

28 May 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
on the 40th Anniversary of Africa Day**

Mr. Chairman
His Excellency Mr. Kenneth Kaunda,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely pleased to have this opportunity to address the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Africa Day.

I would first like to take the opportunity to comment on this year's theme, which is very telling of the current situation in the African continent. The theme of this year's commemoration, I'm sure, resonates very deeply with every African, for a number of reasons, but primarily because of the challenges Africa has faced and continues to endure, such as extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS, and in a broad sense, her search for self-definition in this time of rapid globalization.

This year's observance bears special significance because it marks the first-year anniversary of the African Union, the new voice of Africa, which was established to succeed her 4-decade-old predecessor, the Organization of African Unity.

Through this design, the African continent earlier on envisioned the integration of all the apparatus Africa would need to provide the framework, tools and common purpose needed to achieve its goals in the next millennium.

Recently we witnessed the birth of a very important initiative - the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which has forged a new path under the direction of Africa's leaders who, unfettered by the constraints of external conditions, are tirelessly working towards the ultimate goal of empowering and cultivating the potential of the African continent. The United Nations had expressed its strong support to this initiative during last fall's deliberations on this issue, and through resolution 57/2, the Assembly reaffirmed its conviction that, if given the essential assistance and tools, Africa would succeed in achieving the aspirations envisaged by its leaders.

A large part of the assistance Africa needs lies in the areas of Infrastructure, Integration and Development; moreover, Africa needs to find a way of strengthening the link between these integral factors of development. These issues still need to be thoroughly reviewed as they lie at the heart of the central mechanism that will allow the continent to build a stable foundation upon which other mechanisms and developmental strategies can be built.

These issues are currently deliberated through this African blueprint, and through its guidance, and in concert with efforts from other UN and non-UN bodies, represent the framework for a number of developmental issues that are currently being discussed and, in some cases, started to be implemented.

We have to continue with helping to bridge the infrastructure gap, mobilize Africa's resources, continue efforts in debt relief for highly indebted countries, and most importantly, support the conditions for sustainable development, through peace, security and governance.

It heartens me to know that the support of the world body for Africa has not waned, in fact, since the Millennium Summit Declaration, the commitment and effort towards Africa has grown.

Africa remains the UN's priority and thus the UN continues to play an important role in strengthening partnerships for development and peace. The continent is reliant on the international community to bring its physical and social structures together to harness its potential for development.

With this said, I should stress the African continent is a critical piece to the global mosaic of development of the entire world community, thus I urge all actors involved in the process to redouble their efforts to help Africa fulfill her destiny. At this critical juncture in Africa's development, we have to continue with our pledge to work towards the common goal of African parity with the global community. Let us share in her struggle towards the objectives of unity, peace and prosperity.

Thank you.