



Opening Remarks to the Briefing on the UN's Engagement with
the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

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Excellencies,

I am greatly honored to address you this morning in support of strengthening the UN's engagement with NEPAD.

I believe that ensuring Africa's development should be a strategic task for the entire United Nations system.

NEPAD is an excellent platform for us to move forward *together*, for it has established itself as a credible international partner in providing a realistic vision and policy framework for the continent's 21st-century renewal and development. As President of the General Assembly, I fully endorse NEPAD's work as an African-owned and African-led blueprint for the future.

In my previous capacity, I was privileged to travel to Africa on close to 40 different occasions for bilateral visits or to attend ministerial meetings and summits of the African Union.

For me, Africa is a place of enormous potential and endurance. It has shown great determination to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, including centuries of exploitation unique in the annals of human history.

Excellencies,

As many African states celebrate five decades of their independence, allow me to reflect back for a moment on the role the Non-Aligned Movement played in the continent's quest to affirm its dignity on the world stage.

Perhaps no foreign policy achievement in my nation's history fills me with as much pride as the role that we played in NAM.

For me, its 1961 Inaugural Summit in Belgrade represents the moment when the empowerment of the majority of the human race became irreversible. At its birth, the Movement asserted the aim of establishing what the First Belgrade Declaration termed "new order based on cooperation between nations, founded on freedom, [sovereign] equality, and social justice for the promotion of prosperity."

I have cherished this legacy throughout my career. As President of the General Assembly, I want to continue and build on this way of engaging with Africa, encouraging African solutions to African challenges.

Excellencies,

The United Nations—in large part thanks to the hard work of the Secretary-General and his Special Adviser on Africa—has become an important actor in the efforts to achieve the full political and economic potential of the continent.

Somalia's eight-year political transition came to an end with the election of Professor Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President, opening a new phase of peacebuilding in the country.

Sudan and South Sudan are negotiating a series of agreements to fully normalize their relations.

These are two encouraging trends—and thankfully, there are many more. Yet the grave security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel remains truly alarming. I believe it requires our urgent attention.

The UN's recently adopted Resilience Action Plan for the Sahel—combining short-, medium- and long-term goals—is designed to enable the region to overcome a persistent pattern of recurring and increasingly acute crises.

One of the most dangerous is the threat of secession. In Mali, terrorists have taken over some of the country's northern territories, displacing hundreds of thousands and impacting the stability of neighboring countries.

We must strongly support Mali's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as that of every other UN Member State. This includes the countries of the Great Lakes region—another worrying area.

With all due respect to existing efforts to ameliorate the crisis, I do not think that we are devoting enough resources to address the complex challenges facing this part of the world. As President, I will work with all relevant stakeholders to help generate the political will necessary for peace and security to fully take hold.

Excellencies,

The Millennium Development Goals must remain at the core of our shared vision for a prosperous, peaceful and equitable Africa.

We hear predictions that a number of countries will not achieve the MDGs by the 2015 deadline. I believe, however, that by redoubling our efforts, the targets can still be largely met. I look forward to hearing from African delegations what the General Assembly can do to ensure expedited progress over the next three years. One of the most important questions we face, in my view, is how to overcome the lack of implementation of monetary commitments, as per Resolution 66/293.

We also have to keep looking at the longer term. That is why the General Assembly will need to focus on the post-2015 agenda—especially as it applies to Africa.

This body has been mandated to implement what was agreed by world leaders in June in Rio. As President, I will push preparations for a High-Level Forum to be convened at beginning of the 68th Session. I will also engage with Member States on the establishment of a Working Group to define a list of Sustainable Development Goals for consideration and adoption by the plenary. African concerns, and those of the rest of the developing world, should be high on the agenda—including those that fall within NEPAD's six areas of focus, starting with youth employment and infrastructure expansion.

I also wish to underscore the importance of ensuring that our efforts and those of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda are mutually reinforcing and complementary.

Additional resources will be needed in order to successfully implement the Rio+20 conclusions. I will prioritize the establishment of an intergovernmental process, under the framework of the General Assembly and in line with the mandate this body was given in Rio, to recommend options for an effective financing strategy.

I believe that moving forward in the bold undertaking envisaged by the Rio+20 Conference not only complements, but will decisively reinforce, all other efforts to strengthen international peace and security, especially in the African context.

Excellencies,

A number of African countries are the hardest-hit victims of the global economic crisis. Despite this troubling reality, growth rates in many parts of the continent have been resilient. Over the past several years, trade and investment has expanded, the continental-wide internal market has been built up, and macro-economic indicators have improved. By any measure, this progress is remarkable and unprecedented.

Yet much more needs to be done in a number of areas. This includes finding solutions on how to lessen the difference in living standards between urban and rural populations, and properly addressing the increasing disparities amongst the continent's economies.

To be even more effective, I believe the various assistance mechanisms should more closely reflect NEPAD's agenda, and that of the individual African Member States. The voices of those in need must be heard loud and clear. What they say has to serve as a significant guidepost for moving forward.

Excellencies,

To bridge the gap between the promise of Africa and the reality on the ground, I believe the United Nations must continue to give priority to the continent's singular needs. The UN's agencies, programs and entities need to become engaged as never before in the task of supporting African nations to unlock their full potential.

In my view, the overall credibility of this Organization may well stand or fall depending on whether it can help fulfill what one of the world's greatest living statesman, Nelson Mandela, once defined as his "dream of an Africa that is at peace with itself, [the] dream of realizing the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve [for good] the problems of this continent."

Thank you for your attention.