STATEMENT BY
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DURING
THE SECOND MEETING ON AFRICA AND ITS
RELATIONSHIPS WITH EUROPE

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Honourable Walter Veltroni,
Mayor of Rome,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring warm greetings from His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, who would have liked to be here but for other pressing engagements. He has therefore asked me to express his gratitude and that of the United Nations to Mayor Veltroni and the Organizers of this impressive gathering for this wonderful initiative to help address the critical situation in Africa. Your efforts in this regard also represent a major priority of the United Nations, which requires further concrete actions and support for Africa from the entire global community.

Today's event is particularly timely because the year 2005 may well be the year of Africa, for three main reasons. First, important steps are being taken by and through Africa's own institutions to address the continent's major challenges. For example, the African Union is stepping up the deployment of its peace force in Western Darfur as a demonstration of the acceptance of its responsibility for dealing with its peace and security concerns. Similarly, the African Peer Review Mechanism for the promotion of good governance now has 25 countries voluntarily subscribing to it and the results of the first reviews would soon be released. This is a key element of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

Secondly, there is a growing consensus on what is needed in Africa in order to unleash Africa's potential. Now more than ever, the major studies and reports point to the need to accelerate efforts to promote agriculture and rural development in Africa; increase investments in human resources development; re-energize the private sector; improvements in governance; implement conflict resolution and peace-building measures; and fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. There is also the recognition that Africa should retain ownership of its programmes and priorities for addressing its peace and development challenges, especially through the framework of NEPAD/African Union.
Thirdly, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said during his message on Africa Day on 25 May 2005, "in September, World Leaders will gather for a Summit at the United Nations to review implementation of the Millennium Declaration. That Summit should be a time of decision, including bold action in response to the special needs of Africa. "In Larger Freedom", the report that I have put before the UN membership, contains wide-ranging recommendations for helping Africans in their quest for security, development and human rights. Two other major UN-commissioned reports - from the Millennium Project and from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change - as well as the report of the United Kingdom's Commission for Africa, have also put forward practical proposals. The General Assembly's dialogue on financing for development in June, the G-8 Summit meeting in July, and the September World Summit in New York all offer important opportunities to generate more international support for Africa's development".

Finally, I believe that the stage is now set for meaningful dialogue and collaboration between Africa and the international community. In this regard, Europe has a special role to play in helping to ensure that Africa's international partners act decisively on the related issues of Official Development Assistance (ODA); trade, debt relief/cancellation and increase private investments in order to help overcome obstacles to Africa's development. Moving from rhetoric to action, in a new framework of mutual accountability, would pave the way for an Africa that would depend more on its competence and productive capacity to succeed and prosper than simply relying on the World's compassion.

LONG LIVE ITALY
LONG LIVE AFRICA
LONG LIVE EUROPE-AFRICA COOPERATION

Thank you for listening.