

## **Speech at the United Nations University**

Tokyo, Japan, 2 October 2001

Professor van Kinkel;  
Your Excellencies;  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very happy to have this opportunity once more to speak here at the United Nations University. I bring you warm greetings from the government and people of South Africa.

We meet in a sombre mood occasioned by the heartless terrorist attacks against the United States of America on 11 September this year. The world has spoken with one voice against these heinous acts and I am sure that you will agree with me in reiterating our condemnation of the attacks and killings of so many innocent people.

Later on I will return to the challenges I believe face both the developed and developing countries in the wake of these attacks.

For many years Japan was home to the world's oldest map of Africa. Drawn by a Chinese cartographer in 1402 to prepare the navigation to Africa by the Chinese Admiral, Chang Ho, this map has been part of the collection of the Ryukoku University in Kyoto for years.

Seemingly, the university itself merely preserved this important map until the Speaker of our National Assembly in South Africa, Dr Frene Ginwala, visited the university and had access to the map.

Dr Ginwala pursues a project according to which she collects African maps better to understand and appreciate the history and identity of the African continent and her historical place in relation to the rest of the world.

Indeed, Africa has a long history of relations with many countries and peoples of Asia.

Long before Africa and the West came into contact, there were ongoing contacts between the people and cultures of Asia and Africa. These contacts took place through complex networks of diplomacy and trade.

By the 10th century there was a strong, bustling and established export and import trade between Africa and Asia. The east coast of Africa, from Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa, was a hive of activity as traders bought and sold a variety of goods.

More than 900 years ago, there existed a rich and prosperous Mapungubwe Kingdom in South Africa.

This Kingdom, whose wealth was based on the mining and processing of minerals, had extensive and vibrant trade relations with the countries of Asia.

For many years, there was close interaction between Africans and Asians, even before the 'discovery' of the Indian Ocean Route by Vasco da Gama.

Later, when the Kingdom of Mwene Mutapa emerged in Zimbabwe - also based on mining and processing - the same trade relations with the countries of the East continued.

In 1414, a special envoy of the Kingdom of Marindi in Kenya visited China and in an act that demonstrated close affinity and friendship between the peoples of Asia and Africa, handed over one of the most revered and gracious African animals, a giraffe, as a gift to the Chinese Emperor.

I am citing this history to demonstrate that our countries and continents have a long and enduring relationships that must guide us today as we constantly seek to strengthen and deepen cooperation for our mutual good.

I am happy that we are retracing this history here in Japan because I believe that we are witnessing a very impressive growth and consolidation of relations between Japan and the African continent.

In this context, I must also mention the historic visit of your former Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori, to our country and to sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of this year. During this first ever visit to our part of the world by a serving Japanese Prime Minister, the then Prime Minister said: "I chose to visit Africa at the dawn of the new century because I definitely wanted to stand on the soil of the African continent and express directly to the African people the firm commitment of the Japanese people to open their hearts along with you, to sweat and expend all our might to aid in the process of Africa overcoming its difficulties and building a bright future".

His message was very clear, "that there will be no stability and prosperity in the world in the 21st century unless the problems of Africa are resolved".

Japan is for us in Africa, an important and inspiring example of how to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to become one of the leading economies in the world.

The impressive lesson that is found amongst the Japanese people - the sheer energy, industry and innovation - has on numerous occasions, helped to build and rebuild this country from setbacks, including the destructions and ruins of the Second World War.

Perhaps because of your own history, you have taken upon your shoulders the task of assisting the developing countries to break away from the stultifying underdevelopment that afflicts them.

Accordingly, Japan is today the world's largest contributor of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

From our own interaction with the leadership of this country, it has always been clear to us that Japan did not become a major Official Development Assistance donor because of some selfish reasons.

Instead, we firmly believe that you did so because of your deep desire to assist developing countries to pull themselves out of the morass of poverty, disease and degradation.

Your commitment to the development of Africa is further demonstrated by the important initiatives through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which started in 1993 and continues to be a valuable platform of engaging developmental issues.

It is because of these and many other reasons that we are confident that this country will be amongst our strongest partners in our new initiative of putting Africa on a sustainable development path.

Our strong belief that we can count on our cooperation with Japan is also based on the fact that the recent process that led to the commitment of an alliance for development between the developed and developing countries, was largely initiated by Japan, when Presidents Obasanjo, Bouteflika and myself were invited to enter into dialogue with the leadership of developed countries in Tokyo on the eve of the G8 Okinawa Summit last year.

Chairperson

I wish to discuss briefly with you the vision and practical steps that we think we can take together to advance the development of Africa.

We do this because I believe that you see in our success, as a continent, the possibilities of creating space for development and the opening of ideal opportunities for the mutual benefit of Japan and Africa.

