On 1 January, the dawn of the new millennium, worldwide images of jubilation flashed across our television screens. One ceremony stood out for its sheer simplicity. In the cell where he spent 27 years of his life, Nelson Mandela handed a candle to South African President Thabo Mbeki, who handed it on to a child. The candle was a tiny flicker of light, yet it captured poignantly the commitment that Africa has for its future, a commitment that brings us here today.

This June, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the African Economic Research Consortium will publish a landmark report titled: "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century? " The tone will be tempered optimism. We have examples of countries that have leapt up the scale from "basket cases" to middle income countries boasting impressive growth rates: Mauritius and Botswana, to name two. But the challenges to our development are daunting. They call for a concerted campaign, a campaign of the will and of hard work, equal to our campaign for independence.

I am honored to be at this Summit to speak with you about what unites us..., our current situation, our possibilities and what we can do together to win the campaign for an Africa of human decency and economic success.

Where are we now?

First, Economic indices:

- As ECA's "Africa Economic Report 2000" shows, for five years running, Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) has grown faster than its population, reversing the falling living standards of the previous 15 years.

- Still, poverty is higher in Africa than in any other region of the world. Two out of five Africans subsist below a poverty line of less than $20 per month; the majority of these are women.

- Africa has the most unequal distribution of income of any region in the world.

Second, Social indices

- Half of Africa's children of school going age are out of school; this is
even lower in rural areas and among girls.

- Despite major strides that had been made in the eradication of malaria, the disease is on the rise again throughout Africa.

- Elsewhere in the world HIV/AIDS is on the decline. In Africa, HIV/AIDS has reached pandemic proportions, threatening to wipe out Africa’s fragile social and economic gains. Two-thirds of the world’s 34 million AIDS sufferers are in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet as countries like Senegal and Uganda show, with the necessary political will and resources, the AIDS pandemic can be rolled back.

**Third, Political indices:**

- According to a recent survey on political rights and civil liberties by Freedom House, 23 out of 50 African countries are classified as "not free". But overall, over the last decade Freedom House has moved Africa’s status from "not free" to “partly free” - a significant improvement.

- According to the OAU, 26 African conflicts have taken place since 1963, affecting 61 percent of the population. Today, 21 percent of Africa’s peoples are in war and conflict. Poverty, political instability and war go together.

**What needs to be done?**

None of us has all the answers to this complex list of challenges. But I would like to share with you what I believe are some of the key strategic interventions required.

**Resource mobilization**

To halve poverty by 2015 -- the target agreed at the 1995 World Summit on Social Development -- African economies will have to grow by 8 percent compared to the 4.4 percent growth rate last year. To grow at 8 percent a year, investments need to about 40 per cent of GDP. Even with major increase in domestic savings, there are still huge financing gaps.

The issue is not aid or trade, or debt relief or foreign direct investment, but rather a holistic framework for financing the continent’s development. Aid to Africa is declining at exactly the time when Africa’s abilities and plans are more sound than ever.

Considerable progress has been made on the debt front with a promising World Bank led initiative to provide relief for 36 countries. But funding for the initiative remains uncertain. Africa is calling on its friends in the debt-holding countries, including the U.S., to support the initiative, to ease up eligibility criteria for debt relief and to shorten the length of the work out period before relief is awarded.

Much of the "Battle in Seattle" late last year revolved around the skewed nature of global trade, despite the free trade era being championed by the World Trade Organization. High tariffs, anti-dumping regulations and technical barriers to trade in industrialized countries cost Sub-Saharan African countries $20 billion annually in lost exports. We lose more because of trade barriers than we gain from aid. We require open markets in the rich countries so that we can earn our way out of poverty.
Africa’s rate of return on Foreign Direct Investment is 29 percent per year, higher than any other region of the world. Annual average foreign investment flows have increased from $1.9 billion in 1983-87 to $6 billion in 1993-97. But this is just 4 percent of the total investment pouring into developing countries. In the face of global financial volatility, Africa’s nascent capital markets have also remained buoyant. Yet institutional investors remain resistant to the possibilities in Africa. African countries have undertaken significant economic reforms, but investment has not come.

**Regional cooperation**

In collaboration with the Organization of African Unity and the African Development Bank, we are actively promoting African regional integration and cooperation within the framework of the Abuja Treaty. That Treaty commits all African states to economic cooperation and integration, similar to the European Union. Regional integration is the key to Africa’s success in the 21st century. The challenge is for the subregional initiatives to march together and in step with the World Trade Organization.

