

**CONFERENCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL-
AFRICA MEDIA SUMMIT**

STATEMENT BY

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Excellence Monsieur le Président
Mesdames
Messieurs
Chers Participants

Au nom de la Banque Africaine de Développement et en mon nom propre, J'éprouve une grande joie de présider la cérémonie d'ouverture de cette rencontre internationale sur les médias et la jeunesse ici à Tunis, notre agence de relocalisation. Merci à la Tunisie pour avoir accepté d'abriter cet événement et merci pour l'hospitalité. Merci à toutes et à tous pour avoir répondu si nombreux à l'invitation des organisateurs.

Je remercie les organisateurs notamment l'Agence Africaine de Communication et tous les sponsors de la Conférence, notamment l'Union Africaine, la CEA, la CEDEAO d'avoir choisi la Banque pour abriter cet important événement. En plaçant le sujet de cet importante Conférence sous le thème « Médias et Jeunesse », les organisateurs nous offrent à tous, l'agréable opportunité de témoigner notre attachement à la jeunesse africaine et au partenariat avec la société civile tels les médias, deux composantes essentielles pour le rayonnement de l'Afrique, notre Afrique qui a souvent souffert des prismes déformants, d'un continent toujours secoué par les calamités naturelles et l'instabilité. Si cela était vrai il y a quelques années, il l'est beaucoup moins aujourd'hui. Souvenez-vous il y a quelques années on ne parlait que de cette Afrique oubliée, marginalisée, mais aujourd'hui le mot clé est plutôt « *A Scramble for Africa* » – la nouvelle ruée vers l'Afrique ?

Nous reconnaissons volontiers qu'autant un progrès vers un avenir meilleur est possible, l'histoire de l'Afrique au cours du dernier siècle montre qu'il n'est pas acquis d'avance. Tant il est vrai que la situation est contrastée car les moyennes des cachent des grandes variations, les pays ayant des conditions différentes et réagissant différemment face aux défis. Dans bon nombre d'entre eux, les progrès réalisés demeurent précaires et le risque de recul est réel. Mais je reste persuadé que le continent progressivement surmonte les énormes problèmes auxquels il est confronté. Cet optimisme repose sur les progrès récents et réels accomplis.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your conference has the noble effort to re-brand our Continent. The Thesaurus provides alternatives for branding as an emblem, a label, a symbol, a trademark all true. We must begin from a view point of ownership.. This is our continent. We should be in a position to understand its challenges, its evolution, its political economy, better than others. But as former President Ben Mkapa of Tanzania once put it, ownership without capacity is a dilapidated opportunity. Hence the second imperative to build our capacity, capacity to analyze the challenges we face, and to project our authentic voice. In the Bank, in the domain of our competence, we like to talk in terms of what we call an "African perspective" on issues affecting or concerning Africa. There will of course be a variety of views and interpretation in this competition for ideas. We seek to develop our own perspective based on rigorous study and scientific evidence, based on our intimate knowledge of the African Continent. We are building the capacity in the Bank to be able to provide that alternative view which is indispensable.

But there is another reality we cannot ignore, another type of ownership of problems which are real and not imaginary. A state of denial cannot help in the re-branding process. It will be self defeating whether it is bad governance, instability, owning up is already the beginning of the solution.

As we celebrate achievements of the youth of Africa, we must bear in mind also the sad spectacle, “new boat people” traversing the Mediterranean who will tell another story if they live to see the next day. The children of Somalia – “the lost generation” – will not have another story to tell after a decade and a half of mayhem. We cannot blame it all on foreigners, even colonial history or the foreign media. The story will be real if we show we have learnt lessons. This continent is ours. No one will fix it for us.

Let me tell you what we are doing at the Bank and our vision at this time. Yes. Africa is making progress but it must sustain it for years. We have started from a very low base and the population is increasing. In addition, new threats have emerged not the least climate change and its impact on our agriculture, our ecosystems, our infrastructure and risks of epidemics. The rapid increase in oil prices have been of great benefit to exporters but are threatening the external viability of those who are net importers. The emerging skyrocketing food prices are set to impact on the poor, especially the urban poor in a significant way. While initially our continent was relatively shielded from the current upheaval in the financial markets, we still have to assess the longer term impact. Will there be, or will there not be the decoupling?

At the Bank, we believe a number of things are critical:

- (i) sound natural resource management by those countries well endowed, avoiding errors of the past, such that when and if commodity cycles turn unfavourable the economies can withstand the tide;
- (ii) sound debt management;
- (iii) Our own role as a countercyclical actor, supporting our countries when access to capital elsewhere dries up.

We are convinced we can sustain the progress Africa has made over the last six years or so. We believe it is possible. We are putting great emphasis on levers of growth such as energy, science and technology as well as regional integration. We are building partnerships which we believe to be vital for our work – partnership between Africa and its partners, between our Governments and the domestic stakeholders, civil society, private sector, our youth, our media. This conference is a celebration of that partnership with the civil society whose potential is a golden opportunity.

Let me end my remarks by expressing my appreciation to the organizers, the sponsors the hundreds of participants as well as media specialists who are here. You are the experts and I would like to cede you the floor but I will follow keenly your deliberations and conference outcomes.

Thank you for your attention.