



## Eleventh (special) sitting

Tuesday, 12 June 2007, 11.05 a.m.

*President: Mr. Sulka*

### ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ABDOULAYE WADE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL

The PRESIDENT

It is my pleasure to open the eleventh (special) sitting of the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference. I give the floor directly to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Juan Somavia, to welcome His Excellency, Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal.

*Original French:* The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

I would like to point out that Mr. Blanchard, former Director-General, is also with us this morning.

Mr. President, we are very happy to be able to welcome you to this house of social dialogue. You are a friend, a friend of the house and a friend of the values which we represent. In welcoming you here we are paying tribute to a protagonist of human rights and a visionary for development.

Your exceptional career is a great human adventure. It is the adventure of a free human being, an independent thinker and a man of commitment.

You are, first of all, President Wade, a man of ideas, an open-minded intellectual. You are a mathematician, a sociologist and social psychologist; you are also a doctor of law and a professor of economics. You were the Dean of the Faculty of Law and Economics of the University of Dakar. You became a lawyer, then an international consultant and expert in development financing.

You have also written a number of reference works, in particular on human rights, the role of consensus in society, the destiny of Africa, and the role of women in development. These are all noble causes which inform your activities as a politician and a statesman.

Having been leader of the opposition in your country for many years, you know the price of personal sacrifice which sometimes has to be paid when you stand by your own convictions, but you also know the value of consensus building when the higher interest of the nation is at stake. You have twice been a member of the Government of National Unity as Minister of State. You were elected President of the Republic of Senegal in 2000, then re-elected at the beginning of this year for a second term of office.

President Wade, today we salute you, as a builder of Senegal through the major infrastructure projects you have launched, and as a promoter of social peace, with the creation of the National Committee

for Social Dialogue, which is responsible for arbitration and the prevention of conflicts in Senegal – both institutions that are still in place to ensure social stability. Of course, you are also an architect of tomorrow's Africa, as an ardent advocate of the African Union.

We are with you when you state in a well publicized article at the recent meeting of the G8 in Germany that, despite the challenges of poverty and conflicts, Africa has firmly taken the road to democracy, growth and social justice. And this is the hallmark of your strong commitment, which I personally witnessed, to decent work at the Ouagadougou Summit.

We are with you when you state that it is high time to redefine the word "global" to include Africa as an equal partner, to prepare this interdependent world you describe, to replace narrow interests by projects for a shared future.

Mr. President, your passion and your life, your ambitions for Africa and your international influence inspire hope. On behalf of the International Labour Organization and personally as a friend of Africa, I would like to thank you for having come to be with us today, and speaking personally, Mr. President, you know how important your presence is to me, because of my respect and admiration for you and your struggle. We are all honoured by your struggle. Thank you very much for being here today, Mr. President.

*(Applause.)*

The PRESIDENT

It is now my privilege to invite his Excellency President Wade to take the floor.

*Original French:* Mr. WADE (*President, Republic of Senegal*)

My first words are to express to the President my most sincere congratulations on his election as President of this session of the Conference and to wish him every success in exercising his mandate.

I would also like to address my most sincere thanks to the Director-General, my friend Juan Somavia, for having invited me to this place of work and to give the workers, of whom I am one myself, the opportunity to address the workers' organizations and employers of the world. It is a great pleasure for me to take the floor, invited as I am to address the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

My country has historically been linked with the ILO. My distinguished compatriot Blaise Diagne, the first black Member of Parliament in France,

took part in the ILO in 1919 when he was already defending the cause of the African people.

The International Labour Conference is a unique event, bringing together representatives from governments, employers and workers and for many decades now has been offering an ideal framework for the social partners to work together and to ensure economic and social progress. Dialogue and negotiation are vital in society, vital for the environment in enterprises where capital and work meet to produce richness under the arbitration of public authorities.

