

31 January 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the 10th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African
Union**

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Excellency President of the Commission of the African Union,

It gives me great pleasure to convey my warmest greetings to you on the occasion of the tenth African Union Summit.

The African Union and all its Members States have an impressive history of constructive participation in the General Assembly's work. The 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly has been marked by a more responsive, cooperative and substantive approach to the five priority issues on our agenda: accelerating achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, reviewing implementation of Financing for Development, addressing Climate Change, counter-terrorism and advancing United Nations reform. This strong emphasis on development has to serve the cause of a more comprehensive multilateralism. It goes without saying that the African Union has a crucial role to play.

We have passed the midpoint to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and there is only a small window of opportunity to fulfil our promises. The situation is critical and calls for urgent action. In order to get back on track, I am convening a High-Level debate on 1st and 2nd April, focusing on the poverty and hunger, education and health Goals, with a particular emphasis on Africa. May I take this opportunity to renew my invitation to Member States of the African Union to attend at the ministerial level.

We have also reached a critical juncture in the Financing for Development agenda. I therefore encourage you to remain actively engaged in the preparatory process in the run up to the Review Conference in Doha, at the end of the year. A successful outcome will provide a further catalyst to our collective efforts to achieve the MDGs. Progress on development is possible but a step change is needed. Above all we must demonstrate the political will and deliver on our promises. If we are unable break from 'business as usual' millions living in poverty around the world will be left without hope.

May I congratulate the many African countries that have begun to build solid economic fundamentals for growth and good governance. However, this progress could be threatened by the current economic turbulence, rising energy and food prices. I therefore commend the Summits focus on 'Industrialisation' as a means to promote domestic private sector lead growth

in Africa. But for industrial development to be viable over the long term it must also be environmentally sustainable.

Progress made at the Climate Change Conference in Bali is promising. However, we need a collective global effort and stronger partnerships to address this unprecedented challenge. For this reason, I will convene a High-level thematic debate on 11-12 February to discuss the most effective role the United Nations system can play to address Member States needs. As the continent most affected but least responsible for climate change, I would encourage a strong African voice at the debate. And, in addition I will convene a special follow-up meeting to focus on the specific needs of Least Developed, Landlocked and Small Island Developing States.

The recent terrorist attack on the United Nations Mission in Algeria grimly reminds us that no country is immune from the threat of terrorism. International unity and resolve is essential to tackle this challenge. This year the General Assembly will conduct the first review of the implementation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Regional organizations like the African Union have a key role to play and the United Nations is ready to support effective implementation.

These four priorities - accelerating achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, reviewing implementation of Financing for Development, addressing Climate Change, and counter-terrorism can only be met if the United Nations is stronger, more dynamic and responsive. United Nations reform is our fifth priority. By making timely and concrete progress we can also enhance the role of the General Assembly in strengthening the UN system as the fundamental framework of international cooperation. Reform is never easy. It requires sacrifice, foresight and leadership. May I take this opportunity to thank the Member States of the African Union for demonstrating these qualities to enable progress on management reform and coherence across the UN system. In particular, we look to your leadership for a way forward on the pressing need to make progress on Security Council reform, including intergovernmental negotiations.

Finally, I would like to offer my sincere support for a successful and productive Summit, also, to commend the Member States of the African Union for their steadfast support and commitment during the first half of the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly. We have a busy second half and I look forward to your continued cooperation.

Sincerely,

Srgjan Kerim