



**PRESS RELEASE NO. 77/2006**

**AFRICAN YOUTH CHARTER IS LAUNCHED AS ADF V OPENS**

**Addis Ababa, November 17, 2006-** The fifth edition of the African Development Forum (ADF V) opened at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on Thursday 16 November. The ADF this year focuses on “Youth and Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and is being jointly organised by the ECA and the African Union. Hundreds of delegates are attending, including the UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Anan, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Mr Meles Zenawi, the Chairperson of the Africa Union Commission, Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, the President of the African Development Bank, Mr. Donald Kaberuka, the ECA Executive Secretary, Mr. Abdulie Janneh, government ministers, ambassadors, AU Commissioners and invited guests.

At the official opening ceremony, Mr. Konare launched the African Youth Charter. 4 representatives of African youths received copies of the Charter from the Chairperson, who was assisted by the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and technology professor Nagia Essayed.

Mr. Konare encouraged the youth of Africa to fight for liberty, accountability, to mobilise against HIV and Aids, say no to drugs, and to raise their voice to reject conflict and impunity. He also urged the youths to acquire education and appreciate their cultures and languages.

He lamented the deaths of many the young African migrants who lose their lives en route to Europe in search of jobs. A minute’s silence was observed in honour of those who have died in this way.

Mr. Konare also recalled that Africa will host the Soccer World Cup in 2010 and called on the continent to ensure that the tournament shows African culture and values, and also helps in the fight against discrimination. He emphasised that the success of Africa resides in its unity, in speaking with one voice, hence the efforts being made towards establishing a United States of Africa.

Two youth representatives addressed the ADF V. They recalled that young people, especially girls and women are sometimes victims of neglect, exploitation and abuse. Young people, they said, need to be given a chance to gain experience and be gainfully employed either in institutions or as owners of their own businesses.

The UN Secretary General called on all the people of Africa to work hard to achieve development. Saying that development is never a gift bestowed on any country, Mr Anan urged developing countries to implement their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He also called on developed and middle income countries to fulfil their promises to the developing countries.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Mr. Meles Zenawi noted that a combination of the wisdom of grown ups and the courage and ambition of the youth is an ideal recipe for Africa to tackle its many development challenges. He said that while there has been interference in African affairs, Africa should not continue to blame others entirely for its condition, but should instead take responsibility for changing the balance of forces. In this respect, he encouraged the youth to see how they can contribute to the development process and become involved.

Mr. Kaberuka of the African Development Bank said that Africa is the youngest population in the world, with over half a billion young people, many of whom are part of the “MDG Generation”. This is a positive thing for Africa, he added. He also observed that, despite the recurring conflicts, cases of corruption and droughts in some cases, Africa has made a lot of progress. This progress should be supported with good institutions and the wherewithal to continue.

The ECA Executive Secretary Mr Janneh observed that two thirds of Africa is below the age of 25. Young people, he said are among the most creative in society, they have radical ideas and are the inheritors of the future. As such the ADF is also about encouraging the young people to make the right decisions and to ensure that their lives are not limited by poverty, diseases, or by wars and conflicts.

**Communication and Information Division**  
**African Union Commission**  
[dinfo@africa-union.org](mailto:dinfo@africa-union.org)