

## Press Releases

### Press Release No. 24/1997

#### **Good Governance the Single Most Important Issue for Africa's Future, Says UN Secretary-General as ECA/UNDP Forum Opens**

Addis Ababa, 11 July 1997 -- There is no single issue of greater importance to the economic and political future of Africa than good governance, and it must command the "full and lasting attention" of Africans, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared here today.

In a videotaped statement delivered to the First African Governance Forum which began this morning at the Economic Commission for Africa headquarters, Mr. Annan told delegates from 14 African countries, UN agencies, donor and NGO representatives that good governance was a key condition for sustainable development.

"[Good governance]", Mr. Annan said, "promotes the most salient features of a free and prosperous society: social justice, transparency, accountability in the management of public affairs".

Mr. Annan said he believed Africa was entering a "new wave of progress", based on peace, democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. These four pillars, he added, formed the "pillars of good governance".

In his opening remarks, the forum's host, UN Under Secretary-General and ECA Executive Secretary, K.Y. Amoako, told delegates the meeting sought to "establish a dialogue on governance issues among Africans and their partners in the international community, to facilitate sharing of experiences, and to foster consensus around best practices of governance".

Stressing that Africa's post-Cold War economic crisis was the result of "an insufficiency of peace, security and policy stability", Mr. Amoako argued that, with the current phenomenon of democratization, Africa must concentrate on capacity building.

"Only in this way can we assure that the process of economic reforms and political liberalization remains irreversible", the ECA head asserted.

ECA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are co-sponsoring the Forum as part of the UN System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa (UNSI) -- a 10-year plan launched by the UN in March 1996 to co-ordinate, leverage and consolidate the work of UN agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in Africa.

The UNSIA is focused on United Nations System collaboration at country level in key

development areas, including Education, Health, Water, Governance, Harnessing Information Technology for Development, and Promoting Food Security and Sustainable Livelihood.

Mr. Amoako and UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth -- who is also in attendance here -- are co-chairs of the UNSIA Administrative Co-ordinating Committee.

Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), told the Forum that there were "no ready-made recipes for democracy and governance" and as such "each society should generate its home-grown modalities for forging ahead in democracy".

"...While the fundamental principles of democracy and good governance are universal," Mr. Salim added, "their application varies from country to country". African countries were, therefore, "entitled to determine the application of democratic government on the basis of the socio-cultural values, taking into account their specific realities".

Mr. Salim listed four specific factors in good governance in Africa: the strengthening of the quality of leadership in Africa; sound management of economies; a strong judicial system; and independent and responsible media.

Norway, one of 18 donor countries invited to participate in the Forum, stressed the importance of education -- alongside participation, rule of law and transparency -- in the building of good governance.

"Investment in social capital represents a way out of poverty", said Kari Nordheim-Larsen, Norway's Minister of Development Co-operation, in a statement read on her behalf by Norway's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Sven A. Holmsen.

Ms. Nordheim-Larsen told the forum that governance was central to Norwegian aid policy. Norway, she reported, had established a trust fund in Africa on governance with UNDP in December 1995, and was encouraged to see that governance was an important component of the UNSIA.

Referring to the country reports prepared for the forum, Ms. Larsen added: "We are even more encouraged by the documentation before us, which clearly shows that progress is being made at the country level, and that the approach to the issue of governance is discussed and tailored to the country specific situation. I foresee... a continued strong Norwegian support for

the issue of governance in Africa in the coming years."

Turning to the issue of the UN reforms, Ms. Nordheim-Larsen said the principle of good governance was also important for international organizations.

Encouraging the UN Secretary-general to present "broad and comprehensive" reforms in his second track of proposals due 16 July, Ms. Nordheim-Larsen concluded: "In order for the UN system to have a greater impact at country level, we need a system which works in a much more

integrated way than at present. I encourage and expect all UN agencies to participate in good faith in the reform process. Turf battles among different agencies can no longer be permitted."

Also making statements at the opening ceremony were Dawit Yohannes, Speaker of Ethiopia's House of Representatives, and Anathassios Theodorakis, Deputy Director-General of the European Commission.

Some 14 African countries are participating in the two-day forum, with Prime Minister Kwassi Klutse heading the Togolese delegation. The full list of participants is: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Senegal, Uganda, Mozambique and Swaziland. Nigeria is participating as an observer.

Participating African countries will articulate their positions on the following themes:

- Decentralization;
- Constitutional and Judicial Reform and Human Rights;
- Electoral and Parliamentary Reforms;
- Socio-economic Management and Public Administration; and
- Empowerment and Participation.
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Three NGO umbrellas -- MWENGO, Forum of Women in Development, and FAVDO -- have also been invited to participate, following an NGOs Consultation that took place in Addis Ababa last May as part of the Africa Governance Forum process.

In addition to ECA and UNDP, several other UN system organizations and agencies are represented at the forum: ILO, IMF, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Centre for Human Rights, UN/DPA, UN/DDSMS, UNOPS, UNAVEM III, and the World Bank.

Observers include the Inter-Parliamentary Union, European Centre for Development Policy Management, Institute of Social Studies, African Institute for Economic and Social Studies, Institution of African Democracy, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Japan International Cooperation Agency, International Peace Academy, and the International Institute for Democracy

and Electoral Assistance, among others.

Representatives from the European Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Assistance Committee are also present.

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