



Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
ON THE THEME

**"AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS: STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIOUS
COMMITMENTS, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD"**

63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Distinguished Co-Chairpersons,

On behalf of my delegation, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this roundtable discussion on "Africa's Development Needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward". But before expounding further on the issue being discussed, let me express that my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made this morning on behalf of the African Group and the Group of 77 and China respectively during the Opening Plenary of this august high level meeting.

Let me seize this moment to express our gratitude to both the Presidents of the 62nd and 63rd Sessions of the General Assembly, as well as to the Member States for contributing towards the organization of this high level meeting which is of great significance to us all, particularly those of us from the continent of Africa. This very important gathering is also timely in the sense that it is being held at eve of several imminent high level meetings such as the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on the MDGs and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha during which related issues of great importance to Africa will be discussed.

My delegation also wishes to thank the Secretary General for his useful report on the activities undertaken by the United Nations system in support of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's development.

Co-Chairpersons,

General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/7 was adopted almost six years ago on 20th November 2002 recognizing among other things, that the New Partnership for Africa's Development should be the framework within which the international community, including the United Nations system, should concentrate its efforts in support of Africa's development. Since then, several commitments have been made in this regard by the African countries and members of the international community including Africa's major development partners, but many of these commitments are yet to be realized. Prospects in the continent have been quite positive. The adoption of appropriate policy reforms coupled with sound macroeconomic management during the past five years resulted in strong economic growth of 5 to 6 per cent in some cases. Democracy and the rule of law are spreading. Of recent, Africa has displayed unparalleled maturity in successfully resolving crisis situations with home grown solutions. Despite the persistent efforts exerted by Africa to achieve its development aspirations, the continent continues to face enormous challenges.

One of the highly debated irregularities of the 21st Century is the undemocratic and unfair global economic framework in which both the participation and influence of the developing part of the world, particularly Africa, continue to be extremely marginal

despite the fact that decisions taken by this global system have significant implications for the growth and development of developing countries.

The extent of the debt crisis in Africa poses a great obstacle to advancing the Millennium Development Goals and taking forward human development. External debt has impeded the process of establishing sustainable development and achieving social, economic and political security and stability in Africa.

The recent debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiatives (HIPC) and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) may have partly freed some resources for development related expenditure in the developing countries, yet they are clearly inadequate in helping African countries to realize the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs) including the MDGs.

Therefore, my delegation would like to join the rest of the international community members in calling for the consideration of additional measures and initiatives aimed at ensuring long-term debt sustainability through increased grant-based financing, cancellation of 100 per cent of the official multilateral and bilateral debt of heavily indebted poor countries in Africa.

Co-Chairpersons,

The efforts of African countries to maintain debt sustainability would also be greatly facilitated by improved market access for their exports and other measures to enhance their productive capacity without which, growth and sustainable development cannot be attained.

Besides, despite the fact that an increasing number of African countries are liberalizing their trade regimes, the drift of trade policies in developed countries is towards greater protectionism. Such enlarging protectionism will only aggravate problems associated with international trade imbalances, indebtedness, and exacerbate the problems of poverty and development. It is very unfortunate that the recent WTO trade negotiations in Geneva were ended with an impasse. In this regard, it is important for all parties to bring the Doha Round to a successful conclusion with balanced and development oriented outcome as an essential contribution of the trading system to the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 8, of achieving an open, transparent, predictable, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system.

In this respect, the Government of The Gambia wishes to reemphasize that development concerns form an integral part of the Doha Development Agenda, which places the needs and interests of developing and least developed countries at the heart of the Doha Work Programme. Developed countries should therefore demonstrate the flexibility and political will needed to undo the current impasse in the Doha Round of trade negotiations and to work towards early resumption and timely completion of the Doha Round of trade negotiations.

In this regard, it is imperative to note that the ongoing global food crisis is a consequence of transitory as well as more deep-rooted problems. Food export subsidies and subsidies to domestic food producers as well as the high tariffs imposed by the developed countries on many agricultural products coming from the south have discouraged production and exports in numerous developing countries with agricultural potential.

My delegation would also like to seize this opportunity to once more urge the donor community to provide the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) with the increased resources necessary to deliver effective and demand-driven assistance to African countries, as well as to enhance their contributions to the trust funds of the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries, particularly those in Africa.

Whilst recognizing that South-South trade should be enhanced and that further market access should continue to stimulate South-South trade, we are deeply concerned about the imposition of laws and other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries, which undermine international law and the rules of the World Trade Organization and also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment as well as the right to development. In this regard, we once more call upon the international community to denounce the implementation of such measures, which are intended to undermine the existence of humanity.

Co-Chairpersons,

Africa must learn from the successes registered by emerging economies which can be attributed to investments in infrastructure. Poor infrastructure and inadequate services are among the major factors impeding the continent's development. For Africa to develop effective global trade partnerships it must first develop its regional trade potential and the most effective way to unlock this potential is through the development and implementation of infrastructural programmes and projects as proposed in the NEPAD Plan of Action, including improvements in communications, transportation and energy at sub-regional and regional levels. Investments in infrastructure also represent an untapped potential for the creation of productive employment.

Notwithstanding, the support of the international community to the New Partnership for Africa's Development is critical in enabling African countries to take their fair place in the global economy. Investing in Africa's priorities, particularly infrastructure, agriculture, human development and the environment would go a long way in eliminating the major constraints to trade, development and poverty reductions in Africa.

Africa still faces major implementation gaps which must be filled if the continent is to get out of the current development dilemma. In this regard, whilst my delegation acknowledges the efforts by our international development partners to increase official development assistance (ODA), we note with concern, however, the overall decline in ODA in the last two years. Therefore, we urge Africa's development partners,

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