of Africa. Participation in Addis Ababa also included Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, who co-chairs the Special Initiative Steering Committee.

The Special Initiative is the UN system's

most significant mobilization of support for the development of a continent's people and its largest coordinated action. Implementation of the Initiative's 14 components will cost up to \$25 billion. The World Bank has agreed to lead in the mobilization of over 85 per cent of this amount, the bulk of which will go toward improving basic education and health. Reallocations of existing resources will be required, as will better ways of managing aid. To this end, the Initiative contains new measures to improve donor coordination and increase aid effectiveness.

The Special Initiative's 14 components are grouped in four themes (see below) which reflect Africa's agreed development priorities and were presented at a major meeting of African ministers of finance and planning held recently in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Each component has its own framework for implementation and a relevant lead UN agency or agencies which will be held accountable for progress in achieving the Initiative's goals. National governments will have responsibility for implementation on the ground.

### • **Give Development a Chance**

This theme consists of actions which are required to create a conducive climate for development. The Initiative will help strengthen Africa's capacity, through the Organization of African Unity, to engage in conflict prevention, management and

resolution, and help civil society organs and the mass media to support peace-building. The Initiative will also assist in releasing more funds for development, by improving mobilization of Africa's internal resources and by promoting action on deeper debt relief, greater trade access and improved South-South cooperation. Third, the use of information technology for development will be expanded.

- **New Hope for the Upcoming Generation**

The Initiative's major thrust, with the largest commitment of resources, is on assuring Africa's children vastly improved opportunities for productive and rewarding lives. This goal will be achieved through a 10-year campaign to provide basic education for all and expanded health care at the community level. Under this theme, poverty reduction will also be addressed by the promotion of employment and sustainable livelihoods, particularly in environmentally marginal areas.

- **Strengthening the Capacity for Governance**

The Special Initiative will support African countries' efforts to expand their capacities for transparent, responsible and effective governance, by strengthening the civil service and civil society organizations. It will also help build independent judicial systems and support the functioning of parliaments and electoral processes.

- **Urgency on Survival Issues**

Africa's future hinges on the successful management of the interrelated issues of food production, population growth and protection of its fragile environment. The Special Initiative will address issues of food security and drought management by promoting control of land degradation and desertification, improvements in soil quality and strengthening women's access to credit, extension and land ownership. It will also ensure the sustainable use of and equitable access to freshwater.

In addition to these concrete commitments, the Secretary-General and the heads of UN agencies will participate actively in a year-long effort to mobilize international political commitment and support for African development. Collaboration with the donor community is key to the Initiative's success and to raising Africa's priority status on the global agenda.

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**FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES**, please contact the UNDP Division of Public Affairs, Tel: (212) 906 6709/5315; Fax: (212) 906 5364; or Africa Recovery, UN Department of Public Information, Tel: (212) 963 6857; Fax: (212) 963 4556.

**FOR OTHER INQUIRIES**, please contact the Initiative Secretariat, Tel: (212) 906 5926/5965; Fax: (212) 906 5423; Directors of Public Information of participating UN agencies; or, in Africa, UN Resident Coordinators.

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