Perhaps a starting point for the appreciation of the challenges that gave rise to the need, firstly, to articulate the vision of the African Renaissance and subsequently the enunciation and elaboration of this vision in the form of the African Union and the New African Initiative, is for all of us to begin to grapple with the question: what exactly is this Africa! With your kind permission, I would like to start by referring to what the historian John Reader says in his book 'Africa - an autobiography of the continent': "Africa is the Earth's oldest and most enduring land mass. Ninety-seven percent of the continent has been in place and stable for more than 300 million years, most of it for more than 550 million years and some for as much as 3,600 million years. It is a story of accretion that records a large and significant fraction of the history of the Earth. Incontestable forces assembled a continent as millions of years flitted by. This is a timescale on which the average human lifespan is close to irrelevant." Reader continues: "Consider: 5 million years spans all of human evolution; 670 million years encompasses the evolutionary history of all animal life; 3,600 million years goes back to the beginnings of life itself.

Africa has seen it all, and preserves the evidence. Rock formed more than 1,000 millions years ago still lies in horizontal plane - undistorted; many ancient types of sediment are hardly touched by metamorphic processes. No other part of the world reveals so much of the Earth's structure and history so clearly, from the beginnings to the present." (John Reader, Africa - A Biography of the Continent, pages 9 - 10, published by Hamish Hamilton 1997.) Chairperson I am certain that we will all be interested to know that the part of Africa that is 3,6 billion years old to which John Reader refers, is found in South Africa in a place called Barberton Mountain Land.

The evidence of the age of the Barberton Mountain Land was found on the cherts of the Fig Tree formation. One of our museums in Pretoria has some of the small rocks on which the evidence of the Age of the area was fossilised.

Scientists who have studied these rocks from the Fig Trees concluded that the first form of life on Earth, in a single cellular form, emerged in Barberton, 3,6 billion years ago.

Accordingly, chairperson, one will make bold to say that those of us interested in the history of the evolution of the Earth, have to look at the history of Africa. If we wish to examine the history of the genesis of life, that evidence points to the history of Africa.

And as is now well established, if we want to look closely into the history of the beginnings and evolution of humanity that history is also in Africa.

Of course, all these have been corroborated by the rich and unique African fossil evidence. Indeed, nowhere on Earth is there a concentration of fossil records that reveal so much about the Earth, the evolution of life and of humanity, than those found on the vast expanse of the African landscape, especially in the south and east of the continent.

This great heritage inspires many of us to be driven by the conviction that we have a responsibility to ensure that this ancient continent, which has contributed so much to the development of our common globe, should, once again, take its place among the other continents as we all strive together to create a better world and a better life for all.

Today, as we know, Africa is a continent of immense size and great diversity in its landscape and climates, conditions that have, more than on any continent, created space for many evolutionary transformations that took place over a long period of time.

This diversity, has at one time, ensured an abundant life, at another, cursed the continent with speedy and mass extinction of its species.

Africa's abundant vegetation made it the first continent whose conditions were favourable for human habitat and, as a result gave birth to humanity itself.

Yet, the same rich vegetation gave Africa malaria, sleeping sickness, yellow fever, bilharzia and river blindness.

This is a continent that has suffered the forced mass exodus of its most able-bodied sons and daughters to become slaves in far away lands. Many amongst these Africans perished in the violent turbulence of the seas.

Again, as we all know, this is the continent with the largest deposits of gold, diamond and many other precious metals. However, few of the necks of its citizens glitter from adornment with refined jewellery.

The continent's children have laboured hard to help cultivate cocoa plantations. Sadly though, for many of the continent's people, the closest they have come to the aroma of the chocolate has been the sight of its appealing colour on the billboards.

Most if not all of us in this hall know the picture of Africa as a continent whose people have been the victims of centuries and decades of the indecency of war and the brutality of insane conflicts.

Clearly, we have to bring all this to an end! It may be that history will record that the beginning of the present century and millennium marked the beginning of a new chapter in Africa's destiny.

Depending in good measure on what we, as Africans do, but in cooperation with the rest of the world, the possibility exists that our continent has taken to a high road leading to peace, prosperity and development for the millions of the people of Africa.

Our continent has taken two important decisions to expedite the processes towards political and economic integration. These decisions have found expression in the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme, currently known as the New African Initiative.

These major decisions are based on a number of critical propositions.

The first among these is that as Africans, we can and must pull our continent out of the situation of poverty and underdevelopment in which it is currently immersed. We are therefore saying that not only should this be done, but that it must be done.

We make this determination on the basis of our own experience. The decades since the independence of the majority of our countries have exposed us to what should not be done in politics, in the economy and the development of society.

We know what makes for conflict, impoverishment and further underdevelopment. Because we know what should no longer be done, necessarily we had to ask ourselves the question - what is to be done! The first thing we have therefore done is to say a new begin ning must and will be made.

