

African States need to move faster on development, Uganda tells UN debate



President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda

23 September 2009 – The countries of sub-Saharan Africa have spent too long “wandering in the desert of under-development” and need to take faster steps towards building infrastructure and modernizing their economies, the President of Uganda told the opening of the General Assembly’s high-level debate today.

Yoweri Museveni **said** the low levels of electrification across Africa were “shameful” and the high transport costs as a result of dilapidated or non-existent railways and road networks were obstructing the continent’s progress.

“The whole of Africa needs to wake up on this issue and cooperate to find a solution,” Mr. Museveni during his address to world leaders gathered at UN Headquarters in New York.

Fortunately, in the last 15 to 20 years, Africans have also got the grasp of the development compass.

The Ugandan President contrasted the record of Africa and many Asian countries over the past 40 years, noting that the likes of Singapore, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Malaysia and China “did not similarly” struggle with under-development.

“Fortunately, in the last 15 to 20 years, Africans have also got the grasp of the development compass. We have started doing what we had left undone for a long time and the ‘truth’ is now beginning to be ‘seen in us.’”

Citing his own country’s record of relatively steady economic growth during the past two decades, Mr. Museveni said it was vital for poor countries to deal with bottlenecks in development and infrastructure.

He warned of the danger of States such as Uganda exporting raw materials to richer nations and receiving only 10 per cent of the value of the final processed products.

"In Uganda we are also transforming traditional subsistence agriculture into modern agriculture... This involves using improved seeds, fertilizers, tractors, irrigation, improved breeding stock and improved agro-practices."

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