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President of the European Commission

**"Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments challenges and the way forward"**

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High Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs

**New York, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2008**

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

2008 ne doit pas seulement laisser le souvenir d'une année de nouveaux engagements de la communauté internationale à l'égard du monde en développement. Elle doit rester aussi comme le moment où nous avons convenu de tenir plus concrètement, et plus rapidement, nos promesses dans un nouvel esprit de partenariat.

Comme le Président Sarkozy vient de le dire très clairement en tant que Président du Conseil européen, l'Union européenne est un acteur mondial particulièrement engagé en faveur de tous les pays en développement. Elle accorde 60 % de l'aide internationale.

Notre relation avec l'Afrique est unique. Nous sommes liés par l'histoire, par la géographie, par le commerce, par nos langues. En adoptant la stratégie commune Afrique – Union européenne en décembre 2007 à Lisbonne, nous avons ouvert un nouveau chapitre de notre relation. Ce chapitre tient compte des nouvelles réalités économiques, politiques et sociales. Mais il a aussi pour vocation d'aller au-delà des domaines classiques de développement pour embrasser les questions mondiales. Autrement dit, les défis d'aujourd'hui.

Permettez-moi d'évoquer trois de ces grands défis: les prix des denrées alimentaires, le changement climatique et la sécurité énergétique.

Firstly, rising world food prices. Action is needed to support agriculture in developing countries – to enable African farmers to grow more food for Africans. We have already stepped in with short term measures worth an additional €550 million in 2008, with a further €250 million to come in 2009. Now the Commission has proposed a new €1 billion Food Facility, promoting agricultural production by improving poor farmers' access to inputs such as fertilizers and seed. This is entirely in line with Africa's own objectives for developing agriculture, and I hope the Facility will soon be agreed inside the European Union.

Secondly, climate change, which is hitting hardest the poorest countries of the world, with severe droughts, desertification, lack of water, and other natural disasters. Climate change threatens to undermine the promising 6% African growth rates and it could be a major threat to peace and security.

The upcoming conferences in Poznan at the end of 2008 and in Copenhagen in 2009 must be the moment when we build a new international consensus. To achieve that, it will be essential for Europe and Africa to work very closely together in the coming months to develop a strong partnership based in particular on adaptation, the key question for Africa. It was with this in mind that the Commission launched the Global Climate Change Alliance between the European Union on the one hand, and poor and vulnerable developing countries on the other.

Another aspect of our partnership, of course, concerns the struggle against deforestation, which is a major concern in Africa. We have to prevent the illegal exploitations of rainforest, and support sustainable management of the forests. A prime example of that is the forest partnership that is being established in the Congo basin.

The third area is energy, where we must look to develop together a sustainable future. We need to establish energy security for both continents; better interconnections both between, and within, Africa and Europe; better governance and use of oil and gas revenues; and finally, we must cooperate closely to tackle the inter-linked issues of poverty, deforestation and climate change. All of these issues will be addressed in the Africa-EU Energy Partnership launched last year.

In conclusion, I want to stress one point. I am proud of the European Union's record in working together with Africa on the crucial mission of development. But the reality is that Africa is getting to its own two feet – building stronger rates of growth, using its rich natural resources more effectively, strengthening good governance. When we in Europe say that we want to be partners with Africa, we will continue to take our responsibilities. But Africa's future must ultimately lie in African hands.

That still requires us to work closely together to tackle global problems that recognise no frontier. But I am confident that we will now do so in a new spirit of partnership.

Thank you very much.