Statement
by
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at the high-level segment of ECOSOC on
the "Development of Africa, including implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s"

Geneva, 5 July 1995
Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s shows that, despite progress in some areas, the situation in the Continent remains critical. Of course, it is encouraging that in 1994 eight countries have achieved, or exceeded, the 6 per cent annual GDP growth target set under the New Agenda. This could be the sign of a momentum that will generate an improvement in the overall situation. It is not however clear how far this improvement corresponds to the objectives, or correlates directly with the implementation, of UN-NADAF. We know that the macroeconomic situation is often very far removed from socio-economic realities on the ground. Who can deny the immense human needs and inequalities that exist in Africa today? We must seize this and every opportunity to mobilize support for African development and in particular to ensure – in the words of the Secretary-General's report – "an enhanced flow of resources from the international community to support domestic efforts in Africa". The key figure – so often quoted, so rarely attained – remains the United Nations ODA target of 0.7% of GNP.

The United Nations must make it the priority of priorities to boost the financial and human resources devoted to African development. It must also take decisive steps to optimize the impact of such assistance through better co-ordination at agency and system level, as well as within each state and in the Africa region as a whole. We must also learn from the experience of structural adjustment measures and pursue broadly conceived policies that promote macroeconomic health without compromising the long-term prospects for national economic recovery and development. UNESCO's last General Conference called on Member States to take steps to protect key sectors such as education, training and health from the adverse repercussions of structural adjustments.

UNESCO's main areas of concern in the implementation of the UN-NADAF are: human resources development and capacity building, including scientific research and the transfer of technology for sustainable development; democratic
participation in the development process; and the promotion and respect of human rights. The Organization has an established framework to implement these objectives in the form of the **Priority Africa programme** launched in 1989, reflecting the lines of emphasis of the Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa (1980-2000).

In pursuance of the aims of **Priority Africa**, UNESCO organized in February of this year a conference entitled **Audience Africa/Assises de l'Afrique** aimed at giving the voice of Africa itself - represented not only by governments but also by members of the cultural and scientific communities and civil society in general - a chance to identify the priorities for African development and to suggest a global perspective and innovative approaches to human development in Africa.

**Audience Africa** has provided an opportunity to distinguish between what Africa can do on its own and what calls for international support on the basis of a new partnership. It has helped to identify both the successes and the failures of development efforts in Africa to date. And it has produced a series of recommendations on capacity-building in Africa, particularly in the crucial field of science and technology.

**Audience Africa** made a point of expressing its appreciation of the establishment by UNESCO in 1994 of the International Fund for Technological Development in Africa and the allocation by our Organization of US$ one million as a start-up contribution. The sum - we are only too conscious - bears no relation to the needs in this key area. I reiterate here the call I have made on previous occasions for 3 % of UNDP's IPFs to be devoted to scientific and technological development. Governments for their part should move towards an investment in science and technology equivalent to 0.4 % of GNP by the year 2000, which is still less than half the amount pledged under the Lagos Plan of Action. They should also take steps to draw more on the General Environment Facility (GEF) for this purpose; UNESCO is ready to advise them on the formulation of the relevant projects.
Capacity-building in science and learning rests on a broader base of human resources development. A command of literacy and numeracy is a pre-condition for successful learning in science and technology, as in other fields. The key to development that is self-reliant and sustainable is education. Increased educational investment - together with the transfer of knowledge and know-how from the developed countries - is essential to achieving the goals of human development in Africa. Investment is needed to improve the quality and social relevance of all forms of education, including the very important sectors of higher education and vocational training; to ensure outreach to socially and geographically isolated populations through both formal and non-conventional means; to promote gender equity in education, sensitizing girls and women to problems such as population growth and ensuring they play their full role in national development efforts; to foster development in rural areas; and, last but not least, to promote democratic participation and the whole corpus of values - relating to human rights, tolerance, justice, equality and peace - on which democracy depends.

Educational investment must go hand in hand with measures to improve the quality of life - the provision of health care and shelter, communication development, human rights observance, promotion of democracy, commitment to a culture of peace. UNESCO is working with its United Nations and other partners to respond to educational needs in societies in strife or under stress. In Africa, it has been particularly concerned with providing emergency educational assistance in situations where civil structures have broken down - for example in Somalia and Rwanda, where it has supplied teacher emergency packages among other actions designed to facilitate the transition from conflict to peace. Under its Culture of Peace programme, it is organizing in Mozambique a series of projects for national and community mobilization in favour of peace and in Burundi it has established a multi-ethnic House of a Culture of Peace as a focus for civil peace-building. Nation-building in the sense of consolidating national consciousness in ethnically diverse countries, as well as promoting regional solidarity, is one of the main challenges facing Africa at the present time. A number of special cultural programmes
launched by UNESCO - such as the Gorée-Almadies Memorial and the Slave Route Project, testifying to a history of past oppression and pointing forward to new links of solidarity and partnership - can play a part in cementing national and regional allegiances.

Within a broader framework, efforts to promote self-sustaining African development will call for a meaningful commitment by the international community in all the areas identified by the Secretary-General in his report. The continuing scandal of debt repayments that pauperize still further the poorest of the poor, the need to improve access to international markets, the importance of increasing foreign direct investment in Africa - these are all issues that must be addressed urgently. I should like to make a special plea here for the establishment of special procedures for the speedy allocation to the most needy countries of genuine development funds. It is time to end unnecessary bureaucratic delays in the granting of urgently needed aid. Similarly, pledging meetings should not arouse expectations that are fated to be dashed when the promised assistance is delivered in a form that amounts to little more than the dumping of surplus products. Enough of the confusion between development assistance and business!

An evaluation of UNESCO's Priority Africa programme has recently been completed for submission to the forthcoming session of the UNESCO General Conference. Meanwhile the recommendations of Audience Africa have been reflected in the Draft Fourth Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO (1996-2001) and translated into specific action proposals in the Draft Programme and Budget for 1996-1997. Almost 15.2 million dollars are foreseen as direct cost allocations for proposed actions in African Member States in the biennium. Thus Africa is placed at the centre of UNESCO's priorities, in keeping with the commitment of the Copenhagen Summit and UNESCO's long-standing solidarity with the Continent - as expressed, for example, in the appeals for assistance to Eritrea and Ethiopia by the General Conference of UNESCO at its last session.

Under the Revised Programme of Action of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the
1990s, UNESCO has been given the role of lead agency in the implementation of the human resources development and capacity-building chapter. Recognizing that Africa will have to rely more and more on its own capacities to address the problems confronting it, UNESCO's strategy to help attain the objectives set in UN-NADAF is to serve as a catalyst and mobilizing force for international technical co-operation. It will aim at providing support for the initiatives of the African Member States, in close collaboration with its institutional partners in the United Nations system, the international and regional financial institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, the donor community and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The involvement of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, as well as other regional or sub-regional organizations, will be increasingly sought in our efforts to further regional and subregional co-operation and integration in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.

UNESCO is naturally fully committed to the Secretary-General's Special Initiative on Africa, taken in the framework of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. Our Organization has been given the responsibility to chair the Working Group on Social and Human Development and is also participating actively in other working groups, notably in the areas of water resources, capacity-building and governance and on the financing of African development and the role of the private sector. We will review this initiative at the next meeting of ACC in October in order to launch a concerted and global effort for the development of Africa.

If we are able to change the focus of our approach and improve the forms of our action so as to help Africa to help itself, then – I believe – it will be possible before too long to cease talking of Africa in terms of problems and to start seeing it in terms of solutions, as its incomparable natural resources and human potential demand. This must be our ultimate aim and guiding ambition in our efforts in support of African development.