**Information technology**

Information and communication technologies present some of the most exciting possibilities for Africa in the new millennium. For once, we have affordable (and increasingly cheaper!) forms of technology capable of benefiting Africa, rather than making the continent even more marginal. With new ways to communicate we can leapfrog through several stages of development; cut the cost of doing business; and narrow the gap of huge distances. A few years ago, only a handful of African countries were connected with the Internet. Now all are! E-commerce, regional radio and television, telecenters and computers in schools are starting to make an impact around Africa.

At ECA, we want to make sure that Africans are drivers, not passengers, on the information highway. We played a central role in launching a continent-wide effort to accelerate the use of information and communication technologies in Africa through the African Information Society Initiative. Our first African Development Forum of government, business, academic and civil society leaders last year was on the information age. Seventeen concrete initiatives came out of this Forum.

**Governance**

In our 1999 *Economic Report on Africa*, we concluded that for economic growth to be sustainable, all the institutions in the region that support democracy must be of high caliber. Ensuring and sustaining good governance must be an African responsibility, first and foremost. Good governance that comes as a string attached to an aid package simply will not endure. As the voice of the UN in Africa, we have established an African Governance Forum and a Center for Civil Society. We are developing qualitative indicators on good governance and an annual "African State of Governance Report."

**Social investment**

Social spending has become a major casualty of recent budget cuts in many African countries. To expect that Africa can progress when investment in its human capital is declining is a classic case of being penny wise and pound foolish. Social investment challenges of health, education, housing, water supplies and sanitation are enormous and demand the creativity and
partnership of all caring parties.

**Gender equality**

Since the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the world better understands the need to free women to become equal participants in development. This is not just a matter of rights but of good economic sense. It is past time to lead by rhetoric; it is time to lead by example.

**Preventing conflict**

The world has learned expensively that it is cheaper and far more humane to prevent conflict than to fight a war. To quote the UN Secretary General, "In the past twenty years we have understood the need for military intervention where governments grossly violate human rights and the international order. In the next twenty years we must learn how to prevent conflicts, as well as intervene in them." Peace can no longer be just about peace making and peace keeping. It is also about peace building.

I have described an Africa where there is hope; but where that hope is still fragile. I end by asking:

**What role is there for the US and African Diaspora in Africa's progress?**

It is almost trite to ask what role the world's superpower has in propelling Africa to greater heights in the 21st century.

We know how much of the US is built on the blood, sweat and tears of Africa. The African Diaspora is now nearly 13 percent of this great nation. But when it comes to the United States and Africa we don't see 13 percent; we see 1 percent: 1 percent of imports; 1 percent of exports; 1 percent of corporate investment and a modest slice of the 0.01 percent of the Federal budget that goes to foreign aid.

Europe, with different historical links to the continent, has long had a series of special trade and aid agreements with Africa which have helped us dramatically. Yet the African Trade and Development Bill, which could play this same sort of kick starting role for many African economies now waiting to take off, has still not passed the Congress. Just as the US has taken the lead in Africa on helping combat HIV/AIDS, there is considerable scope for a more proactive role from Washington on our core development challenges.

This brings me to my list of three things that each person here can do when you leave this auspicious gathering to help in a campaign for an Africa of human decency and economic success:

- **First, Become an Advocate for Africa:** For every devastating image of Africa you see on television, not far from that camera there is an image of people striving to develop. As a start, visit Africa. Spread the word about it. Become a personal lobbyist for Africa. Lobby for African products in your stores; lobby for strong US-Africa ties.

- **Second, Invest in Africa:** Investing in Africa is profitable. The Corporate Council on Africa conference on "Attracting Capital to Africa" in Houston last April was a sell out. Now is the time to put your money where your mouths are. You don't have to
be as rich as Michael Jordan, Stevie Wonder or Oprah Winfrey to invest in Africa. Whatever your income, you can invest in Africa, through such convenient ways as the mutual funds that concentrate on Africa. Members of other diasporas have accelerated development in their ancestral homelands through widespread individual investments. Surely African-Americans can do it, too.

Third, Invest politically in Africa: 40 percent of UN assistance currently goes to Africa. When the US pay its UN dues and when you make voluntary contributions to the United Nations, you are helping Africa. Foreign aid is not a dirty word. It is building schools and helping governments to be more effective, empowering people. Stand up for Africa! And, for goodness sake, if you leave here with only one item on your list of things to do, help pass the Trade and Development Bill!

In closing, I remember the African saying that a child who does not cry dies on its mother's back. So here is my final plea: Don't just claim the 21st century for Africa. Go out and make it Africa's century.

God bless you and thank you.