Since 1919, a great deal has changed and the nature of the challenges has changed as well. These problems have become more numerous and more complex. This is why we need to try to achieve the aspirations for peace, progress, equity and social justice, which are the ILO's purpose, which remain as objectives that need to be achieved in order to ensure better conditions of life for all. The decisive role that the Director-General of the ILO has played in the preparations and the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development owes a great deal to his precious contribution in considering social questions at international level. This is vital because economic and social progress can only be made at the detriment of social progress. Social and economic factors are complementary. The social aspect relies on the economic aspect, while the latter depends on the social aspect.

This is why I responded favourably to his invitation when, in September of last year, during the annual session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, he invited me to participate at the session of the International Labour Conference and to tell you a bit about "Africa in globalization" and also to voice my vision of Senegal's development. I am going to do this right now.

Globalization for me is an objective reality. It stems from the tremendous development in communication and information technology, the volume and the mobility of capital and the movement and unprecedented diversity in the exchange of goods and services. It also causes cultures and civilizations to meet in an ambiguous dynamic environment in which peaceful and conflicting aspects exist together. To believe that globalization is a epiphenomena is a false interpretation of it. It is a given fact which has to be seen in a framework of time and has to be taken as an essential component. We do not choose globalization, we experience it because it is involved in everything. The idea is not to decide whether we are for or against globalization but rather how we are to tame globalization, by integrating paradigms of speed, competitiveness and the powers of anticipation that control it. This is the real challenge that Africa faces in order to fill the gap that it faces vis-à-vis developed countries and to ensure it is not hampered in its progress.

It is true that as opposed to other continents, Africa has the heavy burden of slavery and colonization, plunder of its natural resources, unfair trade and a brain drain in its past. We have definitely been profoundly stigmatized by this loss. With respect to the negotiations in the World Trade Organisation, in particular, my country has the advantage that it has been appointed to speak for Africa in Cancun in Mexico.

If Africa appointed Senegal it is because it believes that it will represent and defend the interests of its continent in line with the article I published in

*Le Monde* on the eve of the Cancun negotiations. Today trade freedom, a principle we approve of, is not tainted by Africans but by the agricultural subsidy developed countries use for their farmers.

The World Trade Organization has already recognized that the subsidy rules, which at the moment are \$1 billion a day in developed countries, distort competitiveness and means the developing and developed countries' markets are closed to our goods. We are unable even to take protectionist measures ourselves because we would then expose the violations of WTO rules by Africa and that would compromise assistance to us.

Paradoxically, at the same time when African countries are asked to open their markets to free trade, subsidies are being taken which contravene world trade guidelines from the WTO. So is it any wonder that Africa's part in the world trade represents less than 2 per cent? In actual fact, of course, Africa is not poor. It has been made poor.

More than assistance, which is not always particularly effective, what Africa needs most is justice and respect for the rules that govern international trade.

At this point, I would like to modify Jean-Baptiste Henri Lacordaire's statement that between the weak and the strong, it's freedom that oppresses. I say "it is justice which sets free".

In responsible globalization where rules of equity and justice are respected as called for in the internal systems of African countries, given the wealth of natural resources and human resources in Africa we should be able to face up to competition but it has to be fair competition. Africa has the authority and is in a position to dictate the conditions of its social and economic development and to be optimistic in tackling the realities of globalization. This is why we can contribute something to the success of the cycle of Doha negotiations. But as I said the other day at the G8, in Heiligendamm in Germany, in order to overcome obstacles and to speed up trade of trade measures, strictly trade measures can only take place properly among countries at equal levels of development. But as soon as developing countries are introduced, trade measures are not enough and we need to be supported by economic measures.

Just to give you the example of international trade. We are all aware that it is a motor for development because it is a motor for growth. But if international trade is developing, then the gap which separates Africa from the developed countries is expanding because the developing countries do not have the capacity to meet the same rhythm of growth in improving their export levels. This is why I said, and this was in fact approved by all the members of the G8, that trade measures have to be complemented in our countries by investment.

Africa, at the moment, represents 1.7 per cent of international investment and that is not enough to enable us to follow international trade growth. We have to be aware of this and I managed to get all the members of the G8 to share this point of view.

