



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**63rd session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

Agenda item 57 (a)

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

New York, 22 September 2008

Mr President,

Africa has always played an important role in the various challenges taken up every year by the General Assembly of the United Nations. For the last 60 years Africa, with its historical and geographic particularities, has challenged the capacity of the United Nations to carry out the high ideals enshrined in its Charter of peace and prosperity for all. Recent history has also witnessed the capacity of African governments to harmonize their wide array of interests and local needs, their great cultural diversity and the special geographic and climatic challenges with the need to coordinate a common response to the serious problems that affect without distinction the entire continent.

The successes achieved in the consolidation of independence, the overcoming of the ideological conflicts of the twentieth century, the abolition of apartheid, and more recently the strengthening of the African Union and many other regional structures of cooperation, are a sign of hope for the potential of Africa. It is now high time to allow and encourage an African sense of ownership in leading a sustained and sustainable developmental process that frees all the peoples of Africa from the scourge of extreme poverty.

The Holy See commends this very timely meeting aimed at taking stock of the implementation of various commitments put forward by the international community as well as the efforts being undertaken at the national level throughout Africa.

My delegation expresses its appreciation for the Report of the Secretary-General. The Holy See echoes the Report's call for concrete action and believes that delivery must be the principal result at the international, regional and national levels. The political Declaration constitutes an effective guide for such concrete action if accompanied by the political will to put its aspirations into practice.

The development of Africa is a great opportunity for the whole world given its human resources and unique climatic and cultural diversity. Africa is the "youngest" of continents with sixty percent of its population under 25. In a number of African countries growth has kept pace with and even surpassed that of developed nations. Such growth, substantiated in the Report of the Secretary-General, is due not only to the improvement of the terms of exchange of raw materials but also to a generalized improvement in methods of government.

In spite of this, however, the recent economic growth has not been sufficient to free from extreme poverty large segments of the population of Africa, and the average life expectancy remains one of the lowest in the world. Clearly there is still a long way to go in improving the health of the people of Africa.