

**Speech by Mr. Abdelkadar MESSAHEL,
Minister of State for North African and African Affairs
on the topic of “Partnership with Africa”
at the 9th Forum for the Partnership with Africa
12-13 November 2007**

Mr. Chairman,

It is clear from our discussions that the reforms undertaken by many African countries to strengthen the democratic process, to improve the state of governance and to boost growth have unquestionably yielded positive results that require increased support from our Partners.

As I was able to point out during my speech on governance yesterday, in addition to a reduction in the number of conflicts, the improvement in growth rates (generally averaging about 6%) and the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law are further indicators testifying to the commendable efforts and progress made by African countries in honouring their commitments.

In this regard, we are delighted with the support provided by our partners, particularly our G8 partners, to the creation of the African Standby Force and with the support provided to help various African countries to reinforce their ability to deal with issues relating to peace and security, particularly the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We are also delighted by the fact that certain African countries have been able to have their debt cancelled under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

We also note with satisfaction the establishment of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, under the umbrella of the African Development Bank, and of the Investment Climate Facility for Africa.

We note with further satisfaction that the efforts of Chancellor Angela MERKEL led to the launch, on 25th October, of the EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure and the establishment of the appropriate Steering Committee. I am convinced that these initiatives will further pave the way to the construction of a joint EU-African strategy.

Even though we believe that we urgently need to reverse the downward trend that currently typifies the dynamics of development aid, we applaud the commendable efforts made in the field of ODA, just as we warmly welcome the decisions taken to that end at the Gleneagles and Heiligendamm Summits, designed to double such aid for Africa by the year 2010.

Nevertheless, we must stress that these significant initiatives still fall short of Africa's needs and of the commitments made by the international community, notably at the Millennium, Monterrey and G8 Summits.

Mr. Chairman,

It is no exaggeration to say that, if urgent action is not taken, Africa runs the risk of failing to achieve its Millennium Development Goals, particularly those of halving poverty, providing universal access to primary education, reducing infant mortality and improving maternal health, promoting sex equality and combating pandemics.

We are well aware of the scale of the challenges that Africa still faces as development is a colossal undertaking and the task an arduous one. Yet these challenges are not insurmountable provided that the political will that inspires us all is translated into action.

To that end, urgent measures need to be adopted in the following areas:

- Boosting official development aid. In this regard, we would stress that not only are we well short of the figure of 0.7% of GNP reaffirmed at Monterrey but just recently there has been a drop in ODA by volume;
- Accumulation of funding requires that long-term commitments be made;
- Easier access for the African countries to further subsidies and low-interest loans so as to allow those countries to escape the vicious cycle of debt;
- The establishment of adequate arbitration mechanisms to deal with the origins and treatment of illegitimate and abusive debt;
- The streamlining of procedures so as to allow further African countries to benefit from the HIPC initiative, notably the middle-income countries;

- Access for the products of the African countries to the markets of the developed countries by lifting or at least reducing customs and tariff barriers;
- The elimination of export subsidies for products destined for African markets. In this context, we would highlight the delay that has occurred in fulfilling the WTO commitments made at the Hong Kong Conference in 2005. The reduction and elimination of subsidies for agricultural produce require the signing of a multilateral WTO agreement;
- The acceleration of the Doha Round of trade negotiations so as to construct a trading system that promotes the integration of the African countries into the global economy;
- Extra resources to develop African infrastructure and to reinforce the ability to develop such infrastructure. In this context, it is important to point out that financial shortfalls remain a cause for concern for many African countries. ODA and private capital funding in sectors as crucial as transport, water and drainage cover just 20% of Africa's investment needs in those sectors;
- An increase in foreign direct investment flows. Although FDI flows increased from 17 billion USD in 2004 to 31 billion USD in 2005, we would point out that this upsurge only affects certain sectors and that Africa's share of global FDI remains low, amounting to no more than about 3%;
- A correction of the perceived risk factor in Africa through the promotion of investment, particularly in infrastructure;
- Extra funding for the agriculture sector and rural infrastructure. We note that there has been a net decline in agriculture's share of the ODA earmarked for Africa as it fell from 6.8% in 2001 to 3.6% in 2005. It would be worth our partners' time to explore the idea of creating an investment fund designed to support the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Mr. Chairman,

The exercise that we are carrying out must allow us to evaluate the progress achieved and it must highlight the shortcomings and constraints that have hindered our work - and thus the challenges that we must still address so as to honour our commitments.

To this end, we believe that greater clarity in our work requires the effective institutionalisation of evaluation and monitoring. In fact, such action is essential, notably through the establishment of an effective joint mechanism for the evaluation and monitoring of AU-NEPAD/G8-OECD commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

I remain convinced that, beyond doubt, we have made progress towards the fulfilment of our mutual commitments.

In the context of a mutually beneficial partnership, we must move on from the pessimism of analysis to the optimism of action. That is the purpose of our work and that is the vocation of our Forum.

Thank you.

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