Another of these propositions is that such is the reality of interdependence among the countries of our continent, that it is not possible for anyone of them to achieve all-round success on its own. Accordingly, we are all of the view that our future lies in regional and continental integration.

This will require that we recognise the reality that we will each, as nation states, exercise our sovereignty within the context of a process of mutually beneficial integration such that we do not sacrifice the objective of a better life for our people to a desire merely to boast, in poverty, that we are proud sovereign states.

The third of these propositions is that we will not achieve success unless what we do to realise this goal is based on what we ourselves, as Africans will have decided is the correct path that we must take.

As Africans, we must therefore own whatever programmes are put in place to drive our continent towards a better future. This also means that we therefore bear a principal responsibility to ensure that these programmes are implemented and actually succeed.

The fourth of these propositions is that the huge transformation that we seek to achieve can only happen if the masses of the peoples of Africa are involved in this project as conscious actors for their own emancipation from conflict, poverty and underdevelopment.

Necessarily, therefore, this project cannot merely be a matter for the African elites, with the masses of the people being passive beneficiaries of what benefit accrues from the process of Africa's reconstruction and development.

The fifth of the propositions to which we have referred is that, to succeed, we require to enter into partnership with the rest of the world to secure its support for the mutually beneficial success of the programmes that we ourselves would have elaborated .

It was for this reason that we named the project for the socio-economic development of our continent, the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme. Whatever the name that is finally decided, the reality is that this partnership during this millennium is critical elements of the building blocks that will help us ensure Africa's recovery.

As we have already said, to respond to these propositions, Africa has decided both on the African Union and the New African Initiative. We must therefore proceed to look at these to see what they mean.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union, passed by almost all the parliaments of Africa, seeks to move the continent towards unity and economic integration.

Some of the important objectives of the African Union, as contained in the Constitutive Act, are to:

- achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the people of Africa;
- promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;
- promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance;
- promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies;

In order to achieve the above objectives some of the important organs of the African Union are:

- the Pan-African Parliament;
- the Court of Justice;
- the Economic, Social and Technical Council;
- the African Commission on Peoples and Human Rights; and

- the Special Organ for Peace, Stability and Security.

These important objectives and organs of the African Union seek to enable the African continent to effectively address the challenges of enhancing the economic, political and social integration and development of the peoples of Africa.

This will be achieved by further strengthening relations between African countries as well as working in partnership with the rest of the world for the mutual benefit of all.

The African Union provides the continent with effective institutions and organs that will ensure that programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and underdevelopment succeed.

The Union will serve as a strategic mechanism to advance the objectives and programmes of the New African Initiative.

As we have said, the New African Initiative is another pillar that constitutes a practical measure for the realisation of the African Renaissance.

It seeks to re-position the continent within the international scheme of things and, among other things, argues that the African continent is an indispensable global resource base.

These resources that have served humanity for millennia, and have enriched people other than the Africans, are mainly the mineral, oil and gas deposits; the unspoilt rain forests and the fauna and flora; the rich and diverse fossil records; and the rich culture.

The New African Initiative therefore looks into ways and means of ensuring that the natural riches of the continent should benefit the African people.

Africa cannot continue being merely a provider of raw materials. We therefore are faced with an urgent challenge to train and equip Africans to participate practically and meaningfully in the refining and processing of these raw materials.

Accordingly, through the New African Initiative we will establish an African School of Mines System, which will be responsible for the education, development and skills training at all levels.

Testing laboratories and certification organisations will also be set up and linkages and partnerships will be made with international structures.

In this regard, Africans are themselves setting the agenda for the renaissance of the continent.

Through this Initiative, we are saying that instead of depending on handouts, let us build partnerships that will bring about sustainable development.

The agenda of this development will be based on regional and national priorities and therefore provide the required flexibility and diversity for innovative engagements.

For instance, one of our priorities is to ensure that we deal urgently with the question of infrastructure. Most of sub-Saharan Africa, as we are all aware, suffers from very poor infrastructure, be it transport, communication or energy infrastructure.

This inhibits development on all fronts - in production, agriculture, and access to modern technology and even service provision.

And because there has not been sufficient co-operation between countries and regions, there has been an absence of a unified voice on priorities.

Furthermore, Africa is lagging far behind in crucial areas such as telephones, broadcasting, computers and the Internet.

Clearly, there is a need to improve teledensity and ensure that households and factories have sufficient telephone lines.

Our new Initiative has put the target of two lines per 100 people by 2005. At present, African teledensity remains below one line per 100 people.

The target that our programme hopes to achieve by 2005 will require US \$8 billion in core infrastructure alone. That is the reason why there is a need for joint work in attracting investment into the continent, because there is no single country that will be able to attract that amount of money.

