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## Africa's youth can do great things for the continent, says Ban



16 November 2010 – Africa's young population can drive the continent's future development, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon told an international symposium taking place in Benin.

More than 60 per cent of Africa's 1 billion people are under the age of 25 years, he noted in a [message](#) to the meeting in Cotonou.

“While it will be a tremendous undertaking to provide them with jobs and income opportunities, this energetic creative and vibrant workforce can do great things for African standards of living if only they are given the tools.

“Africa's impressive economic growth during the past decade shows what is possible. The challenge now is to translate growth into improved social welfare for the people and faster progress towards the Millennium Development Goals,” Mr. Ban said, referring to the targets to slash hunger, poverty, disease and a host of other social and economic ills by 2015.

The other challenges the Secretary-General outlined for the continent to address included climate change, desertification and democratic backsliding, as well as continued armed conflict and sexual violence against women.

At the same time, he praised the achievements of African countries since their independence from colonial rule, with particular tribute paid to the African Union (AU), and the efforts it has made to improve the political and economic situation in the continent.

“Africa has taken charge of preventing and resolving its conflicts and promoting the economic and social development of its people,” he said.

Through African institutions, such as the AU, the continent had become less reliant on the international community for aid and support, Mr. Ban noted, while adding that the UN will continue to support Africa’s efforts to ensure stability and progress.

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