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**High-level meeting on the theme
“Africa’s Development Needs: state of implementation of
various commitments, challenges and the way forward”**

Statement of

H.E. Heinz FISCHER
Federal President of Austria

New York
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Mr. President,

It gives me great pleasure representing my country Austria today and addressing this important assembly on Africa's development needs. Only a few months ago I had the occasion to pay State visits to two African States and to interact with the African Union at its seat in Addis Ababa. The warmth with which I was received by leaders and citizens of Africa has strengthened my commitment to contribute my share to advancing the African agenda. My interesting talks with the Chairman of the Commission of the African Union Jean Ping a few days ago in Vienna have further heightened my resolve.

In this important assembly on Africa's development needs I should like to focus my remarks on three critical areas for Africa's development:

- **food security**
- **water**
- **energy**

Austria is active in these areas. The Austrian government has confirmed that it will uphold the EU-commitment of devoting 0,51 % of Gross National Income (GNI) to official development assistance (ODA) by 2010 and to reach 0,7 % in 2015. For 2007, our ODA percentage has been confirmed by the OECD-DAC at 0,5 %. Already now, more than 50 % of Austria's overall ODA is devoted to Africa. In line with existing international commitments, this share will increase as funds for ODA augment overall.

The present crisis in global **food security** has revealed the collective neglect of food agriculture in developing countries since the eighties. This has led to a significant deceleration in agricultural productivity growth since then.

In order to produce more food, donors and partner countries alike need to invest more in agriculture, in particular of small holders. The Austrian Development Cooperation has continuously been engaged in rural development programs and will continue to do so.

In order to enable the poor to buy the food that is available we have to undertake greater efforts to create sustainable livelihoods for the poor in agriculture and to expand training opportunities for the urban poor. From the very poor who have to live on less than one dollar a day, some 300 million live in Africa alone.

Another key question is the **water** issue. The Austrian Development Cooperation supports the EU Water Initiative through the provision of an electronic information system and bilaterally promotes integrated water resource management, in particular in Eastern Africa where Austria has been the lead donor for the water sector in Uganda. The International Water Association Congress, held in Vienna from 7 to 12 September, brought together some 3000 experts and decision-makers to advance their common goal of sustainable water management. I hosted a dinner around water issues on the African continent for colleagues on the eve of this High-Level Event since I share the view of many experts, including the president of the African Development Bank Group, that advancing on access to water and sanitation may be one of the best opportunities to jump-start African development.

Of central importance for development is **energy**. UNDP has drawn up very informative correlations between low human development and extreme energy poverty. UN Energy, currently chaired by the Director General of UNIDO Kandeh Yumkella, has demonstrated how none of the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved if access to energy is not improved for the roughly 2 billion people worldwide without access to modern energy services (lighting, cooling, heating, mobility, power, etc.).

The information technology gap, for instance, which severely handicaps Africa, its students, entrepreneurs, and civil society cannot be closed without increasing access to energy.

Mr. President,

Across the three critical areas – food security, water and sanitation and energy services - we need to pursue **gender justice**. It is the women who bear the largest burden when it comes to providing for food, for water and for fuel wood to cook the family's meals. Austria therefore actively promotes the empowerment of women and their active participation in all dimensions of economic and political life.

Mr. President,

Africa's development needs will be better met if the process of continental integration proceeds smoothly and steadily. We are therefore enhancing our cooperation with the African Union and are pleased that upon our initiative and with our support we can expect an Office of the African Union to be opened in Vienna by 2009. This will enable the AU to interact more effectively with the Vienna-based international organisations.

There can be no lasting development without **peace**. And no lasting peace without development. Austria has therefore, over the last few years, intensified its endeavours to work within a regional setting with African partners.

Thank you.