

Statement
by Ursula Plassnik
Federal Minister for European and International Affairs
of the Republic of Austria
at the 12th UNIDO General Conference

3 December 2007

Mr. President,
Dear Director-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all today for the opening of the twelfth General Conference of UNIDO: Heads of state and government, ministers and high officials from the capitals, as well as representatives of the diplomatic missions here in Vienna.

Our peoples expect, above all, a life in freedom from fear and in freedom from want. It is therefore essential that we make every effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals by determined, concerted action. And we recognise that special attention needs to be directed to Least Developed Countries.

In this endeavour UNIDO is a key partner. UNIDO has a clear strategy at hand to help LDCs, most of which are situated in Africa. UNIDO can count on our support for reaching our common goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria fully endorses the statement to be made by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to take advantage of my privileged position as the first speaker to high-light some issues of particular relevance: Aid for Trade, youth and employment, and energy.

Aid for Trade and the development of productive capacity are issues which are closely interlinked. They were the theme of the Ministerial Conference of Least Developed Countries here in Vienna last week and will also be discussed by a high-level panel during this week's General Conference.

This is certainly not a topic of purely academic interest, on the contrary. The European Union's future Economic Partnership Agreements with the ACP countries, for instance, will require restructuring and upgrading of the economies of these countries in order to fully benefit from the new trade and development agreements.

As the past has shown, even preferential access to markets is not sufficient if the productive capacities are not there to actually use the opportunities offered. Austria in its bilateral programmes, but also in our collaboration with UNIDO, has therefore put great emphasis on supporting small and medium enterprises in our partner countries. We know from our own experience that small and medium enterprises form the basis for a successful export-driven economy.

We support UNIDO, which over the years has become one of the most important and experienced contributors to Aid for Trade programs. Mainly in its endeavours to improve quality control and certification and thus help LDC exporters to adhere to the high standards required in today's global markets.

May I call upon our fellow donors to use the font of knowledge here at UNIDO in the area of Aid for Trade. – Especially in view of the fact that the EU has already promised to achieve the goal of € 2 billion Aid for Trade by 2010.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On women, youth and employment. Employment is the bridge between growth and poverty reduction. Only when sustained growth is translated into productive employment opportunities for all, people have the chance to earn the income needed to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

Women and youth are key agents for change in their societies. Only when they are given a strong perspective, a sense that their goals and interests are being taken into account, these societies can thrive.

UNIDO's collaboration with other organisations and, for instance, the countries of the Manu River Union to create productive and decent work for youth is a prime example in this respect. But youth employment is also a decisive tool to fight against the insecurity and support the stability of societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, a few words on **energy**. Since the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development it is generally recognized that none of the Millennium Development Goals will be reached if access to energy is not significantly improved.

Some 2 billion people worldwide do not have access to electricity. UNIDO takes concrete action to address this challenge. We welcome and support UNIDO's activities in this field, including through the Global Sustainable Energy Islands Initiative which benefits several island nations in the Caribbean.

As does UNIDO, Austria believes that synergies need to be found between the major, cross-boundary infrastructure projects currently envisioned by Africa and its international partners and small-scale access for energy projects.

Furthermore, at the core of UNIDO's mandate is energy efficiency, in particular in industrial processes. Austria has been a partner with UNIDO over many years to establish Cleaner Production Centers in a number of countries.

Just ten days ago, UNIDO was a co-sponsor of the Seventh Meeting of the Global Forum on Sustainable Energy here in Vienna which focussed on "Energy Efficiency for Developing Countries – Strong Policies, New Technologies". The meeting brought together some 300 international participants from governments, the private sector, the academic world and NGOs. It underscored inter alia:

- That it is cheaper to save one megawatt than to produce it.
- That it is possible to decouple economic development and energy consumption.
- That international know-how transfer is needed to help partner countries “leapfrog” to current technologies.
- That improved energy efficiency saves money, promotes development and protects the environment.

Austria will continue to promote international cooperation on energy efficiency. In 2008, we will facilitate several regional consultations – with small islands nations as well as with partners from Africa – with a view of elaborating concrete recommendations for action.

Three weeks ago, at a conference co-hosted by Burkina Faso and Austria at Ouagadougou, I have furthermore agreed with my colleagues from West Africa that Austria will assist with the development of a Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency for the ECOWAS region.

Given the high importance of energy on all political agendas, UNIDO’s Director-General has demonstrated leadership, courage and far-sightedness in assuming the Chairmanship of “UN Energy”, an interagency committee that brings together the more than 20 UN entities with energy mandates.

Austria stands ready to support you, Kandeh, in your new and important task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The coming week will require you to address important issues; I have outlined only a few. Much is at stake. May your deliberations be constructive and fruitful. And may your time in Vienna be enjoyable and pleasant.

Thank you very much.