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UN agency pledges \$25 million to reinforce good governance in developing nations



19 February 2010 – The United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**) has **pledged** \$25 million to strengthen credible national institutions like parliaments, human rights organizations and anti-corruption commissions in developing countries during 2010, with more than half going for elections in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The funds will also go toward promoting inclusive governance programmes such as access to information and channels that allow stakeholder voices to be heard in governance processes.

The decision comes at the end of a week-long conference in Dakar, Senegal, of more than 200 governance experts and delegates including former South African President Thabo Mbeki and former Canadian Prime Minister Joe Clark. Some \$13 million will be spent on supporting election processes in Sub-Saharan countries during 2010-2011.

“This week has shown us that there’s a very strong consensus that capable, inclusive, responsive States are a prerequisite for development, including for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” UNDP Democratic Governance Practice Director Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi said, referring to targets set by the 2000 UN summit to slash a host of social ills, from extreme poverty and hunger to maternal and infant mortality to lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015.

“Therefore, we are fully committed to harnessing and optimizing our resources to that end,” she added.

The conference was held against the backdrop of new global challenges threatening development gains, such as the economic crisis and climate change, and which the conference participants said called for a renewed focus on the role of the state.

"It is generally accepted that lack of governance, insufficient governance or outright bad governance at both global and national levels have contributed heavily to the ongoing global crises and challenges facing humanity at the moment," UNDP said in a news release.

"For UNDP it is therefore important to ensure that democratic governance – with its focus on inclusive participation, responsive institutions and values regarding human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment – becomes a critical and strategic part of the response."

The conference dedicated significant attention to Sub-Saharan Africa where some 20 countries are scheduled to conduct legislative or presidential elections over the next two years.

"Sub-Saharan Africa has a very promising future if we can promote inclusive States that speak and act on behalf of citizens, and that are capable of confronting the challenges and complexities most nations in the region face today," Ms. Fraser-Moleketi said.

At the same time, the need for capable States reaches far beyond Africa and there are best practices to be shared through South-South cooperation, she added.

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