

STATEMENT BY GONZALO RAMOS
TEMPORARY GOVERNOR OF SPAIN

Mr. Chairman,
President Kaberuka,
Fellow Governors,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure for me to address this Assembly on behalf of the Government of Spain. I would like to join previous speakers in expressing my gratitude to the Government of Senegal for the efficient organization of this Annual Meeting, as well as to the people of Dakar for their great hospitality and warm welcome.

Mr. Chairman, 2008 has been a very challenging year for the world economy. In the context of a severe and synchronised global fall in demand, Africa continued to register positive rates of economic growth, albeit lower than years precedent. Yet, despite recent successes in terms of economic growth, reduced conflict, expanded political liberalization and substantial improvements in governance, the African continent continues to suffer from the deepest levels of poverty. Economic growth in Africa has been uneven, has not yet translated into meaningful social development, and has not sufficiently benefited vulnerable groups, in particular in low-income and fragile states.

The severe challenges arising from the present global financial crisis, such as the decrease in the global demand for commodities or the slowdown in capital inflows and remittances, endanger the life of millions of persons in Africa. The private sector has been severely hit by the shortage of liquidity and, hence, trade and investment. Therefore, we strongly welcome the initiatives launched by the Bank to assist countries to address the current situation, such as the Trade Finance Initiative and the Emergency Liquidity Facility. We commend the Bank also for having established in 2008 the Africa Food Crisis Response Initiative. In this regard, we wish to congratulate the President for his leadership to carry an African input to the G-20 process of trying to address the present financial crisis.

Mr. Chairman, 2008 has also been a busy year for the Bank. We welcome the new Medium-Term strategy, as well as the move to multiyear budgeting integrated with program budgeting.

We welcome the new Chief Operating Officer, Vice President Mr. Moyo, and all the new senior management team, and wish them well in their task ahead of completing the Bank's transformation into a results oriented institution.

Mr. Chairman, Spain continues to be fully committed to supporting the ADB in making a significant contribution to Africa's development. The Bank has a key role to play in helping countries preserve the foundations of growth that have been steadily built over the last decade. In this common endeavor, we wish to encourage the Bank to continue to advance the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals by continuing to assist its member countries to finance programs in health, water, education and nutrition, to protect the poor and most vulnerable.

We wish to stress the importance that the Bank continues to pay attention to its key objectives of regional integration, investment in infrastructure, and better governance, in order to strengthen Africa's ability to profit from the world recovery once it is underway. We wish to encourage the Bank to continue to help fragile and post-conflict countries. We urge the Bank to pay special attention to gender issues, and to enhance its support for women in economic activity. And finally, we strongly encourage the Bank to find additional avenues for private sector support.

Mr. Chairman, the severity of the crisis calls on donor countries to deliver on existing commitments and rightly calls on the Bank to do more. Spain is willing to explore the need for a capital increase of the Bank, and we look forward to a constructive and positive discussion on this issue.

Further, we look forward to the Mid Term review of ADF-XI. We support the frontloading of present ADF resources, and wish to stress the importance of a timely framework of negotiations of ADF-XII in order to allow the Fund to be effective when required.

Spain is already a contributor to the African Water Facility Trust Fund. Further, we wish to thank the Bank's staff and management for helping us establish a new dedicated multidonor Microfinance Fund, with a very special focus on gender and women support. Spain expects this initiative will canvass wide donor support, and help reinforce strongly the area of microfinance in Africa, where the Bank can expand its activities with a very substantial impact on development.

Let me finally add that Spain has continued to maintain a generous attitude with regard to the different debt relief multilateral efforts, namely the HIPC and MDRI Initiatives, and has backed and actively participated in the European Union partnerships with Africa. Spain also maintains its commitment to bilateral debt relief agreements.

Mr. Chairman, it is clear to us that Africa has to lead its own development process and in this context the role of the African Development Bank is increasingly instrumental to back the efforts of its regional member countries.

In this respect, I would like to reiterate our full support to you, Mr Chairman, and your team in your current efforts to complete an efficient implementation of the Bank's Institutional Reform. We sincerely believe that the Bank is on the right track to play its role as the high performing, results-focused, efficient and effective knowledge institution Africa needs.

Thank you very much.