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**Office of the Special Adviser on Africa**

**Remarks at the Workshop of African Energy Experts on**

**OPERATIONALIZING THE NEPAD ENERGY INITIATIVE**

**(Dakar, 2 to 4 June 2003)**

Mr. Minister,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This workshop is being organized by the Government of Senegal, which is the country coordinator for infrastructure under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the United Nations.

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the United Nations co-organizers, to make these opening remarks, as we embark on this endeavor to provide inputs into the NEPAD Energy Initiative. Your acceptance of our invitation to participate at this workshop, and your presence here today manifest your dedication to the quest of seeking appropriate solutions to the energy problems in the continent, for which we thank you most sincerely.

In July 2001, the OAU Heads of State and Government unanimously endorsed NEPAD at their Summit in Lusaka, Zambia. The General Assembly at its high-level plenary meeting on 16 September 2002 welcomed NEPAD as an African Union led initiative and considered how to support NEPAD. It adopted a declaration urging the United Nations system organizations and the international community, in particular donor countries, to assist in the implementation of NEPAD priorities. In December 2002, by its resolution, the United Nations General Assembly welcomed NEPAD as a programme of the African Union that embodies the vision and commitment of all African countries and peoples for peace and development and endorsed NEPAD as the framework for the international community's support to NEPAD and identified the role of the international community, including the United Nations, in providing such support. It called for the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to be headed by an Under-Secretary General, to monitor the progress in the implementation of NEPAD and provide annual reports to the United Nations General assembly, ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies.

The United Nations role, as defined by the resolution, included advocacy, providing technical cooperation for building institutional and human capacity, norm setting and the mobilization of financial resources. In this effort of the United Nations to support NEPAD in the Energy sector, the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UNEP Risoe Center have pooled resources together to assist the Government of Senegal to sponsor this Workshop.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has as its key long-term objective the eradication of poverty, and to place Africa, both individually and collectively, on a path to sustainable development and thus halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process. It also sets itself the twin goals to achieve and sustain an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of above 7 per cent per annum for the next 15 years and to ensure that the continent achieves the agreed International Development Goals (IDGs). It is clear that energy has a key role to play if the long-term objective of energy and these two goals are to be achieved. NEPAD recognizes the critical role of energy in the development process, first as a domestic necessity, but also as a factor of production.

However, the sector is plagued by a number of problems, including the lack of capital, non-access to improved technologies, inadequate management skills, outdated or run-down infrastructure, and lack of access to energy sources. One does not need to belabor the point about the importance of energy for development, nor on the problems that plague this sector, in a forum of this nature. Suffice it to say that Africa is rich in energy resources, but requires the necessary resources for exploiting them to effectively address its development process. Africa also has an uneven distribution of energy resources and, it is in the light of this, that NEPAD concludes that the search for abundant and cheap energy should focus on the rationalization the territorial distribution of existing but unevenly allocated energy sources.

The most important feature of NEPAD, which distinguishes it from past initiatives on African development, is its emphasis on ownership and on the need to engage the international community as partners. It is in the spirit of these two basic tenets that this workshop of African Energy Experts is being organized.

There is a tendency for Africa to look outwards when it searches for expertise to address its development problems. But yet, Africa possesses a cadre of experts who could make substantive contributions to the development of the continent, if called upon to do so.

We have here the finest Africa has to offer in the Energy sector. Men and women who have distinguished themselves, not only within their own countries, but among their counterparts all over the world. At this time, when there is renewed effort to tackle the development problems of the continent, they have graciously agreed to give some of their time and efforts to reflect on developing a comprehensive approach to Energy under NEPAD. For this, we in the United Nations are most grateful.

As we begin our deliberations, I would like to suggest that we focus our attention on

Developing concrete action-oriented proposals for the way forward. We believe that, although the challenges for development of our continent are many, and require support from the international community, there is a lot we could do for ourselves.

We could, first and foremost, elaborate our needs succinctly, so that those who are in a position to assist us would know exactly what we are seeking from them. In addition, with the limited resources available to the continent, there are some actions, which we could afford to act on, even now. Furthermore, we need to gear ourselves up more fully to benefit from existing resources, which other parts of the world have been making greater use of.

In view of the importance of energy as the fuel for development, we need to move the energy sector forward at a faster pace, if the noble development objectives are to be achieved. Let us put our shoulder to the wheel. We owe it to ourselves and to Africa.

Thank you.