

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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MESSAGE ON AFRICA DAY**25 May 2007**

Every year, Africa Day provides an appropriate opportunity to reflect on Africa's prospects, take stock of its problems, and acknowledge its achievements.

Through such initiatives as the New Partnership for Africa's Development and its Peer Review Mechanism, you have helped focus our collective efforts on key priorities for the continent's renewal. And through such institutions as the Pan-African Parliament and the African Union Peace and Security Council, the governments and peoples of Africa are demonstrating increased commitment to take effective and concrete actions to address the immense challenges at hand. Recent sustained economic growth in many African countries is another encouraging development.

But I also share Africa's pain and frustration at the persisting and widespread suffering on the continent. Extreme poverty -- together with lack of access to basic education, health care and adequate nutrition -- continues to prevent millions of talented, promising young people in Africa from fulfilling their potential. At the same time, the devastation being inflicted by HIV/AIDS is reversing past development gains.

We welcome the important steps made towards consolidating peace in Africa, including the historic, democratic elections held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the progress achieved in the Côte d'Ivoire peace process. However, armed conflicts continue to have tragic consequences for civilians in Africa's remaining trouble spots. In Darfur, despite the joint efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to reinvigorate the peace process and strengthen peacekeeping, the violence is taking an intolerable toll on human lives. Somalia, too, is again in the midst of upheaval, underscoring the urgent need to find a political solution to the protracted crisis afflicting the country.

As we strive to make real progress in our fight against poverty, disease and illiteracy in Africa, let us strengthen our global partnership to reach the Millennium Development Goals, including through more and better aid, debt cancellation and fairer trade. Let us also do all we can to resolve the continent's destructive conflicts, by making full use of Africa's institutional mechanisms for the promotion of peace and security. Finally, we must all work diligently to improve respect for human rights, particularly by empowering Africa's women.

On this Africa Day, I applaud the continent's many contributions to the United Nations, and I reaffirm the support of this Organization for the work of the African Union. I also pledge the strong commitment of the United Nations to serve as Africa's partner in our efforts to bring peace where there is war, prosperity where there is poverty, and hope where there is despair.

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