So, this is the drama facing Africa at the moment. This could be amended by bringing in private investors to invest in the field of exports in order to reduce the gap that separates us from developed countries. But I must say here that relations between developed countries and developing countries have been skewed for quite some time now by the assistance and credit practices which have limited scope.

Assistance, as such, has not really met the objectives set in the 1970s of 0.7 per cent and credit has led to debts.

We need to find something else and it is along those lines that we have set up the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). I am one of the people who started NEPAD, because the objectives of NEPAD include a new vision of ourselves and our relations with our partners.

Based on three parameters – all long-term factors – that is the private sector, good governance and features of the region concerned, we have defined eight priority sectors. They have to represent the foundation for a renewed stimulus for Africa – infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, training, environment, information technology, energy and international trade, that is, access to developed countries.

Even though NEPAD, as our response in Africa to globalization, remains relevant, we have to realize that its development is being considerably delayed due to a lack of management in being able to mobilize the necessary resources for its implementation. Africa's second response to globalization remains, as I see it, in managing to perfect African unity through the media of the united states of Africa. One point is clearly true. No one African State is able to alone meet competition with the major industrialized countries and the supernationals. If many far richer countries than ours feel the need to get together in associations in appropriate agreements, it is because outside the major conglomerates, the micro state no longer has any chance of survival.

Senegal's plea for a federal government is based on this clear view of the future of our people. This is the view that we will be defending at the Accra summit on 3 July. The summit has been convened to deal with one single item of our agenda; continental African government and the united states of Africa. In that discussion we think that we have found a response to the concerns of national sovereignty expressed by some States of the African Union. For some States, resistance to the constitution of the united states of Africa as a political entity is based on the problem of sovereignty. That is why we suggested right from the beginning, that each State should maintain a ministry for foreign affairs, maintain their embassies, while waiting for awareness to develop. However, the other ministries should be replaced by the federal ministries.

It seems vital to me to recognize that an African state which thinks it can become an island of riches in an ocean of poor people because it has oil, for example, is making the biggest mistake. Those who feel that because they are wealthy they should not associate themselves with others, should take, Bavaria in Germany and California in the United States, or even certain countries in the European Union as an example.

I think that labour, something that is extensively discussed here, aims to liberate the individual from need by pushing back poverty and creating wealth. But, what is covered by the concept of poverty, which continues to regulate the daily lives of all people throughout the world? The classic definition in the international community considers someone to be poor, who earns less than one dollar a day.

This is too simplified a view of the problem. I think that the time has come to rethink the definition of poverty. Are even two or three dollars a day

really enough to obtain housing, food and clothes, educate one's children and care for one's family?

Poverty is not expressed in terms of revenue, but of conditions of life. There are a number of factors on which we need to act in order to have sustainable improvement in these conditions.

This is why I think we should look at the phenomenon of poverty more as the cumulative result of deficits in individual needs and basic social services. I propose that we define poverty as a "cluster of shortages". These would be a lack of access to decent housing, to drinking water, to an adequate quality and quantity of food, to health, to education and literacy training for children, and to a healthy environment. These are what I would call the seven plagues of the modern world for the majority in our globalized society. If you tackle one in order to escape poverty, that is progress, yes, but nevertheless you have six other areas to tackle. These can also be called "fundamental human needs".

It is not with one, two or three dollars a day that we will manage to solve so many intertwined problems. We need to work on several fronts in order to tackle all the problems at once, to help the deprived at what I would call the very bottom of society to emerge, by offering them decent conditions for life.

This is the experience that we are implementing in Senegal with the Jaxaay Plan aimed at rehousing communities, who suffered floods two years ago, in clean housing projects where social housing units can be bought cheaply on hire purchase. Today, for around 40 to 70 dollars a month over 20 years, the head of a household can buy decent housing in Senegal. These communities are taken out of unhygienic accommodation and rehoused in modern housing projects with clean surroundings, decent housing, good drinking water and basic social services, such as health services and education for children.

Our ambition is to go from the Jaxaay Plan to a "One Family, One Roof" plan, and to extend that over the whole of our national territory. In our social housing policy, the State, of course, takes charges of the provision of utilities, water conveyance, rain water drainage and waste water disposal, and reimburses the companies involved for taxes paid on imported building materials.

