

Africa Industrialization Day
**“Job Creation and Entrepreneurship Development:
A means to accelerate industrialization in Africa”**
Friday, 22 November 2013

Statement of H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe,

**President of the sixty-eighth session
of the General Assembly**

**Delivered by H. E. Noel Sinclair
Deputy Chef de Cabinet**

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the President of the General Assembly, in whose name I speak here today, I pay tribute to the Director General of UNIDO, not only for his Organization's lead role in organizing today's Africa Industrialization Day observance, but more significantly for UNIDO's consistent support for Africa's industrialization. I also give praise to Maged Abdelaziz for the faithfulness and passion with which he approaches his responsibilities as Special Adviser for Africa.

President John Ashe considers to be quite appropriate and timely the emphasis placed on Industrialization in Africa, as is seen in the choice of the theme for this year's commemoration: *"Job Creation and Entrepreneurship Development: A means to accelerate Industrialization in Africa."*

In past decades, the narrative concerning Africa has tended, more often than not, to be decidedly negative. We so often heard or read of the "dark continent" a place destined to perpetual poverty and underdevelopment. But more recently, that narrative has changed considerably, as Africa is showing that history is not destiny. The story of Africa has come to be one of a continent in an increasingly assertive mode. Certainly not without its challenges, both domestic and external, and some of them quite weighty. But there is a particular dimension to the modern-day African reality, which forms an exciting backdrop to this year's Africa Industrialization Day celebration.

Statistics show that Africa has the potential for significant sustainable growth. In the past decade, for example, the continent experienced an average growth of 5 percent, though this growth continues to be unevenly spread, because of a variety of factors. The challenge for Africans is to ensure that policies and practices are put in place which will allow this potential to be amply realized. The challenge for the rest of us, the friends of Africa, is to ensure that we give all appropriate support and encouragement to that indigenous effort. To the extent that this growth consolidates and expands, so will the states of Africa be able to move toward the eradication of poverty, which continues to be a blight on the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no silver bullet, no magic formula whereby Africa's continuing and expanding growth can be assured. But there are lessons to be learned, not only from Africa's own past experience, but also from that of other developing regions of the earth. One of those lessons is that such growth is unlikely to be assured solely through the continued export of raw materials, whether from agricultural or from mining activities. The newly industrialized giants of Latin America and Asia earned that status not in this manner, but by moving their exports up the value chain to manufactured goods – the process of industrialization. But this lesson is certainly not lost on Africa. The prices which these states must pay for the import of their own re-processed and re-exported raw materials are soberingly instructive.

The related strategies of job creation and entrepreneurship are hand-maidens in the service of industrialization, and by extension, that of eradicating poverty. Job-creation is the point at which economic growth becomes meaningful to the poor. Entrepreneurs, guided by their own designs and desires, and their own personal assessments of what services or products are needed in the market, and where the greatest productivity lies, establish their own companies, often very small at the beginning. They nurture them and in expanding, they create larger numbers of jobs. With a flexibility and relative ease that are characteristic of less bureaucratic structures, they adapt to local conditions, define their needs in terms of skills, equip their employees accordingly, and in some cases are able to open new avenues of inclusive and productive activity. Entrepreneurs have made considerable and decisive contributions to the economic advancement of the newly industrialized countries and there are abundant indications that it will be the same for Africa.

Excellencies,

African states and entrepreneurs will, of course, decide what sectors or sub-sectors have the greatest potential for job creation, bearing in mind the countries' natural resource endowments, the energy of its work-force, the extent to which conditions exist, or can be created, for the unhindered release of that energy and, of course, the requirements of sustainability. In this latter regard, earlier this month, at the Regional Consultations meeting on the Sustainable Development goals, stakeholders from 53 African states identified green growth, industrialization and value addition, inter alia, as essential parts of the pillar of economic transformation and inclusive growth.

In this globalized village in which we currently live, this afternoon's Panel will be convening against the background of the availability of a vast array of data concerning the entrepreneurial instincts that are being unleashed in Africa, particularly where its youth are concerned, and its rapidly increasing job-creation initiatives.

In addition to all of this there is the readiness of UNIDO, a member of the family, to continue playing its valuable supportive role. I expect that out of this mix, the Panel will seek to identify the most effective ways of mobilizing international support for the maintenance of a climate which encourages and strengthens entrepreneurship and job-creation in Africa, and at the same time helps to advance the continent's industrialization goals within the framework set by its stakeholders. That support obviously needs to be more than political, for industrialization comes with a huge price tag, whether in infrastructure, or transport or personnel capacitation or other costs.

The President wishes you a successful event.

Many thanks