

AUC/ECA Partners Dialogue

Remarks by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA

1 December 2009, Addis Ababa

Your Excellency, Dr Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Excellencies, Leaders of Delegation, Ambassadors,
Dear Friends and Colleagues

Let me join Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission in welcoming you to Addis Ababa for this first meeting of the Partners Dialogue Forum of the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa. We are pleased that you were all able to join us here today as we embark on an exciting new path of collaboration between our two pan-African institutions and our key development partners.

The ultimate purpose of our efforts in the AUC and ECA is to contribute to improving the lives of millions of ordinary Africans. This entails enabling them to overcome grinding poverty while living in peaceful conditions and having access to quality healthcare, educational services, nutrition and functional infrastructure amongst other things. It also means promoting growth and generating productive employment opportunities particularly for our young people, while protecting basic human rights, empowering the African woman and protecting her from violence.

These objectives have been broadly articulated in various ways including in Africa through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and by the international community in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With the adoption of NEPAD, now fully incorporated into AU structures, Africans took ownership of their development aspirations and responsibility for improving governance in the continent. With such commitment and other fortuitous circumstances in the global economy, Africa averaged a growth rate of nearly 6% per annum from the beginning of the millennium. The discourse on governance also became less contentious with more commitment to electoral democracy and extensive liberalization of the political and civil space.

We should not allow these encouraging signs of progress to be derailed by the current global economic crisis the impact of which has been compounded in many cases by the lingering effects of the food and fuel crisis which peaked early last year. The Doha Round of trade talks is in its ninth year without any tangible hope of coming to a successful conclusion and its expected development benefits are in several respects being overtaken by regional and bilateral trade deals. We are also reminded daily of the devastating effects of climate change in developed and developing countries alike and must act swiftly and collectively to reach a post-Kyoto agreement in Copenhagen although the signals emanating from on-going negotiations are not very encouraging.

Crisis is something that has often associated with Africa but now that the entire world is contending with various crises, it is evident that no country or region is immune from crisis. Our challenge in Africa, of course, is that our long-term development objectives should not be forgotten or overlooked due to collective concentration on resolving current global economic problems. It is also essential in this regard that Africa has a say in globally determined solutions be they peace and security, international trade and finance, climate change or institutions of global governance.

African countries cannot achieve their development goals individually and need to integrate to reap economies of scale, overcome trans-boundary challenges and negotiate as one in global processes. Moreover, just as partnerships are needed at global level to fashion collective responses to common problems, they remain essential for supporting the development process in Africa. It must be made clear that such partnerships must go beyond the provision of official development assistance and encompass a broader approach that includes consultations and dialogue to increase coherence and promote the achievement of desired results.

Partnership between Africa and the rest of the world should, of course promote aid effectiveness but should in addition include the sharing of knowledge and experience and promotion of greater global understanding. One integrated African market with ease of movement of people and goods will be of mutual benefit just as common discourse on migration, transnational crime and peace and security issues can bring about viable solutions. After all, piracy of the coast of Somalia which is now a global concern has its origins in peace and security issues in that country.

This approach and reasoning underpin what the AUC and ECA are striving to achieve at this Partners Dialogue. By coming together to organize this event we are signaling to our key partners that our two institutions are joined at the hip to deliver

services in support of Africa's development. Quite naturally, given our common constituency, this is not the first time that both institutions are working together. Indeed, we are mandated to do so by our Assembly of Heads of State and Government and this is authenticated by the AUC/AfDB/ECA Joint Secretariat whose Joint Support Office is now being realized.

However, our partnership along with the AfDB is not merely a matter of legislative mandates but also serves to combine our respective strengths and utilization of our comparative advantages to support the development aspirations of our member States. By so doing, we demonstrate to other stakeholders in the continent and our friends from other parts of the world what focused and genuine collaboration can achieve in all sectors of our work. The partnership that now exists between AUC and ECA is exemplary and is not merely a reflection of the virtues of the personalities involved but also reflects institutional arrangements that we have put in place to ensure that this vastly improved relationship stands the test of time.

From the ECA perspective, following a major repositioning exercise in 2006, our strategic orientation was re-aligned to promote regional integration in support of the AU vision and its NEPAD programme and to help the continent meet its special needs including the MDGs. The ECA Business Plan for 2007-2009 was then articulated to operationalize this new orientation and provide a viable framework for significantly up-scaling our work in support of these two pillars. It was in recognition of these improvements that the AU Assembly in July 2006 re-emphasized the role of ECA "*as key and necessary UN institution to assist and facilitate the work of AU and the RECs*".

The spirit of ECA's 2007-2009 Business Plan is carried forward into our 2010-2012 Business Plan which we will be discussing later. Suffice to say at this stage that by working together with a dynamic and purposeful AUC leadership and in tandem with their pillars of Peace and Security; Development, integration and cooperation; Shared values; and Institution and capacity-building, we will continue to provide top-notch knowledge generation, consensus building and technical advisory services across key themes like economic and social analysis; regional integration, infrastructure and trade; gender; governance; ICTs, Science and Technology; statistics; food security; land policy; and climate change.

Our joint efforts will help bring coherence and clarity in many aspects of Africa's cooperation with the international community. The annual Economic Report on Africa jointly produced by ECA and AUC has become the authoritative source of information on socio-economic conditions in the continent. Similarly, the MDG report submitted annually to the AU Summit by AUC, AfDB and ECA has become the authoritative means of monitoring progress in this key area within Africa. The Joint AU/ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance and Economic Development is now the major platform for official dialogue on Africa's development priorities and of course every body here knows that Africa will be speaking with one voice at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference later on this month.

To sum up, the partnership we are starting today must be a credible one that enables access, provides timely exchange of information, promotes interaction and engagement as well as a means of following-up on matters of mutual interest. I am confident that we have embarked on a successful and mutually beneficial journey and that we will achieve the aim of building an enduring strategic partnership.

Thank you for your kind attention.