

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
Letter to Heads of State and Government of the Group Of Eight

17 June 2002

Excellencies,

I would like to thank you for inviting me, along with five African Heads of State, to join you for a working session during your Summit meeting in Kananaskis later this month.

I am much looking forward to that meeting. Your decision to focus on Africa's problems is particularly welcome, at a time when Africans themselves have devised a New Partnership for Africa's Development that reflects at once their determination to tackle their own problems and their acute need for international support. The special needs of Africa were clearly recognised by world leaders in the Millennium Declaration, and the United Nations system as a whole is firmly committed to supporting African efforts.

And yet, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I also have wider concerns, which I know you will share.

All of us must be concerned by the struggle against international terrorism, which requires the active cooperation of all States, using the machinery of the United Nations to ensure that they give each other all necessary support in upholding the rule of law.

And all of us must be concerned to see the world economy return to a path of sustainable economic growth.

Both those objectives concern humanity as a whole, and not least the peoples of the developing world. They have suffered disproportionately from the slowdown in the world economy, and they are also the primary victims of terror and violence.

Equally, even the richest and most powerful countries, such as those represented at your meeting, are unlikely to achieve lasting security, either in the economic or the physical sense, so long as billions of people in other countries are denied those benefits.

I therefore hope that your meeting will bear in mind the objectives set by the Millennium Summit two years ago, and in particular the eight Millennium Development Goals, all of which are aimed at dramatically reducing the amount of extreme poverty and human misery on our planet during the first 15 years of this century. These are goals set by the world for the world, although it is in Africa that they present the toughest challenge, and in Africa that their achievement will depend most crucially on international solidarity.

All of us have a vital interest in seeing these goals achieved, and I trust we can all accept them as the common framework for measuring our progress.

Our prospect of achieving them depends first and foremost on the peoples of the developing countries, and above all on their leaders. Those peoples clearly recognise that,

unless they themselves have the will to resolve their conflicts, eliminate corruption, uphold the rule of law, give priority to the needs of the poor, create an investment-friendly climate, and use their natural resources in a sustainable manner, no one else will be able to do these things for them.

But even the best efforts of these countries to break out of the cycle of poverty, ignorance, disease, conflict and environmental degradation are likely to be insufficient unless they can count on the support of the international community. And it is to your countries that they look most urgently for that support.

The peoples of the developing world would therefore be bitterly disappointed if your meeting confined itself to offering them good advice and solemn exhortation, rather than firm pledges of action in areas where your own contribution can be decisive. They would hope, in particular,

1. That you would commit yourselves to help them resolve conflicts and build peace, both by strengthening their capacities and institutions and, when appropriate, by contributing to UN peacekeeping operations.
2. That you would hold firmly by the commitments you made in Doha last November, to conduct a round of trade negotiations offering real benefits to developing countries, notably by giving full access to your own markets for their textiles and agricultural products – both raw materials and processed goods – as well as helping the poorest countries develop their capacity to export. This requires that you take care neither to allow the political will manifested in Doha to dissipate, nor to derail the negotiations by adopting protectionist measures, whether barriers to imports or subsidies to domestic producers.
3. That you would build on the recent success of the Monterrey conference by working towards the additional \$50bn a year of official development assistance that is the minimum needed if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met – and by ensuring that that money is spent in a coherent and coordinated fashion, so as to have maximum impact.
4. That you would also make sure that sufficient resources continue to be devoted to helping heavily indebted countries – so that their external debt can be reduced to, and maintained at, genuinely sustainable levels.
5. That you would make specific commitments to implement the report of your Task Force on Education for All, and would make sure that this applies to girls as well as boys.
6. That you would continue and strengthen your support for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, as well as other efforts to combat endemic or epidemic diseases, including through access to affordable drugs, and through the research and development of ways to prevent and treat diseases that particularly affect tropical countries.
7. And that you would commit yourselves to making a success of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, which must mark a real step forward in implementing the commitments given in Rio ten years ago –

notably in the five priority areas of water and sanitation, energy, health, agricultural productivity (especially in Africa) and biodiversity – as well as the pledge in the Millennium Declaration “to free all of humanity, and above all our children and grandchildren, from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoiled by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs”.

In conclusion, Excellencies, let me say that this historic summit, at which the most privileged countries in the world will focus on the plight of the poorest, represents a historic opportunity for progress. I am sure all of you will be mindful of the heavy responsibilities that that implies.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Kofi A. Annan