In addition, governments on their own do not have the capacity to embark on these important and critical programmes of development. It is therefore important that we work on Public-Private-Partnerships with the private sector so that we are able to utilise the expertise of everyone in our common globe.

In this regard, we should also point out that much has been done already to identify specific projects in various sectors so that we can begin to plan on a specific basis.

In our country for instance, some of our state corporations have been working on some of the programmes that will help realise our commitment to the recovery of the continent.

In this regard, one of the examples that we have mentioned in the past and which we wish to repeat here is that of our telecommunication company, Telkom.

Telkom is busy with an undersea fibreoptic cable project to link Africa with Europe and Asia.

The first part would be a 15 000 km link between South Africa and Europe, landing at ten Southern and West African countries from Namibia upwards, including Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana.

The second segment of the project is a 13 800 km link to the East, which will land on the East African countries.

The cable is expected to cater for Africa's communication needs for the next 25 years, connecting the continent directly to many international destinations.

Other corporations dealing with electricity, energy and oil are also doing a lot of work on the continent. These are the practical elements of the African Renaissance.

In terms of Human Development and Education, the plan supports the immediate strengthening of the university system across Africa, the creation of specialised universities where needed and the creation of special institutes of technology.

Through this programme we will also seek to accelerate the introduction of ICT in primary schools.

Furthermore, there is a plan to build primary schools in all the villages and secondary schools in all regions.

Health, as we know is still a big problem, with infant mortality having not improved since the 1960s and the life expectancy struggling to pass the 50 years mark.

The plan in this regard is among others, to intensify the fight against communicable diseases, to build the health infrastructure and to empower the people to act to improve their own health.

Accordingly, the New African Initiative includes a programme to combat TB, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases.

The Initiative also includes a programme to ensure sustainable access to safe and adequate clean water supply and sanitation, especially for the poor.

This will include better management of water resources both nationally and regionally, encompassing enhanced cooperation on shared rivers among member states.

It will also entail acceleration of existing work on multipurpose water resource projects like the investigation of the utilisation of the Congo River, and the Nile Basin Initiative.

Clearly we have to ensure the success of all these measures because for development to take place, we need healthy people who live in healthy conditions.

The objective is also to systematically address and sustain ecosystems, biodiversity and wildlife, so that we preserve for eternity these important elements of the environment that have made Africa the mother continent.

In agriculture, the plan is to improve the productivity of the sector with special attention to small scale and women farmers, to ensure food security and promote measures against natural resource degradation.

Of importance, is also to achieve food security among the rural poor and to integrate these millions into the market economy, including access to export markets.

This will require amongst others, land reform programmes, improvement of production, transport, storage and marketing of food crops, as well as livestock and fisheries.

It also means that there should be easier access to credit and finance schemes for small scale and women farmers.

Chairperson There are a number of other initiatives around tourism, around market access, capital flows and the debt question.

Basically, what this plan seeks to do is to banish forever the conditions that have imposed poverty and suffering on the peoples of the continent.

In this regard, the precondition for development is the attainment of peace, security, democracy, human rights and sound economy.

One of the problems we face in Africa is weak states that lack the necessary capacity to address the demands of good governance, including contributing decisively to the development imperative.

It is therefore important to strengthen the capacity of the State as a critical player in development and poverty reduction. The processes of the African Union and the New African Initiative will be of great help in strengthening the various organs of state in different countries.

As we have said, it is important to realise that the extent to which this programme of the African recovery will succeed is the extent to which not only the elite, but also the people themselves participate in it.

The manner in which people participate would not be dependent on the leadership or the prescriptions contained in the New African Initiative document.

There would be a lot of imagination and creativity so that every sector finds for itself a role in the process of African Renaissance.

I wish to return to the challenges facing us in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the USA in the last month.

Acts of terror are aimed at disrupting normal activities. Their main intention is to instil fear, create instability, cause consternation and bring about general anarchy.

Not only did the terror attacks affect the USA, they disrupted many business, political and social activities throughout the world.

Amidst the need to respond to these attacks, we should guard against the possibility of the international community changing focus on the critical issues of our time.

We therefore have to ensure that there is no possibility of these attacks creating negative consequences, whereby the developmental issues that we have been grappling with for decades, are sidelined to the margins of the global agenda.

Clearly, we need to work together between countries and across the continents to ensure that we have a common strategy that will be effective against terrorism.

The challenge facing all of us is the ability to simultaneously deal decisively with terrorism and effectively address and defeat poverty and underdevelopment.

From the success of this country since the Meiji Restoration, through the breathtaking advances out of the ruins of the Second World War, I am confident that Japan has many lessons to offer many of us as we strive to create conditions that will ensure that all of humanity lives the life fit for humans.

I know that when we go back to South Africa, we will do so confident that in Japan we have committed and dedicated partners of the recovery of the African continent.

Thank you.