

20 November 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on Africa Industrialization Day**

Mr. Chairman of the African Group,

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to begin by conveying my appreciation for the opportunity to address you at this year's event to mark Africa Industrialization Day, although I regret that I could not be with you in person due to a prior engagement. I commend the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and African countries for their continued efforts to promote industrial development and economic growth on the continent.

Among the priorities that I established for the 62nd Session, in consultation with Member States, is the attainment of the MDGs, Financing for Development and Climate Change. These priorities are central to Africa's development aspirations and underscore the need for continued international support and cooperation to address the challenge of poverty and underdevelopment. These issues are inextricably interconnected and demand a collective international response. During this session I look forward to the continued support and cooperation of Member States to make further progress to address them.

I wish to commend the close working relationship between UNIDO and the UNDP in supporting industrialization and development efforts in Africa and elsewhere around the world. At the country-level UN system should continue to strive for greater coherence and coordination in order to support national efforts more effectively.

As we mark Africa Industrialization Day this year, we should all be encouraged by the recent announcement by the World Bank that African economies are now growing at the steady rates needed to reduce poverty and attract more foreign direct investment. Over the past decade, African economies have grown on average by 5.4 per cent. According to the World Bank, continuing these positive trends would be "critical not only to Africa's capacity to attain the Millennium Development Goals, but also to becoming an exciting investment destination for global capital."

However, Sub-Saharan Africa's share of world industrial output remains stagnant at less than 1 per cent. The underlying reasons for this should be addressed, including the continent's infrastructure gap and cost of doing business, which can be two to three times higher than Asia.

The African Union's decision to dedicate this year's Africa Industrialization Day to science and technology is appropriate and timely. Innovative and sustained technological development is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction. In this regard, the Connect Africa Summit which took place in Rwanda at the end of last month and resolved to increase investment in information and communications technology for development, is commendable and should be encouraged.

Industrial development in Africa, and indeed the rest of the world, should be environmentally sustainable. During the General Debate and at the High-level Meeting on climate change in September our leaders stressed our common responsibility to address the global challenges brought about by climate change. There is clearly a need for greater innovation to develop affordable low-carbon technologies. There is also a need for greater access to this technology across the developing world through technology transfer, capacity building and greater financial transfer.

As we mark this year's Africa Industrialization Day, let us all renew our commitment to sustainable economic growth and development in Africa through industrial and technological development, technology-transfer, trade and investment, so that the continent might be able to attain the MDGs by 2015.

Thank you.