

5 June 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Opening of the Organizational Session of the Ad Hoc  
Committee of the Whole for UN-NADAF**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

As we begin today's organizational session to prepare for the UN-NADAF, I think this is a proper occasion for me to make a brief report on my recent official visits to four West African states from April 11 to 18.

As you may recall, upon assuming the presidency of the 56th Session of the General Assembly, I set the issue of African development as one of my priorities during my presidency. As we are all aware, African development has become one of the most daunting challenges for humanity to cope with in the new millennium. In particular, such issues as eradication of poverty, the fight against HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention, and preservation of the environment in Africa are major tasks for the United Nations to undertake, reflecting the aspirations of all humankind.

It is in this context that I visited four West African countries -Ghana, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Senegal - which provide models and offer hope for the pursuit of African development. In this regard, I would like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his sincere cooperation and suggestions that greatly helped make my visit successful and productive.

During my visits to these four countries, I met with their heads of state, foreign ministers and other high government officials, all of whom are setting an excellent example in inspiring and encouraging their peoples toward democracy and prosperity. I conveyed to them the strong support of the United Nations system for their efforts to promote economic and political development and exchanged views on finding better ways and means to realize our common goals. I would like to express my profound gratitude to those leaders, including Their Excellencies President Kufuor and Foreign Minister Owusu-Agyemang of Ghana, President Kabbah and Foreign Minister Dumbuya of Sierra Leone, President Jammeh and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Jagne of The Gambia, and President Wade and Foreign Minister Gadio of Senegal.

I would also like to mention my very rewarding experience of visiting the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, or UNAMSIL, and its field offices. Though I had been well aware of UNAMSIL's reputation as one of the most successful peace-keeping operations of the UN, I was deeply impressed by what I witnessed on the spot. I was especially impressed by the firm commitment of those young men and women of the peace keeping mission who are doing their utmost under difficult circumstances to achieve peace and stability in the region. As I inspected those weapons collected through the patient and efficient disarmament campaign, and as I

personally conversed with ex-combatants, who are now being reintegrated into society, on the streets of what was once a rebel stronghold, I could see that the concerted efforts of the international community are beginning to bear fruit.

However, I also believe that we must not be complacent about the achievements so far. Rather, we need to persevere with our collaborative efforts so that the foundation for peace and stability can be firmly established, not only in Sierra Leone but also in the sub-region as a whole.

In this regard, I would like to commend Amb. Adeniji, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, his deputies Mr. Sadry and Mr. Doss, and Force Commander General Opande for their effective leadership and skillful management based on their wide experience and strong commitment. I also wish to convey my personal observation that UNAMSIL has played an instrumental role in maintaining peace and stability and that its continued presence in Sierra Leone for a considerable length of time is indeed necessary.

Although it has already been almost a month, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to President Kabbah and Foreign Minister Dumbuya, along with Amb. Adeniji and the leadership of UNAMSIL, on the presidential and parliamentary elections successfully held in Sierra Leone in mid-May thanks to their untiring efforts.

In each country I visited, I held discussions with representatives of various United Nations agencies, during which I was briefed on the state of their activities there, including assessments on prospects and necessary steps for improvement. I noted with satisfaction the close cooperation between the national governments and the UN agencies in their common endeavor to enhance the well-being of the local population, as well as the local population's enthusiastic participation in various UN projects, such as vocational training and campaigns against HIV/AIDS. I wish to commend the resident coordinators in those countries for the leading role they are playing in this vital work.

During my visit to Senegal I had the distinct honor of addressing the African Summit Conference on Partnership with the Private Sector for Financing Africa's Growth through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) held on 16 April in Dakar. At this Meeting, I was especially struck by the firm determination of the leaders of Africa to achieve peace and prosperity throughout the region through their own initiative. I was also pleased to note that the Meeting afforded business leaders from around the world an opportunity to engage in lively interaction in an open forum with the African leaders on ways to create an environment favorable to trade and investment.

I am convinced that when combined with the strong political will of the African leadership for political and economic reforms and necessary international support, NEPAD will indeed bring genuine change to Africa. I sincerely hope that the forthcoming high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly which will take place on September 16 will provide a good opportunity for the international community to take a closer look at this comprehensive and bold initiative and find ways to help translate NEPAD's vision into reality.

To sum up, my visit to the region gave me an invaluable opportunity to observe conditions in those four African countries and assess how the international community, and the United Nations in particular, can contribute to building peace and prosperity in Africa. In this regard, I call upon the international community to devote more attention and resources to our common task of African development. I firmly believe that continued progress on African development issues will do much to brighten the outlook for all of humankind in the 21st century

I also believe that my trip to the region serves as a clear manifestation of the United Nations' commitment to African stability and development and as a modest contribution to our common effort toward that end.

Thank you very much.

Coming back to today's agenda item, Final Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for Development of Africa (UN-NADAF), I wish to make a brief remark;

The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) is a political compact in which African countries reaffirmed their primary responsibility for the development of their countries. The international community, at the same time, committed itself to support Africa, based on the principles of shared responsibility. The primary objectives of the New Agenda were the accelerated transformation, integration and diversification and growth of African economies, and to reduce their vulnerability to external shocks and internalise the process of sustained growth and development.

The New Agenda has also set out a number of priority areas, and underscored the need for firm commitment from the international community to support Africa in its efforts to implement successfully its development agenda. Within UN-NADAF, the roles of various partners, including African countries, United Nations system, NGOs and the international community were specified. A final review and appraisal of UN-NADAF was called for in 2002. It is clear that a decade after UN-NADAF was adopted, the results have not been according to our expectations. What have been the reasons for the limited success? It is expected that the Ad-Hoc Committee of the Whole will clearly identify these reasons during its deliberations.

In 2000, inspired by the vision of launching Africa on the path of sustainable growth and development at the beginning of the new millennium, African leaders initiated action to articulate a new development plan for the region. This effort was a search for a new approach of partnership to Africa's development and to ensure a strong commitment to African ownership of its development. The result of their efforts was the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is now generally welcomed by the international community.

The review and appraisal of UN-NADAF is timely, as it coincides with the process of the elaboration of NEPAD. The objective of the final review and appraisal should thus concentrate on the lessons learned from UN-NADAF that could benefit NEPAD.

Thank you.