

**Welcome remarks for Helen Clark UNDP Administrator, on  
the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual African Economic Conference**

**“Inclusive and Sustainable Development in an Age of  
Global Economic Uncertainty”**

**Kigali, Rwanda, 2012**

**30 October, 2:30pm**

**The seventh annual African Economic Conference is a joint initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, and UNDP. I am pleased to join with UNDP’s sister organisations in welcoming President Kagame, former Heads of State, Ministers, other distinguished guests from across the continent, and all participants to this opening ceremony.**

**This conference provides a forum for dialogue around the ideas, evidence, and policies available to advance inclusive**

**and sustainable development in the uncertain times in which we live.**

**Markets always dislike uncertainty – yet uncertainty and volatility appear to be the new normal in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Recent years have been marked by a succession of crises, from the economic and financial crises beginning four years ago, the effects of which are still playing out, to the series of extreme climatic events which have contributed to hunger and even famine in the most exposed countries and to high prices in some food commodities.**

**Africa, like all regions, is affected by the current sluggish global growth and by climatic extremes. Its poorest people are affected the most. As well, the spillover effects of the crisis in Libya have impacted heavily on the Sahel in**

**particular, and the conflict in Somalia has impacted adversely on its neighbours in the Horn.**

**Achieving the inclusive and sustainable growth which advances human development, within the boundaries of our planet, is a huge challenge.**

**Yet we meet here bound by the conviction that the vast potential of Africa and its peoples can rise to this challenge.**

**Doing so begins with leadership – and we are privileged to have with us here transformational leaders, past and present, who have taken their countries forward in so many ways.**

**Over the first decade of this century, with the exception of 2008, Africa experienced exceptional economic performance and growth in GDP per capita.**

**But there is a way to go in many countries to translate that growth into higher human development. Deliberate policy measures and targeted investments are needed to make growth not just fast, but also inclusive and sustainable. The rising tide is capable of lifting every boat.**

**Africa's dynamic youth population offers the opportunity for a huge demographic dividend. Young people are a source of innovation and creativity – given the opportunity. A visit to technology centres like Nairobi's I-Hub for young ICT entrepreneurs leaves one's head spinning with the ideas and possibilities spilling out of that base. Such young people are to be found across the continent. Investing in youth potential**

**and the skills needed to drive agriculture and the manufacturing, processing, services, and logistics sectors will reap huge benefits.**

**Women too yearn for the opportunity to reach their full potential. Equal status and rights to property, tenure, inheritance, and credit transform the economic contribution women can make. In this respect, I am inspired by the recent decision of the Botswana High Court to overturn a customary law which had prevented women from inheriting the family home. This suggests that legal empowerment has a useful role to play in driving economic empowerment.**

**There has been tremendous interest in this conference, with close to 500 papers submitted for consideration. This suggests that Africa's academics, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners are as dynamic as the economies of the**

**continent. UNDP's Country Offices, working with the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa, have also been able to identify and bring to the conference many promising young scholars, researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners from Africa and beyond who will help invigorate the debate here and generate practical advice and policy solutions for sustaining growth and harnessing it to higher human development outcomes.**

**There is a proverb in my country which asks:**

**He aha te mea nui o te ao?**

**What is the most important thing in the world?**

**The answer is :**

**He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.**

**It is people, it is people, it is people.**

**Human development surely must be at the forefront of our priorities as we debate how to advance inclusive and sustainable development in this age of global economic uncertainty.**

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