

## Ensuring Africa's development critical task for UN, says General Assembly President



General Assembly President Vuk Jeremic. UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

17 October 2012 – The United Nations system and African countries must strengthen their partnership to advance the continent's economic growth, development and participation in the global economy, the President of the General Assembly said today.

“Ensuring Africa's development should be a strategic task for the entire United Nations system,” President Vuk Jeremic said in his opening [remarks](#) to the Assembly's discussion of the world body's engagement with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The NEPAD initiative of the African Union (AU) was adopted in 2001, with the continent's leaders pledging to pursue new priorities and approaches for the political and socio-economic transformation of Africa. The programme is intended to accelerate Africans' efforts to extricate the continent from underdevelopment and exclusion from the global economy.

“To bridge the gap between the promise of Africa and the reality on the ground, I believe the United Nations must continue to give priority to the continent's singular needs,” said Mr. Jeremic. “The UN's agencies, programmes and entities need to become engaged as never before in the task of supporting African nations to unlock their potential.”

In a report on NEPAD, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon noted that African countries have made good progress in the implementation of NEPAD sectoral priorities, in particular in the areas of governance, infrastructure, information and communications technology and agriculture, while progress has been made by the international community in providing debt relief, official development assistance and aid for trade.

“In an uncertain and slow global recovery, the main challenge for African countries is to consolidate their gains and thereby ensure that the current turbulent economic situation does not reverse the progress made,” he wrote.

As the second decade of NEPAD begins, African countries and the international community, including the United Nations, should strengthen their partnership for development on the basis of mutual responsibility and accountability, the Secretary-General said.

In addition, the UN should continue to accord priority to the special development needs of Africa, particularly in the global development agenda beyond 2015, the target date for the achievement of the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), as well as the follow-up to the outcomes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)), held in Brazil in June.

In his remarks to the Assembly, Mr. Jeremic noted that a number of African countries are the hardest-hit victims of the global economic crisis.

“Despite this troubling reality, growth rates in many parts of the continent have been resilient. Over the past several years, trade and investment has expanded, the continental-wide internal market has been built up, and macro-economic indicators have improved. By any measure, this progress is remarkable and unprecedented,” he stated.

“Yet much more needs to be done in a number of areas. This includes finding solutions on how to lessen the difference in living standards between urban and rural populations, and properly addressing the increasing disparities amongst the continent's economies.”

He added that to be even more effective, the various assistance mechanisms should more closely reflect NEPAD's agenda, and that of the individual African Member States. “The voices of those in need must be heard loud and clear. What they say has to serve as a significant guidepost for moving forward,” he said.

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