

STATEMENT OF H.E. PRESIDENT JOACHIM CHISSANO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE AND
CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN UNION AT THE
AFRICITIES 2003 SUMMIT; YAOUNDE, CAMEROON;
3 DECEMBER 2003

Your Excellencies

Heads of States and Government;

Dear Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I feel greatly honoured to take part in this important Summit of African Cities held at this beautiful and vibrant city of Yaoundé where I was only two weeks ago. Allow me to take this opportunity to express, once again, my gratitude to the people and government of Cameroon for their fraternal hospitality.

I came to Yaoundé to fulfill a promise I made to the Africities Political Committee delegation when I met them in Maputo last July. I told them that I accepted the invitation to participate in this event because I consider it essential for our Continent's development.

This Summit is a corollary of the many efforts undertaken by Africans towards a common approach to the challenges hampering the development of our Cities.

We recognize that Local Government institutions have been working hard in search for the best and most appropriate solutions to the problems our urban communities face.

We commend the efforts of cooperation and collaboration we have been witnessing among Local Governments in several fields especially in the area of local governance, taking due account of the different cultural, historical and traditional context of each country.

These experiences and cooperation activities bring greater focus on issues of utmost importance to the African Continent, namely:

- The need to improve service delivery to the people;
- Combating endemic diseases such as HIV-AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis; Local and community development; and intra and inter-local government cooperation.

In this process, we have noted that decentralization has proven to be the best way of promoting local community development. That is why one of the major challenges we can identify is public service reform and decentralization of public administration. This allows for greater participation of the citizens in the management and decision-making processes of the City institutions. It enables citizens to search and find the best ways of resolving conflicts as well as to elect their leaders and representatives.

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Conference takes place a few months after the historical Second Summit of the African Union held in Maputo. The Heads of State and Government of the Continent noted with satisfaction the progress made by the African Union in its efforts to restore and consolidate peace, socio-economic stability and towards sustainable and integrated development of the whole Africa.

In the Maputo Summit, the Heads of State and Government consolidated the establishment of the structures of the Union by electing the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Commissioners. They also adopted important decisions and declarations of which most relevant for the Africities Summit are the Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis and on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The Declaration on NEPAD reiterates the African leaders' commitment to this vision and programme and it offers guidelines for its implementation.

NEPAD seeks to ensure a balanced development of the rural and urban areas with Local Government playing an active role.

I am pleased to learn, therefore, that you have discussed and decided to take an active role in the African Union and its programme, NEPAD.

The Africities Summit should, among other stated objectives, create a space for dialogue among all relevant stake-holders, from both local and central government, with a view to finding common mechanisms to deal with the greatest challenge before us, that of reducing absolute poverty and generating the sustainable development of our countries.

The presence of so many ministers of local Government and of African Cities Mayors.

It is clear evidence of the African leaders' determination to effect change for the good of our cities and citizens. We hope that this Summit will come out with specific strategic options and recommendations on the promotion of development at local level thus solidifying the foundations we have laid down for the Continent.

In my capacity as Chairman of the African Union, I would like to assure you of our total support, and to wish you every, success in your endeavours, for in yours we see the success and prosperity of the peoples of Africa.

I thank you.