

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
STATEMENT AT PRESS CONFERENCE
Kananaskis (Canada), 27 June 2002

My dear friends. I am very happy to be here in Kananaskis.

This is a historic meeting, and Africans expect a great deal of us.

I should also like to extend my thanks to all Canadians for such a warm and extraordinary welcome.

The special needs of Africa were clearly recognised by all world leaders when they met at the United Nations two years ago at the Millennium Summit, so it is very fitting that the UN should take part in this Summit, at which the leaders of the G8 [Group of Eight] have pledged their support for NEPAD – the New Partnership for African Development.

NEPAD is a compact between African leaders and their peoples. This relationship, underpinned by a code of good governance, provides a platform for African compact with the international community.

NEPAD provides a framework for ending conflicts, for stemming the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons, and for improving the investment climate, a prerequisite for sustainable development on the continent.

If Africans really stick to the commitments they have made in NEPAD to themselves, and to each other, and if the G8 really carry out the Action Plan they are announcing today, this Summit might come to be seen as a turning point in the history of Africa, and indeed of the world. That is a challenge for all of us to live up to.

One clear indication of whether we are living up to it or not will come in just two months' time, when we meet again in Africa for another summit, but this time a world summit on sustainable development.

That summit will be held in South Africa, in the heart of a region acutely affected by poverty, by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and now also now affected by a terrible drought, with a serious threat of famine in several countries in the region.

There is an urgent need to bring humanitarian relief to people in acute distress, and the United Nations and the donor community is doing its best to help provide the assistance.

But it is no less urgent for the world as a whole to learn the lessons of that drought, which gives us an ugly picture of the fate that lies in store for us, and for our children, if we do not find models of development that are genuinely sustainable – economically, and socially as well as ecologically.

Those issues are of extreme importance, not only to Africa but to the whole world.

By and large we know what needs doing – and we have known that at least since Rio ten years ago. But we have been too slow to act on that knowledge.

That must change, and that is the purpose of the Johannesburg Summit.

I hope very much that all the leaders who are here today, and those of many other countries, will come together again in two months' time to take concrete decisions about the future of our planet and its people.

Thank you very much.