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UNIS/CP/518
5 September 2005

African Leaders Urged to Tackle Crime, Insecurity and Corruption

In Order to Promote Development: A Programme of Action

To be Endorsed at Abuja Meeting

VIENNA, 5 September (UN Information Service) -- At a landmark Round Table of senior state officials and policy makers from African countries, hosted by the Government of Nigeria and organized in association with the United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC), the inter-linkages between crime, insecurity and underdevelopment in Africa have been put under the spotlight.

In a message read on his behalf by the Minister of Justice of Nigeria, Chief Bayo Ojo San, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo emphasized that "Crime and drugs constitute a threat to democratic governance, the rule of law and the free exercise of human rights in Africa. They also constitute a serious impediment to efforts to promote human prosperity and development."

In a video message to the Round Table, United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan emphasised that "Africa's problems -- poverty, diseases, environmental degradation -- make its people even more vulnerable to crime." Mr. Annan urged African leaders to take the threat of crime and insecurity and its impact on development seriously. He also stressed that this meeting in Abuja is particularly important, given its focus on concrete ways to address the challenge.

In his message, Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director UNODC, emphasized that the Round Table is about turning the *premise* that violence, corruption and crime are stumbling blocks to development, into a *promise* that African States take effective action. "We know that where there is a will, there is a way -- that there are remedies at hand, and that the right solutions, in the right combinations, at the right time, do produce results."

The Round Table, attended by senior officials from 50 African countries, including 14 Ministers, will review and endorse a five-year Programme of Action designed to take concrete steps to counter crime, drug trafficking and related problems of insecurity on the African continent. The meeting is also being attended by representatives of donor countries, international financial institutions, development agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. Costa emphasized that the Programme of Action was a clear step in the right direction. He urged African leaders and the G8 nations to reaffirm the Programme's value at the forthcoming World Summit 2005 to be held in New York, 14-16 September 2005.

UNODC recently released a report on Crime and Development in Africa, which provides a detailed overview of the state of crime in Africa as well as its impact on development. (The report is available on UNODC's website: www.unodc.org).

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2005 World Summit

High-level Plenary Meeting of the 60th Session of the General Assembly
14. – 16. September 2005
<http://www.un.org/summit2005/>

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