I should note that housing is part of our policy of voluntary cooperation and social liberalism, which extends to other fields too. This is the case in particular for health through the Sesame Plan. We now offer free medicines and free health services for people over the age of 60. Our programme to fight HIV/AIDS enables us to provide free screening and anti-retroviral treatment. This, coupled with an awareness-raising and prevention policy since the start of the AIDS pandemic, has enabled us to achieve a very low rate of AIDS infection of 0.7 per cent.

This is also the case for education. Forty per cent of our national budget goes to education. This is almost unique in the world. Since the launch of a class for the youngest children a few years ago, pre-school education, which had previously only been available for payment, is also made available free of charge. It accepts children from 2 to 6 to familiarize them with modern educational toys and to help them to become used, from an early age, to an information and communication technology environment (one of the toys in question is a computer).

The children also receive visits from the “grandfather” or “grandmother” of the village or neighbourhood in which they live, who each day comes to tell them a traditional African story. Every legend teaches us a moral lesson about life in society. This is why children who participate in these schools are well-rooted in their cultures. This pre-school class has been praised by UNESCO as a universal model.

Our aim is to create an integrated system, inspired by our traditions and open to contemporary facts of life. Computers are to be used from pre-school right through to university, hence the programme “One Student, One Computer; One Teacher, One Computer”.

We think that computerization is a great opportunity for Africa, since it can make world knowledge available to everyone. This is something that enables education to take place both on an individual level and in groups.

It is in this spirit also that teaching of Arabic and the Koran is being updated, to adapt humanity’s spiritual quest to contemporary conditions. To this end, we have launched modern *daras* schools.

Nevertheless, in a country such as ours, where quality human resources are seen as a factor for growth and development, education and training are regarded as a very viable investment, which is why any student in Senegal who meets the criteria for teaching now benefits from a grant helping her or him to complete her or his studies either in Senegal or abroad. I do not think there are many such examples throughout the world.

We are also continuing our efforts to make sure that Senegal develops a good university structure. Senegal inherited one university at independence; my predecessors created another, at St. Louis. I have set up four new universities, as well as a new technical university at St Louis training workers right from the lowest possible levels to the level of engineer, on a par with the polytechnics and the engineering schools of France.

Senegal’s emerging vision rests on both qualified human resources and high-quality infrastructure. In human resources, we have invested a great deal for the medium and long term, which is an expensive risk: allocating 40 per cent of the budget to one single sector is necessarily a risk. But there is no sustainable development without well-qualified workers who are able at any moment to respond to the needs of the system. This is why we have launched a vast programme of infrastructure projects including roads, airports, railways and ports. We are currently building a new, ultra-modern airport 35 kilometres from Dakar, with a revolutionary new funding system without any recourse to the national budget and without any recourse to external aid either.

We are aiming to ensure that most Senegalese have access to decent work compatible with human dignity. As strongly recommended by the ILO, decent work is something that we need to ensure is in place in order to attain our economic and social development. Decent work means first and foremost a job that guarantees an adequate income. It includes social protection, where the worker and the worker’s family are covered. Decent work means good working conditions and access to health and social security services. Decent work also means a good pension. Lastly, it also requires respect for health and safety standards at work.

Senegal has taken all these recommendations to heart. This is why we have taken a number of measures to meet our commitments, including ratifying a number of ILO Conventions, including the worst forms of child labour Convention, the minimum age Convention, the abolition of forced labour Convention, and the discrimination (employment and occupation) Convention. Along the same lines, we have raised state employees’ salaries three times and raised their retirement age from 50 to 60 years, and are gradually extending this to the private sector. We have also drawn up a new retirement system alongside the current one in order to raise pensions. Since the year 2000, the beginning of my last mandate, we have set up over 200,000 jobs, almost as many as all the jobs in the private and public sectors that existed until then. Most of these jobs were for young people, thanks to a fund for youth projects, while we have also taken on 5,000 new teachers a year. All teachers’ salaries have increased; some have almost tripled. You can see in a document – in an annex that I will leave here – all the general statistics on teachers and workers in Senegal.

