

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND



YOUTH & LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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AT

THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM (ADF-V)

ADDIS ABABA, NOVEMBER 16-18, 2006

Your Excellency, Prime Minister Melese Zenawi
Secretary-General Kofi Annan
AU Chairperson, Alpha Konare
Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, ECA Executive Secretary
Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors, Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good morning, and what a real honor it is to be here for the Fifth African Development Forum. Thank you Abdoulie, and the ECA for inviting the AfDB. The choice of the theme of this Forum is a testament to your vision and leadership. Eight years to the MDG target 2015, I can hardly imagine a more timely and urgent issue for Africa—the future of its young, and our ability to give them hope and aspiration.

2. In the year 2000 Kofi Annan, Africa’s distinguished son, who has honored us with his presence today, convened world leaders at the Millennium Summit. Historic commitments were made—both by poor and rich nations; developing countries committed to better governance and ownership, while rich nations promised more resources, open markets, voice, action on global public goods and an overarching

commitment to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty. The unprecedented level of prosperity in the world made, and still makes this a laudable and attainable goal.

3. Young boys and girls who were beginning school during the summit would be 15 years of age in 2015; and those who were about to complete primary education will be about 25. This is what we may call the “**MDG GENERATION**”. They will in 2015 comprise 60% of the entire African population. Mr. Chairman, there is no mistaking that the future of Africa is largely dependent on our ability to attain as many MDGs as we can.

5. That, in turn is dependent on whether Africa and its partners can generate the political will to fulfill the commitments made by both sides. The future of our youth depends on our ability to expand our economies, that in turn requires investment which depends largely on peace, stability, rule of law a sound investment climate and the willingness of the international community to deliver on trade reforms and global public goods such as action on

climate change and communicable diseases—particularly HIV/AIDS.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

6. The discourse on Africa is, understandably, still about violent conflicts, pervasive corruption, drought, despotic rule and more. Yet democracy has never seen such a period of expanded space as it is today. These are not always smooth transitions, but on balance, military putschs have given way to elections.

7. In the Africa of today, 15 or so countries will grow this year at above 6%. Capital flight is giving way to \$ 12 billion of remittances, of which about 6.5 billion is to sub-Saharan Africa. While most countries are off-track for most of the Millennium Development Goals, at least five countries can attain most or all of the MDGs; while many of the reminders can at least attain the goals of universal primary education and gender.

8. Today I see ground for optimism: A new assertiveness and confidence is evident everywhere. Our challenge is to sustain progress and prevent slippages and reversals. This is what the challenge before us is all about.

9. I see three interlinked challenges: **leadership**, **institutions** and **capacity**. Only we in Africa can provide the needed leadership – but building institutions such as the civil service, the judiciary, financial oversight organs etc and reinforcing capacity is a collective endeavour that requires a long-term perspective.

10. There is no substitute for committed leadership; one that sees the need to generate shared economic growth, that is not rent seeking and holds public office in trust. I submit that this type of leadership has emerged in large parts of Africa – ready and willing to correct errors of the past. It is our task to support such leadership with the wherewithal – the capacity to build ever stronger institutions that can design and deliver.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

11. At the African Development Bank we are making our modest contribution, deploying over \$ 4 billion a year to support education, health, infrastructure, private sector development, etc. We have set out to do so in a constructive and innovative way, in the recognition that development is country specific and path-critical.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

12. Many of our youth live in post conflict countries or fragile states. By the nature of our mission we are called upon to continue operating in regions and countries with weak or dysfunctional institutions. This includes devastated or fragile nations emerging out of chaos and mayhem. How we do so very much depends on circumstances. We are appreciative of the leadership provided by the African Union and Chairman Alpha Konare in particular.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

13. Accountability is above all to the citizens of the country, not to donors and not to outsiders. Progress will hold and find meaning only if it involves ordinary people and, state legitimacy can only be reinforced in the process. The NEPAD codes of political, economic and corporate governance provide an African defined and owned comprehensive framework.

14. But Africa is not only demanding more accountability from itself and its leaders but also from the partners. It is also asking that international rhetoric be translated into practice; far too often in the past, commitments have been made only for goal posts to be shifted and ambitions to be revised down. Debts have been cancelled thereby providing additional resources for priority expenditures, new laudable initiatives are coming on stream. But, a question persists: will there be additionality, thereby enabling access to predictable, long term finance for the Millennium Development Goals? Doha has stalled; will it be relaunched

with the interest of developing countries frontloaded? Will there be vigorous action on climate change?

15. I am aware some of the issues here are complex, but this was the Monterrey Pact – of mutual accountability – on trade, more and better aid, voice, governance and attention to global public goods.

16. This forum provides the opportunity to maintain frank and open discussions, at all levels, and conduct a reality check on where each side is on their commitments. Eight years to 2015, we cannot afford to fail the youth of Africa and the world.

17. I would like, at this juncture, to point out the potential of science and technology, today enabling Asian countries to leap- frog several stages of the development path. Perhaps we have not over the last four decades given adequate attention to higher education. We are trying to correct for that at the AfDB by investing in scientific skills which will be critical for the transformation of Africa's economy.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

18. As I come to the end of my remarks, let me reaffirm the engagement of the African Development Bank to work alongside the African Union, the ECA, NEPAD and other partners to reduce the risks and costs of doing business in Africa and bring about a better investment climate. The long term goal, after all, must be an Africa which graduates from aid through a meaningful participation in global trade and investment, as China, India and many others have done.

19. The world economy is undergoing tectonic shifts before our very eyes with prosperity expanding across the globe – except in large parts of Africa. We have a mission to seize this opportunity. We will increase our chance of success if we pursue vigorously the Paris Harmonization Agenda, if we align to country priorities and systems, spell out a flexible and dynamic division of labor among partners and if we stay focused.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

20. Africa is demographically the youngest continent. Out of the 1.3 billion young people in the world today aged 15-25, approximately half a billion live in Africa. I like to see this as a huge opportunity; but an opportunity that will be realized only if we invest in you, the youth, in your education, skills and provide a secure environment that will promote economic growth. Provided we keep faith with our commitments we have every reason to be optimistic and confident about the future.

21. Once again, I wish to assure you of the support of the African Development Bank, and I thank you for your kind attention.