

20 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the occasion of Africa Industrialization Day**

Today, the first Africa Industrialization Day of the new Millennium is a landmark for measuring African industrial progress. This is an occasion to recognize the tireless efforts of African governments and societies to create sustainable development and improved living conditions.

We all know that globalization provides opportunities and challenges for Africa, but perhaps in some occasions late-comers have an advantage of being able to learn from the best practices and tested strategies and to use environmental-friendly technologies. For this reason, industrial development of developing countries may be faster and more stable than it was in those countries, which have experienced it earlier.

For African industry, the challenge of going global is a matter of improving competitiveness and productivity. I should like to remind you of the positive growth rates and reforms in several African countries and the potential of its people. The African Industrialization Day calls for further concerted efforts at national, regional and international levels to transform the continent's natural resources into processed goods and to raise the overall growth rate of manufacturing value added.

In order to do this, among other things, Africa needs to learn from the latest technological wisdom of information and communication technologies in pursuit for development. These innovations should be adapted according to local conditions and needs. Simultaneously, there is a need for basic industries, which are the backbone of any industrialized economy. We need to be pragmatic and to maintain and ensure a balance between different sectors.

African industries need a well-trained workforce. African entrepreneurs need to be encouraged with different incentives on investment and enterprise start-up procedures, as well as on public investment in basic physical infrastructure. The social considerations and poverty eradication should not be forgotten during industrialization.

With the support of the international community and multilateral agencies, African countries can strengthen their small and medium-sized industries, which form the majority of African private sector. This is an undertaking, which requires not only a strategic vision, but the full commitment of entire populations and that of the international community.

The capacity of developing countries, especially in the Least Developed Countries must be our special focus in the new Millennium, as agreed by the Heads of State and Government in the

Millennium Declaration. Next year, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the High-level segment of ECOSOC provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to continue dialogue and exchange of views on these important topics, which we are debating today.