

## ***Improved infrastructure key to economic, social progress in Africa – Ban***



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

2 February 2009 – Addressing an African Union (AU) summit focused on enhancement of the continent's poor infrastructure, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said today that public works were the cornerstone to economic and social progress.

"Africa needs good roads, schools and hospitals; as well as reliable and efficient water services, electricity grids and telecom networks, while information and communications technologies must also be a bigger part of Africa's future," Mr. Ban **told** leaders of the 53-State organization, meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

"These remain the building blocks for job creation and the ability to compete in global markets," he added, in a speech that also ranged over a raft of peace and security issues on the continent, as well as climate change and the global economic crisis.

Mr. Ban stressed that infrastructure development is also an opportunity to 'go green' by tapping geothermal energy in the Great Rift Valley; solar energy in the Sahara, and other renewable sources that have great potential to create jobs and lay the groundwork for a low-carbon economy.

Given the large number of small and landlocked countries and shared resource belts in Africa, he maintained that regional approaches to providing infrastructure are also essential, pointing to the various river basin initiatives as a good first step in this regard.

"There is great benefit to be derived from the economies of scale that cross-border cooperation brings," he stressed, saying it should be complemented by public-private partnerships, the building of indigenous scientific and technological capacities and tangible investments in education.

He urged all stakeholders to mobilize the estimated \$52 million needed each year to significantly upgrade Africa's infrastructure in those areas.

In his discussion of security and democracy, Mr. Ban touched on the situations in Sudan's Darfur region, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe and Cote d'Ivoire.

Commending Ghana for what he called its "smooth democratic transition of power, he noted that the AU had made it clear that it would not accept unconstitutional changes such as those that recently took place in Guinea and Mauritania.

"I welcome and encourage this strong, principled and consistent approach and commend the African Union for the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance," he said.

Expressing concern over disputed leadership in Madagascar, he urged the parties there to address their differences through existing constitutional mechanisms.