Briefing at the World Economic Forum Meeting - Millennium Africa Renaissance Program - Implementation Issues

Davos 28 January 2001

It is significant that in a sense the first formal briefing on the progress in developing this programme is taking place at the World Economic Forum meeting. The success of its implementation would require the buy in from members of this exciting and vibrant forum!

The MAP programme is a declaration of a firm commitment by African leaders to take ownership and responsibility for the sustainable economic development of the continent. Our starting point is a critical examination of Africa's post independence experience and acceptance that things have to be done differently to achieve meaningful socio-economic progress, with out which it would not be easy to achieve our historic task of improving the lives of our people.

Our programme contains a vision, perspective and the outlines of a plan for the redevelopment of Africa. It clarifies our objectives and approach to development projects that are going to be appraised, further developed and negotiated with our partners in Africa and the rest of the world during the next few months.

We have developed the outlines of a concrete programme of action that is multi-faceted and priority areas it would cover include:

- Creating peace, security and stability, and democratic governance without which it would be impossible to engage in meaningful economic activity;
- Investing in Africa's people through a comprehensive human resource strategy;
- Harnessing and developing Africa's strategic and comparative advantages in the resource based sectors to lead the development of an industrial strategy;
- Increasing investments in the Information and communication technology sector without which we would not be able to bridge the digital divide;
- Development of infrastructure including transport and energy; and
- Developing financing mechanism.

The objectives we want to achieve through its implementation include the acceleration of efforts to eradicate poverty on the continent and to significantly increase new investments by mobilising both domestic and especially foreign savings.

Participating African leaders would form a Compact committing them to the programme and a Forum of Leaders who would make decisions about sub-programmes and initiatives and review progress on its implementation. Every attempt will be made by the forum of leaders to be inclusive of all countries that agree to the elements of the Compact.

The plan envisages both Africa wide and regional initiatives. Conflict prevention and eradication of infectious diseases are examples of programmes that will be continental in scope. Economic development initiatives like the development of agriculture and agro-industries, economic infrastructure, promotion of competitiveness and economic integration will be managed at regional or sub-regional levels.

Another continental initiative would be the development of regulatory frameworks for key sectors like telecommunication and energy. The Africa Connection (the telecommunication strategy for Africa already agreed to) is a case in point. The adoption of the Africa plan will accelerate implementation work of this project.

African governments are already working together on conflict prevention and resolution. The organisation of African Unity has taken firm resolution to discourage usurpation of power and military coups and has taken concrete action to resolve conflicts in many parts of the continent.

Another important prerequisite is a partnership with the rest of the world, especially the developed countries, multilateral institutions and (global and national) private sector players. We have already engaged western political leaders and we feel confident that is considerable goodwill and commitment to our programme from them.

In a world where perceptions irrespective of the reality appears to be everything we would have to give significant attention to counter the erroneous legacy of Afro-pessimism. We see a clear role for the many foreign business people who have profitable ties with Africa.

For a range of complex reasons African countries (with a few notable exceptions) have weak states. An essential step in the implementation of the programme would be to strengthen capacity of these states. We see the need to create a continent wide programme to develop this capacity with the support of developed countries, the private sector and multilateral institutions.

The focus of the program is not increased AID but increased investments in viable infrastructure and business opportunities. Targeted aid and technical support to address capacity constraints and urgent human development priorities would also be required.

Participation will be open to all African countries prepared and ready to commit to the underlying principles guiding the initiative. We intend to brief all African Heads of State over the next few months. Our aim is to be as inclusive as possible. Thereafter substantive consultations with leaders of the developed countries and multilateral institutions would take place.

This is the first briefing of international business leaders. It will be followed by other briefings and consultations, both at country and regional levels. The implementation of the plan will commence as soon as briefings have been completed and commitments made by a critical number of African countries. This point, we expect would be reached within the next six months. Countries that are not ready will be welcome to join later.

In the preparation of detailed plans support from institutions like the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the United Nations Commission for Africa would be requested. Account will be taken of major development initiatives like the Strategic Partnership with Africa (a World Bank led initiative), Poverty Reduction Programme Papers (led by the IMF), and Cairo Action Plan (the EU - Africa Partnership), etc.

Full account will be taken of planning that has already been done on projects and programmes that are in line with the new plan. The call on business leaders is to partner Africa in her resolve to claim the 21st century. The commitment to make Africa the preferred destination for both domestic and foreign investors is very deep. Today we are inviting business to work with us in creating the necessary conditions.

We propose a Global Partnership for Africa's development and inclusion in the world. This poses a challenge and an opportunity to all countries of the world. The continued marginalisation of Africa from the globalisation process, and the social exclusion of the vast majority of our people constitute a serious threat to global social stability. Simultaneously the establishing of sound governance at the global level remains incomplete, but is essential for the sustainability of the globalisation process. Implementation of our programme will not only be a major step forward in developing effective global governance but also make a profound contribution to the future welfare of the entire globe.

Thank you.