

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**MESSAGE ON AFRICA DAY**

**25 May 2014**

Transformation, growth, dynamism, progress and partnership: these concepts are central to the African Union's narrative as it embarks on the second half of its first centennial. I am confident that the AU's vision, "Agenda 2063," can succeed.

Agriculture and food security – the theme of this year's Africa Day – will be critical. More countries are investing in agriculture, while donors have pledged to increase funding and technical assistance. I am especially alarmed by the high risk of famine in South Sudan, where the lack of a genuine cessation of hostilities may cause farmers to miss the planting season.

My Zero Hunger Challenge initiative aims to scale up efforts to eliminate hunger through sustainable agriculture and food systems. The observance of 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming aims to mobilize support for smallholder farmers, especially women, who contribute so much to Africa's food security.

At the same time, we must do more to unleash the full potential of Africa's agricultural sector, which employs two out of every three Africans. By processing commodities and using other means to add value, we can help develop rural areas, create jobs and empower people while ensuring food security.

I encourage Africa's leaders and their partners to advance these aims. The United Nations will continue to accelerate our push to reach the Millennium Development Goals and to ensure that Africa's priorities, as expressed in the Common African Position, are reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

I also call on Africa's leaders to participate in the Climate Summit I will convene in September to galvanize action toward a meaningful new climate agreement. Africa is among the regions most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and I fully support the continent's leaders as they engage on this critical issue.

Africa Day is also a moment to reaffirm commitment to the continent's women and young people. I express my solidarity with the families of the kidnapped schoolgirls in Borno State, Nigeria, along with the country's Government and people, and pledge to work for their safe return.

Africa is achieving admirable growth, but social and economic inequalities are on the increase. Greater equity presents a common challenge to the continent as a whole and

can help foster peace and stability. Conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and mediation are critical to realizing the goal to end all wars in Africa by 2020.

The United Nations will maintain a strong partnership with the African Union as we pursue peace, sustainable development, democracy and human rights. On this Africa Day, let us pledge to continue standing with the people and leaders of Africa as they advance on a path to a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future.