

**Statement by Mr.Sergey Lavrov, Minister of
Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the
7th Meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum
Moscow, October 27, 2006**

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to extend my warm greetings to the participants of the 7th meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum.

After the end of confrontation between blocs, the world has changed irreversibly and continues to change. The tendency towards democratization of international relations is gaining ground. The international community is increasingly aware of its common interests in the face of new threats and challenges, as well as of the indivisibility of security and prosperity in the era of globalization.

The ongoing changes have left no one unaffected. And Africa also is more and more actively involved in global development. We welcome integration processes on the continent that are gaining momentum. Peace-keeping activities of African countries are becoming one of key factors of sustainable development.

Russia advocates a steady progress of the states of the region towards economic and political reforms in accordance with their development plans and pays close and undivided attention to the problems of Africa.

We are concerned with many global risks and threats which rather strongly affect the African continent in particular. We firmly believe that the region should not be left alone facing its numerous problems. We stand for an effective partnership of all members of the international community based on both external support and effective measures by the African states themselves.

We support steps taken in this regard, aimed at contributing to the sustainable development of Africa, soonest and full integration of the continent into the global economic system and overcoming poverty and misery.

Our commitment to multidimensional cooperation with Africa has been time-tested. Today, it is characterized by: enhancing dialogue on the current key international problems, including combating terrorism and other manifestations of extremism; recovery of trade; expanding contacts in the field of education and public health. We help our African partners to reduce the debt burden, strengthen their peace-keeping capacity and train national civil specialists. We enhance our participation in the existing international initiatives and mechanisms established to render assistance to the continent, of course including the Africa Partnership Forum.

Priorities of the Russian Presidency in the G8 are completely in tune with vital interests of African peoples. Namely - energy security, education development and combating infectious diseases. The last topic, as far as I know, will be specially discussed at your today's meeting. The Africa document adopted by the G8 Summit in St.Petersburg summarized activities on African track after Gleneagles and marked the milestones for further joint work. A new impetus was given in St.Petersburg to the international efforts to support the implementation of the "New Partnership for Africa's Development" Program (NEPAD).

Active participation of H.E.Mr.Denis Sassou-Ngesso, Chair of the African Union and President of the Republic of Congo, and H.E.Mr.Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, in the outreach discussion during the G8 Summit was of great importance. These discussions had a follow-up during the visit of President Vladimir Putin to the continent in September and my working visits to a number of African states. I had numerous contacts with my African colleagues within the last two months in New York and Moscow.

I would like to note that the times when the G8 was an exclusive club are over. Globalization requires truly representative global fora to coordinate approaches to problems common for the whole international community. It is in this direction that the G8 is evolving. Russia has contributed to the consolidation of the tendency. Within the framework of our Presidency the format of the dialogue and interaction with partners from other regions have been extended. They not only joined the ‘out reach’ discussions during the summit but directly participated in the elaboration of the G8 documents throughout the year. We are certain that the tendency towards more openness and further democratization of our activities will grow.

We consider that the implementation of the decisions related to the St.Petersburg Summit, which have a direct bearing on the continent’s future will indeed contribute to the mobilization of Africa's own efforts and additional external support for the countries of the region in implementation of their development plans.

Your Forum reasonably has a special role to play in this respect. It is fundamentally important that this Forum is a mechanism of interregional dialogue and interaction contributing to the promotion of principles of broad multilateral cooperation. It offers an opportunity to consider, together with the representatives of the donor community, strategic and political matters and to elaborate recommendations aimed at enhancing the efficiency of African states’ own steps. We note the Forum’s increasing effectiveness that is being assisted by the organizational consolidation of the APF, including the establishment of its Secretariat.

Considering the prevailing trends in the field of global development, I am confident that the role and importance of this unique instrument that brings together the efforts made by African states and external partners, aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals on the continent, will only grow.

It is our common task to provide sustainable development, stability and prosperity in the region. Its successful fulfillment also depends on today's meeting. I do hope that this Forum will assume, for a full due, one of the leading roles in the efforts taken by the international community to provide comprehensive support for the region, including the implementation of the NEPAD Program and other ambitious plans of the African community. On its part, Russia will further continue to do its utmost to promote the achievement of these noble goals.

I wish you fruitful work for the sake of progress and prosperity of Africa as an integral part of the whole international community.