The workplace, however, especially in a free system, is still an environment characterized by competing demands. We need therefore to ensure that social dialogue is a permanent mechanism to prevent conflict. The National Social Dialogue Committee launched in 2003 in Senegal exists to meet this need, and I am pleased to announce that in April 2007 the Conference of Ministers of Labour of the African Union recommended to the Union’s member States setting up a national structure along the same lines.

Social dialogue and the social protection of workers, which is inherent in decent work, must remain at the heart of our concerns.

Investment in risk prevention is always preferable to paying out for care and compensation, as the good health of a business contributes towards the good health of its workers. There is no real conflict of interest here: quite the opposite. We must not forget that the ILO Constitution is inspired, in part, by the visions of two great entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century, the Welshman Robert Owen and the Frenchman Daniel Legrand. These people understood that enterprises and the world of work could only prosper when there was harmony between economic and social concerns.

We also need to ensure a good balance between the legitimate protection of the rights of workers and the need for efficiency and competitiveness of enterprises in a world of merciless competition. This also applies to the right to strike, which could be exercised as part of a modern approach to the trade union struggle which would protect both the rights of workers and the value of work as a tool.

It is also in the interest of workers, who are the social group most at risk from possible job losses as a result of an enterprise achieving poor results.

However encouraging the picture that I have just painted may be, our efforts nevertheless encounter some major external difficulties. I will just mention the increased oil prices and desertification. As for the increase in oil prices, we have set up an association of non-oil-producing countries, taking the stance that the surcharges we pay on petrol imports should be absorbed by the international community, the World Bank, the European Union and others. We have established a “green OPEC” to promote the development of biofuels. Africa’s potential is so

important that we could be the world's major supplier of biofuels in the future.

Given the problems of drought and desertification, which pose a great threat to us, the Community of Sahel and Sahara States (CENSAD) and the African Union have taken two very important measures: setting up the Green Wall Initiative, which has been welcomed by the G8 countries, to create a band of vegetation of over 40 kilometres in breadth running from Dakar to Djibouti, and subsequently being widened to 150 kilometres; and the construction of reservoirs for collective rainwater, of which 250 exist in Senegal. These basins, which fill up during the winter, transform the living conditions of populations who, during the dry season, can nevertheless carry on market gardening activities and even farm fish. These projects have been submitted to the European Unions and major countries such as the United States, Japan and China.

Within the ILO's work, there is also the problem of clandestine migration, which, in its new, desperate guise, should awaken our consciences. Clandestine immigrants are often strong individuals who take the dangerous road of adventure rather than live in their country of origin. Apart from national measures or bilateral measures, in order to overcome this modern scourge we need to carry out multilateral consultations in order to be able to tackle all aspects of this phenomenon, which affects both rich countries and poor countries.

Now, taking what has been said by a great statesman, President John F. Kennedy, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

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#### The PRESIDENT

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Your Excellency, President Wade, thank you for those words. You are known in the International Labour Organization as a staunch defender of social dialogue as a method of governance. The ILO appreciates very much the support that it has received from your Government in respect of the Regional Programme for the Promotion of Social Dialogue in French-speaking Africa, which is based in Dakar.

This programme covers over 20 countries, and its results have been most encouraging. The adoption by Senegal of a social charter is just one of its many successes.

Mr. President, we have followed your visit to the Heiligendamm G8 meeting last week. You acknowledged the great challenges facing Africa, but you also placed Africa firmly in an international context, where it is no longer, in your words, a "dark continent", racked with political instability and conflict. Your message that Africa is changing and is now entering into relations with countries of other regions of the world on the basis, not of aid or charity, but of mutual interest and advantage, is a message of hope, a message that you have repeated here today.

Your Excellency, I speak for myself, for my fellow Officers and for all participants here in offering you my sincere thanks for taking the time to come and address us at the International Labour Conference.

*(The Conference adjourned at 11.50 a.m.)*

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