



## Meeting of the Strategy and Policy Group Sahel and West Africa Club

13 - 14 September 2007  
Issy-les-Moulineaux, France

### Exchange of views on the development of the Sahel and West Africa Club's 2008-2012 Workplan

*Opening Statement by  
Mr. Mario Amano, OECD Deputy Secretary-General*

Dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to participate in this important meeting aimed at exchanging views on the development of the Sahel and West Africa Club's 2008-2012 Work Plan. It is the first time that I participate in the SPG meeting and I find it most interesting. I have read with great interest the documentation distributed to you by the Club to which Mr. Goerens has referred to. I am sure that this will serve as a useful basis for our open and direct discussions.

Let me thank all of you for being here with us today. This attests to the importance you attach to West Africa and the role played by the Sahel and West Africa Club. I am especially honored and pleased to welcome Mr. Jean de Dieu Somda, Vice-President of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) who will address this meeting following my introductory remarks.

This morning, I would like to say few words on the following topics:

- The importance given to Africa by the OECD
- OECD and the Sahel and West Africa Club
- The way forward for the Club

#### **1. The importance given to Africa by the OECD**

In the DAC and other OECD fora, it has been emphasized time and again that we need to reduce the gap between the developed and the not so developed countries. With the majority of the least developed countries in Africa being in West Africa, there is no question that a high priority has to be given by the international community to that part of the world. Not only for a better future for the region but also for greater security for all.

At the OECD, we are working in many different ways with our African partners. Let me highlight some examples:

- OECD through the African Partnership Forum is helping in the organization and follow of the G8 Summits that are giving a high priority to Africa
- Through the Development Centre and in partnership with the African Development Bank, OECD is producing the Annual Economic Outlook on Africa
- Through the CAD, OECD is focusing attention on international aid effectiveness and policy coherence
- OECD is also very much involved with its African partners in the implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism, policy dialogue in support of reforms, monitoring of development trends and progress.
- Through the Sahel and West Africa Club, OECD is working in close partnership with developed and developing countries, international, continental and regional organizations and the civil society to address the key issues relevant to the development of the region in the short, medium and long term, taking into account the complementarity of the promotion of development between the local, national, regional and global levels.

Let me conclude my remarks on Africa by saying that we fully recognise that while international development assistance is necessary, it is not sufficient however. Indeed, trade, investment, debt-related issues, mobilisation of national and local human and financial resources are also of critical importance. In this context, as a strategic framework for concrete action in Africa, the NEPAD has an important role to play, in conjunction with the efforts made at the local, national, regional and continental levels. The various TICAD meetings reaffirmed the key role of Trade and Investment for development as well as the role of south-south cooperation. .

## **2. OECD and the Sahel and West Africa Club**

The Club has always made significant efforts to clarify its specific role, its operational and methodological approaches and its partnerships within and outside the region, within and outside the OECD. The Club has attached a high priority to giving a bigger and louder voice to Africans themselves. The Club has also strengthened its partnership with the OECD Directorates, including as an active member of the OECD Development Cluster. I would like to highlight the dynamic role played by the Club as a member of the OECD Development Cluster which I am heading. The Club is committed to coordination, partnership for results with the rest of the OECD. I have been able to observe the excellent performance of the Club's management and of its staff.

I am also very pleased with the intensification in recent past of the cooperation between the Sahel and West Africa Club and other partners including ECOWAS, the CILSS, UEMOA, the African Union, UNOWA, UNECA, the African Development Bank, ENDA Diopol, ROPPA and many other partners. More information on this important topic will be provided during the meeting.

I believe that we owe it to the Sahel and West Africa Club for having introduced a more balanced reading of West Africa. While taking into account the problems and challenges of the region, the Sahel and West Africa Club along with its African development partners has developed a prospective vision of West Africa which focuses on the identification of the dynamics of change as well as the drivers of change. I will not go into the details. The documentation before you provides ample evidence of what I have just said. Let me simply add that over the last four decades, West Africa has experienced significant transformation.

As such, this region should not be perceived as a stagnant region, but rather as a region in constant evolution, and capable of significant adaptation and progress. The region should not be seen only in negative terms by the international community but also as a significant strategic partner.

The process of regional integration to which ECOWAS, UEMOA, the African Union and many others are dedicated is one important challenge. With an ever increasing population, the process of regional integration will become increasingly more significant to help address issues such as governance, employment and migration, investment, trade, poverty reduction and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The work done jointly by ECOWAS, the SWAC and other partners on food security, cross-border cooperation, peace and security attests to the specificity of the Club and its value added within the region

I am pleased to note that the Club is now focusing its work in four areas, thus helping to address the priority needs of the region and of its development partners:

- Medium- and Long-Term Development Perspectives
- Rural Transformation and Sustainable Development
- Local Development and the Process of Regional Integration
- Governance, Conflict Dynamics, Peace and Security

You will have an opportunity to exchange views on progress achieved during the period 2005-2007 and on the orientations for the Club's work during the period 2008-2012.

### 3. The way forward

The support to the SWAC by the international community is of critical importance to allow it to play a significant role in support of West Africa's development efforts. I sincerely hope that this SPG meeting will review thoroughly this very important issue.

Many other questions have been raised in the document before you. I will not go into the details but I invite you to discuss them and any other question you may have on your mind, so as to ensure that the Club could play an even greater and more effective role in the future to the benefit of the populations of the region and in support of the commitments of the rest of the world for West Africa.

I wish you full success in your deliberations.

Thank you.

\*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\*