

**Speech by Mr. Abdelkader MESSAHEL,
Minister of State for North African and African Affairs
on the subsidiary topic of “Governance within development”
at the 9th Forum for the Partnership with Africa,
Algiers, 12th November 2007**

Madam Chairman,

Allow me to begin by saying that it is a welcome and most timely choice that Africa and her development partners have made by agreeing to devote this 9th session of the Forum for the Partnership with Africa to the subject of governance and development.

It was a judicious choice both in its rationale and in its implicit expectations.

Among the reasons for selecting that subject there was, first of all, the qualitative shift in Africa's development concerns and in the concerns of the African peoples in their legitimate quest for wellbeing and fulfilment. The end of the Cold War, globalisation, the rapid formation of large integrated economic areas and the gradual establishment of new standards, regulations and balances of power have quickly generated new dangers that the interests and concerns of Africa will be marginalised.

Secondly, there is the fact that under the new configuration of international political and economic relations, Africa cherishes the ambition of becoming an influential player and not a passive subject. In other words, our continent has become aware of the assets at its disposal and of the urgent need to equip itself with the best possible means of exploiting them and of profitably placing them at the exclusive service of its own peoples.

This raised awareness has found expression in the adoption of a new vision of development, but also in a new vision of political, institutional and economic organisation. This vision requires us to break with the practices of the past and to use all those levers liable to promote the gradual and harmonious integration of the continent into the overall dynamic of globalisation. To own and take responsibility for the destinies of this continent is crucial to this new vision.

At a continental level, this increased awareness has involved the establishment of new institutional architecture, where primary importance is given to principles, objectives and tools serving the causes of peace, stability, the rule of law, democracy, personal freedom, justice, popular participation and the parliamentary representation of the people.

The work undertaken to this end is now giving Africa some grounds for satisfaction and powerful reasons to continue down this road.

In fact, the number of armed conflicts has been reduced from thirteen to three (Sudan, Somalia and the Western Sahara), which are being fully addressed by African or international initiatives for conflict resolution. The establishment of the African architecture for peace and security is on the right path, including the conflict prevention system and mine clearance. The Pan-African Parliament is testament to the vitality and recognition of popular representation; the Economic, Social and Cultural Council is supporting the growing part played by management and labour and by organisations within civil society; and the African Court of Justice is working to embed standards and institutions designed to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Work is ongoing to that end.

To that same purpose, on a national level, the vast majority if not all of the African countries are instituting comprehensive institutional, political and economic reforms. The initial outcomes of these reforms, which are already perceptible, also constitute grounds for satisfaction. Democratic spaces are expanding, pluralism is developing in politics and the media, the ballot box is becoming *de rigueur* for the accession to power, while the foundations and above all the culture of the rule of law are developing. The growth rates achieved have been respectable and the outlook is less bleak, despite persistent poverty, pandemics and particularly an international environment that is still essentially unfavourable to the African economies and their needs.

These dynamics of national and continental change and transformation to which the African countries have committed themselves individually and collectively are converging on a single fundamental objective: placing the continent on the path to modernity, competitiveness and prosperity by developing its inherent potential and making rational use of its many assets. Those assets comprise, must we stress, its people, its unused lands, its immense natural resources, still in an almost virgin state, its abundant waters, its dense forests as well as the strong growth of its markets, to cite just a few examples.

Madam Chairman,

The common denominator of these national and continental reforms can be expressed in a single word: governance – the promotion of good governance and the establishment of the tools required to that end.

Africa intends to put in the work required for this long-term undertaking, to which it has committed itself out of conviction and certainly not as a result of external pressure or commands. To that end, it intends to mobilise the resources that it has at its disposal. It also intends to actively involve its development partners in this undertaking.

The new institutional architecture of the continent, to which I have already referred, follows this logic of general mobilisation, as do NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism.

The eloquent speech that Professor Adededeji has just given us concerning the African Peer Review Mechanism is testament to the ever-greater importance that Africa is giving, via this quite unique instrument, to the promotion of good governance in different spheres of activity and to the readiness of the African countries that have voluntarily submitted themselves to this peer review exercise so as to further the establishment of modes and methods of government and administration that meet universal standards and rules.

This mechanism is barely beginning to reveal the full extent of its potential to promote good governance in Africa. The five reviews completed to date have allowed each country to acquire a better understanding of the realities of their situations, to acquire an awareness of their strengths, to develop a closer understanding of the challenges that they face and to draw up appropriate programmes for implementation.

This mechanism has also allowed them to highlight the institutional, administrative, economic, organisational and other weaknesses that are hindering the dynamics of development and modernisation of African societies. Lastly, it has allowed them to identify a major stock of good practices in Africa, which are shown to be an important source of experience and mutual enrichment among the African countries themselves.

Africa intends to consolidate the purely African status of this mechanism, firstly by continually improving the way in which it operates; then by shielding it from any politicking, from any potential attempts at internal – or, worse still, external – exploitation, designed to exert pressure or to use it for any purpose other than the one for which it was created.

When it comes to the involvement of our development partners in promoting good governance on the continent, quite naturally Africa has many expectations. Allow me to highlight certain expectations in the most urgent areas, areas in which the impact on the processes of transforming, developing and modernising African societies would certainly be the most visible.

Firstly, there is the matter of working to improve the fundamentals of governance on a global scale.

In this regard, we must stress that the group primarily and most heavily penalised by the impasse in the Doha Round is African cotton producers. It is aggravating their economic insecurity and hindering the prospects for the development and modernisation of their respective countries. The continuing weakness of foreign investment is making production costs more expensive and feeding unemployment that is already endemic despite the hard work carried out to attract capital. The closure of markets in the developed countries reduces the export prospects of African output and limits the potential for production and accumulation on the continent. The persistent shortcomings of measures to combat corruptors in the developed countries are hindering the ongoing fight against the corrupted and corruption in the African countries and are still serving to tarnish the image of the continent and its efforts to rid itself of this scourge. Preferred migration policies are openly justified by balances in the international labour market, while the grave implications of the brain drain for the development of the African countries are disregarded. The list, regrettably, is a long one.

Then there is the issue of providing Africa with specific support in the sphere of conflict prevention and resolution as well as that of post-conflict peacekeeping, fields in which the continent is implementing audacious measures and establishing innovative mechanisms. Whether we are talking about the early warning system, the African Force, combating terrorism, mine clearance or simply the provision of humanitarian aid, there is a vast array of opportunities for our development partners to contribute to the success of Africa's own initiatives. The same applies in the field of economic and social development, where again major opportunities are available for our partners to provide practical support designed to assist Africa in its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and meet other development targets.

Lastly, there is the prospect of assisting those African countries that would welcome support in implementing action programmes arising from evaluation processes that are designed to improve governance in various spheres of activity.

Madam Chairman,

We are in no doubt that our Forum quite rightly has an important role to play in contributing to the momentum provided by Africa. The recommendations arising from our deliberations will contribute to this, but so must our actions.

Our partnership is still subject to the test of time but also to the need for practical initiatives.

Thank you.