



Questions and Answers

1 What is the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa?

Led by the entire UN system, the Special Initiative is an unprecedented set of concrete and coordinated actions designed to maximize support for African development efforts. It begins with a year-long political mobilization campaign to raise Africa's priority status on the international agenda and to provide a new stimulus to African development. This Initiative is historic because, for the first time, the UN system has committed itself to working in a synergistic manner to support the development of a continent's people.

2 What are the objectives of the Special Initiative?

The Special Initiative's objectives are to add momentum to Africa's development at a time when prospects for economic recovery are greater than they have been in recent years. Many African countries are creating an enabling environment of accountability and better governance. Growth rates are picking up and conditions for investment and production are improving rapidly for local and foreign entrepreneurs. These are all positive indicators for accelerating development efforts.

The Initiative will strengthen the capacity of African men and women to take charge of the development process and

promote the minimum conditions for civil tranquillity, good governance and socio-economic progress in order to give development a chance. It will also seek to give more hope to upcoming generations through the provision of better education, health care and employment opportunities.

3 What are the main components of the Special Initiative?

The Special Initiative has 14 components concentrated in the following sectors: basic education, basic health, governance, food security, water and sanitation, peace-building and informatics. To facilitate implementation of these components, innovative ways to improve development cooperation and increase aid effectiveness have been devised.



UN System-wide Special Initiative *on* AFRICA

4 How much will the Special Initiative cost and where will the money come from?

Up to \$25 billion will be required to finance the Special Initiative over a 10-year period. Financing will come mainly from a redirection of existing resources at national and international levels, as well as from new resources. The exact mix will be determined through a series of consultations at the regional and national levels.

The Initiative proposes three mechanisms for resource mobilization. First, multilateral and bilateral donors are to create goal-oriented regional forums to raise resources for key sectors. Second, African governments are to prepare goal-oriented country investment programmes to maximize the impact of



internal and external resource mobilization. Third, participation in Consultative Group and Roundtable meetings is to be broadened to encourage involvement and participation of non-traditional partners, such as leaders of business and civil society. The Initiative recommends other ways of releasing funds for development, including deeper debt relief, an expansion of Africa's trade opportunities and enhanced South-South cooperation.

5 Can the UN deliver its part of the Initiative during its budgetary crisis?

The current financial difficulties of the UN do not justify any reduction in its activities in Africa, a continent it has identified as the world's foremost development challenge. The financial implications for the Secretariat, the most hard-pressed part of the system, are quite small. Operating agencies, including the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral donors, are expected to meet the external financial resource requirements for the various components of the Initiative. With the UN playing a catalytic role, the commitment of the heads of all UN agencies ensures an unprecedented level of concerted action.

6 Will Member States support the Special Initiative?

Since 1986, Member States have directed the UN to give special attention to Africa. In various UN programmes unanimously adopted by Member States, they have jointly identified the most significant challenges facing the continent and the most appropriate ways of addressing them. The Special Initiative begins with a one-year campaign to mobilize the political and financial support required for successful implementation. Early consultations with a number of countries indicate that this Initiative is welcomed, and further intensive consultations are planned at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The participation of the chairman of the Organization of African Unity in the launching of the Special Initiative demonstrates the offi-

cial recognition and support given to it by the leadership of Africa. A major meeting of Africa's ministers of finance and planning reviewed the Initiative in depth, and other ministerial meetings on the continent have also endorsed it.

7 How does this Initiative differ from past UN programmes for Africa?

The Initiative is innovative because it aims to give practical expression to the policy commitments made in the past, such as the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and the UN System-wide Plan of Action for African Recovery and Development. Second, financial mobilization will take place with the full cooperation of the World Bank. Third, specific leadership roles are taken by agencies across the UN system for each of the 14 major components of the Initiative. Fourth, the heads of UN agencies will hold themselves mutually accountable for achieving results.

8 Who will be in charge of the Special Initiative and how will it be managed?

For each of the major components of the Initiative, a lead UN agency or agencies will be responsible for resource mobilization and for coordinating implementation. All 14 major components of the Initiative respond to priorities established by African leaders, and almost all the programme implementation will be based on requests from African governments. The UN Administrative Committee on Coordination, composed of

the heads of all UN agencies, will monitor implementation of the Special Initiative through a Steering Committee



co-chaired by the Administrator of the UN Development Programme and the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

9 What is the World Bank's role in the Special Initiative?

The Bank has agreed to lead in the resource mobilization for the two largest components of the Special Initiative: basic education and health reform. It is also expected to play an active role in all other components of the Special Initiative.

10 Why is so much emphasis being given to basic education?

In recent years consistent evidence has shown that basic education, particularly for girls and women, is the best possible development investment. Basic education is strongly correlated with a number



of desirable outcomes: greater participation in democracy, more productive farmers, better family planning and higher incomes. The Special Initiative intends to help Africa meet the goal of universal basic education adopted at the UN's Education for All Conference in 1990. Strengthening and expanding access to basic education may also give some impetus to expanding opportunities in higher and tertiary education.

11 Why is there so much emphasis on social development?

The international community has agreed, most recently at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, that improved social conditions are of critical importance for balanced development. It is also recognized that Africa's economic crisis has

led to cutbacks in social spending in recent years and a reversal in some countries of the gains made in social development since political independence. The Special Initiative, therefore, addresses the backlog of unfulfilled needs through social investment programmes which will be prepared by African governments with the assistance of the international community.

12 How will the Initiative help Africa surmount its development crisis?

With its differentiated and flexible approach, the Initiative aims to help African countries that are affected by conflict as well as boost development efforts in the majority of African countries. The Initiative will help Africa strengthen its capacity to build peace and resolve conflicts through the Organization of African Unity and also through a stronger civil society. With its emphasis on basic education and health, the Initiative will support African efforts to accelerate the creation of the basic conditions for more rapid development. With its activities in such areas as food and water security, resource mobilization and governance, the Initiative will also help African countries improve the livelihoods of their people, increase their productivity, enhance the climate for investment and establish the necessary conditions for sustainable economic and social development.