

STATEMENT
BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY JOAQUIM ALBERTO
CHISSANO**
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
MOZAMBIQUE
CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN UNION

AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF TOKYO
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
(TICAD III)

Tokyo, 29 September 2003

Mr. Chairperson,

The Right Honourable
Mr. Junichiro Koizumi
Prime Minister of Japan,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is for me a great honour and privilege to speak on behalf of the African Union. I have been mandated to convey to you warm greetings from the peoples of Africa.

I take this opportunity to express our solidarity to the people and Government of Japan for the loss of life and injuries as well as the material damages caused by the earthquake in Hokkaido, last Friday.

I have been equally mandated to share with you the challenges facing the continent and the successes we have thus far achieved. We would like to register our deepest appreciation to the people and Government of Japan and the international community at large for the continued support and assistance given to Africa within the framework of TICAD.

Indeed, ten years after TICAD I the TICAD process has proven to be an excellent framework for the promotion of partnerships towards Africa's sustainable development. In adopting the principles of ownership by Africa and of partnership, TICAD falls well within the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We welcome the choice of NEPAD as the main theme of this conference. NEPAD constitutes the political and development vision that aims at galvanizing all initiatives and endeavours of the African people towards accelerated and sustainable development. This program responds in a global and systematic way to the main challenges before the continent.

The major challenges faced by the African countries are absolute poverty, high rates of illiteracy and of infant mortality, low productivity of agriculture which in turn is associated with food insecurity, high prevalence of malnutrition, and high incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

An equally daunting challenge to Africa is to maintain peace, security and stability in all countries of the continent as a pre-condition for sustainable development, democracy, good governance and protection of fundamental human rights.

NEPAD seeks to respond to these challenges by defining a set of priorities which are, inter alia:

- Establishing mechanisms for the maintenance of peace and security;
- Agriculture and market access;
- Infrastructure development, including energy and transport;
- Human resources development, including health and education;
- Environment with particular emphasis to water access and sanitation;
- Science and technology, including ICTs; and
- Tourism and culture.

We, the Member States of the African Union wish to reiterate our desire and commitment to continue to work tirelessly for the mobilization of domestic and foreign resources for the implementation of identified projects. We shall use the new structures we have established within the African Union and within the framework of NEPAD to ensure better coordination of development initiatives.

The success of NEPAD requires the participation of all stakeholders, including the youth, women and civil society at large. We wish to encourage them to play a greater role.

The regional meetings convened under TICAD have proven to be very useful in deepening our understanding of the reality in which African countries live and searching for the best and most appropriate solutions to identified problems. They have also helped to realize the principle of ownership.

Likewise, the inter-regional seminars and workshops between Africa and Asia have gone a long way in building and consolidating partnerships among the various stakeholders.

It is in this context that we would like to put forward for your consideration the proposal of the setting up of a follow-up mechanism, which would oversee the implementation of the decisions emanating from our conference. Such a mechanism would liaise with the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat. We believe that this would give a new impetus to our cooperation and partnership.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union convened recently in Maputo and took decisions of great impact to the future of our continent.

We have decided to speed up the process of ratification for the entry into force of the Peace and Security Council, the Pan-African Parliament and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

We also took decisions on the Action Plan of the Environment Initiative of NEPAD, for the implementation of which we call for international contributions of additional financial resources, and we adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Corruption.

We have adopted important declarations on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infections diseases on NEPAD, Agriculture and Food Security in Africa calling for concerted and coordinated action in these areas.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

All our endeavours in the African Union is based on the need to create a better future for Africa and for the world therefore children and youth are always in our minds. That is why we have participated side by side with the ECA and UNICEF to produce the publication which will be officialy launched today with the title " The Young face of NEPAD, which is a call for all of us to invest in children.

Our position in Africa is that the future of Africa lies with the well being of its children and youth. The prospect for socio-economic transformation of the continent rests with investing in the young people of the continent. Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development."

Before concluding, I would like to register our appreciation to the level of involvement of Asian countries namely Japan, China, India and Malaysia for the success of NEPAD. We would also like to see the participation of more Asian countries in the implementation process of NEPAD programs and projects. We believe that TICAD is the framework towards the attainment of this goal.

I also would not like to conclude without expressing Africa's desappointment for the failure of the Cancun WTO Ministerial Conference and calling for our comum effort to reach a just solution if we want our TICAD plans to bear good fruits.

Finaly, I wish to reiterate our profound gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Japan and to the co-organizers of this Conference for the excellent preparatory work and excellent conditions created for the success of our deliberations. We thank you for your commitment and dedication to and solidarity with the continent of Africa.

I thank you for your attention!