

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be with Africa today. This year there is much to celebrate. There is a sense of hope and optimism as the Organization of African Unity is transformed into the African Union later this year and as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) gets off the ground.

I am pleased to say that the Economic and Social Council was **among the first**, if not **the first** to welcome both the launching of the African Union and this very important Africa-designed and Africa-owned Initiative at its High-level Segment which was held a few days after the OAU Summit in Lusaka last year. Africa remains a high priority for the Council. Some of you may recall that the Council also addressed African development at its High-level Segment in 1995 and its Coordination Segment in 1999.

Indeed, as you may recall, last year, the Council devoted its High-level Segment to the theme "*The role of the United Nations in support of African countries to achieve sustainable development*". This meeting was mandated by the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa as the final link in the preparatory processes leading up to its final review and appraisal. It also served an important purpose of being the first occasion after the Millennium Summit of September 2000 to address how the United Nations, as part of the international community, was fulfilling its commitment to "meeting the special needs of Africa" as called for in Section VII of the Millennium Declaration.

A number of important messages emerged from that meeting which will be important elements in the debate both for the final review and appraisal of the UN-NADAF and for the Plenary Debate on NEPAD in September 2002.

Nowhere does Africa need the assistance of the international community **more** than in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. I am pleased to say that one of the important developments arising out of the High-level Segment last year was the consideration of the request by the General Assembly to establish an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict. The Council is in the process of consultations on final details of establishing the advisory group based on the proposals of the Secretary General's report and hopes, with your support, to begin with a pilot case in the near future.

Member States have repeatedly declared that the Council should be actively engaged in addressing the economic and social aspects of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This is a concrete example where the Council will try to mobilize the international community to prevent the reoccurrence of conflict and complement the work of the Security Council so that there is a smooth transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and longer-term reconstruction and development. The Council will need to work closely with the African Union and its subregional organizations.

There is growing evidence that most African countries, especially the least developed, will not be able to achieve several of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, largely because of the lack of adequate financial resources, weak institutional capacities to implement the action

plans required to meet the goals, the devastating consequences of HIV/AIDS, and in some countries, conflict. We must all invest our efforts to reverse these negative trends.

The Economic and Social Council will also pay particular attention to the 34 least developed African countries as required by the mandate given to it by the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The Council will have, beginning with its 2002 substantive session, an annual agenda item on the review and coordination of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs.

More than that, in its follow-up to the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, the Council, which has been given the important responsibility for follow-up, will work with the Bretton Woods Institutions to ensure that the issues of debt, market access, ODA and foreign direct investment which are of such critical importance for Africa's economic recovery and indeed, the transformation of the least developed countries, are meaningfully addressed. I believe that the Monterrey Conference has given some momentum to international economic cooperation for poverty reduction, which will benefit Africa. There is a clear recognition that without adequate resources, there is no chance that African countries will even come close to reaching the MDGs. We will work to ensure that there is no let up in the momentum for Africa.

It is clear indeed, that Africa will also feature in this year's High-level Segment of ECOSOC, which has as its theme, *the contribution of human resources development, in particular health and education, to the process of*

development. It is well known that within the recent past, there has been a marked regression in Africa's social indicators, particularly in the area of health and education. There is no need for a repetition of these stark figures. What is obvious is that, in deciding where the efforts of the international community should be focused to improve and upgrade the quality of human capital in developing countries, Africa is the region where particular attention will have to be paid. I urge all African countries to participate actively in the Segment so that you can have the chance to help shape global policy and achieve better results in this important area.

I assure you that the Council stands by its Ministerial Communiqué of 2001 that it will do what is required to ensure the sustainable development of the region. I look forward to working with the African Union, its subregional organizations and its members in this respect.

I thank you.