

20 November 2002

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,  
on Africa Industrialization Day**

Excellencies, Ladies And Gentlemen,

Today, the United Nations family observes Africa Industrialization Day, with the collective spirit of supporting and promoting the development of the African continent. It is also an occasion to remind ourselves that over 30 out of 48 world's least developed countries are located in Africa.

We are at the end of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa. The Decade was declared by the General Assembly covering the period 1993 to 2002 to focus on promoting sustainable industrial growth in the region. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the lead agency for this programme, has just launched the Industrial Development Report 2000/2003. The Report provides an analysis of industrial performance worldwide and the relevant ranking. It is an acknowledged fact that basic industry, and manufacturing industries in particular are indispensable to economic growth. A skilled work force including managerial cadres, access to capital and technology, good governance, peace and security are only some of the preconditions for industry to flourish. It is expected that by the year 2025 over fifty percent of Africa's population will be living in cities. In this context, harnessing of new information and communication technologies will be key to rapid sustainable development.

This year the special theme for this day is New Information and Communication Technologies (NICT). It is not a coincidence that through NICT, one of the most visible of developmental tools, opportunities for the industrialization of Africa have expanded. We find NICT are at the heart of mechanisms linked to developing new markets and improving existing ones, and have the capability of bringing villages and nations closer together, by facilitating electronic access to global knowledge, and creating an environment for learning.

The Programme of action envisioned in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that was conceived and finalized over a year ago, under the auspices of Africa's leaders, set itself the goals to promote accelerated growth and sustainable development, eradicate widespread and severe poverty, and to halt the marginalisation of the continent in the globalization process. NICT are an important tool towards achieving these objectives. NICT would facilitate human development, accelerate intra-Africa trade and improve access to markets of developed countries. Furthermore, NEPAD foresees the crucial role of NICT in the context of Africa's recovery and calls for concrete and practical steps to develop a proper information and technology infrastructure. The United Nations family, including UNIDO, UNDP, FAO and ILO should continue their support on removing the many constraints to using NICT that industry faces,

through awareness creation and building capacity for national information networking activities and in facilitating public-private partnerships in the context of lessons learned from the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) and the two industrial development decades.

This is a day to renew the commitments by all parties, including the African Union, The Economic Commission for Africa, Conference of African Ministers for Industry and the country specific bi-lateral public and private partnerships to sustainable development of Africa.

Thank you.