STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICE-PRIME MINISTER

ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATION ON THE NEW DEAL FOR ENERGY IN AFRICA

(Thursday 17 September 2015 in Abidjan)
Mr Akinwumi ADESINA, President of the African Development Bank,

His Excellency, Daniel KABLAN DUNCAN, Prime Minister of Cote d'Ivoire

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished Guests, in your respective capacities

Allow me first of all to extend greetings from His Excellency Mr. Augustin MATATA PONYO, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who had wished to personally attend this meeting organized by the AfDB but who was unfortunately held back by last-minute state duties. That is the reason we are pleased to represent him.

We must state that we, the Congolese, have come to realise the obvious; it is this self-evident truth that explains our enthusiastic response to the initiative of the AfDB President, by way of a large delegation including, among others, our Minister of Energy and Water Resources, Mr. MATADI NENGA.

What is this evidence?

What is this truth? It is simple:

The foundation of economic and social development in Africa is a table on three props, namely:

- The 1st prop is human resources, that is to say, the educated, trained, skilled and healthy men and women living in an environment of peace
- The 2nd prop: these are natural resources with which our continent is awash.
- The 3rd prop of Africa’s development is Energy. Actually, we absolutely need energy to enable us, Africans, to produce and process our natural resources into wealth for the good of our population. In other words, only energy can allow us escape this almost unproductive centuries-long relationship between men and natural resources in Africa.

The theme of our meeting today in Abidjan is how to meet the energy challenge facing Africa and unlock its enormous energy potential to speed up growth and economic development.

My country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a perfect example of the issue at stake here.

Indeed, considering the needs of its growing economy, DR Congo’s national electricity coverage is still inadequate, despite the country’s huge potential. This situation considerably slows down its development. In rural areas where 70% of the population lives, the lack of access to electricity is an obstacle to human development.

Given the urgency, President Joseph Kabila decided, at the end of the last decade, to make the electricity sector a pillar of the country's economic recovery and growth. The government gave it a prominent place in its 2012-2016 action programme.
The strategies include:

(i) reforming the legal and regulatory framework of the sector, to create a new incentive environment for private enterprises or public-private partnerships,

(ii) rehabilitating existing infrastructure and building new ones. The development of the Inga site, in particular, will be a major asset for national economies and the region.

We also believe in fostering cross-border solidarity and regional integration through power pools to share our energy resources which are unevenly spread across the continent. The interconnected networks of Southern Africa, which have enabled the DRC to export its energy for two decades to the RSA, are now a significant contribution for mining companies in Katanga facing a huge electricity deficit.

My country is endowed with a considerable potential in hydroelectric, renewable, abundant and cheap energy, the surplus of which could be made available to both our close and distant neighbours. In this respect, Ethiopia is an excellent example of how surplus energy is exported for the development of its economy, which may be useful to the Grand Inga project, expected to become the world's biggest hydroelectric site.

Access of the majority to electricity hinges on rapid rural electrification, which is an immense challenge for the DRC, considering its size and the configuration of the national high-voltage grid following a west-south axis, which excludes 86% of the population.

Whereas Inga is expected to massively produce electricity, smaller sites, scattered in the hinterland, are also targeted. A list of over 200 potential schemes has been prepared by government experts, but it is far from exhaustive, since mining companies are developing plants hitherto unidentified, to reduce the electricity burden in their operating costs.

- The President of the African Development Bank,
- His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Cote d'Ivoire
- Honourable Ministers
- Distinguished Guests, in your respective capacities

What can our weak economies do in the face of the immense energy access challenge for all our citizens?

We need to pool our strengths and develop innovative and effective mechanisms to increase electricity supply and foster rapid growth for the continent’s economic and social development.

The objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative (SE4ALL) by 2030, set forth by the UN Secretary General, can serve as a useful reference to our states to pool their efforts.

Faced with scarce financial resources, but considering the power sector as highly mercantile, the Congolese government has sought to make it sufficiently attractive for private investors, the only ones able to mobilize massive financing needed for our economy to take off.

Interested private partners are thus called upon to finance and develop new electrical infrastructure, but they can also be involved in the rehabilitation, operation and maintenance of existing or new infrastructure financed by concessional loans from friendly countries.
- The President of the African Development Bank,
- His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Cote d'Ivoire
- Honourable Ministers
- Distinguished Guests, in your respective capacities

Lastly, I thank the AfDB, which is involved in the rehabilitation of Inga 1 and the extension of Kinshasa’s electricity network.

I also want to acknowledge the important role played by the AfDB in the Inga3BC project, which, in view of its USD 75-million technical assistance project to build the institutional capacity of the DRC to develop this project worth about a dozen USD billion, encouraged other multilateral and bilateral donors to intervene as well. It can also be added that the provision to the Congolese government of bankable feasibility studies for three medium-power plants (≈ 50 MW) is an integral part of this project.

I will not gloss over the AfDB’s highly significant support in the mobilization and conclusion of financing for the Ruzizi III hydropower plant project, planned to supply the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in collaboration with neighbouring countries.

Similarly, the AfDB finances the construction work of the Bukavu - Goma 220 kV line project and studies for the Goma - Butembo - Beni line that will ensure interconnection of the electricity networks of the CEPGL and NELSAP countries as well as the rationalization of the Congolese share of energy from Ruzizi III.

I wanted, by these few examples, to demonstrate your institution’s commitment to play a major role in finding solutions to the energy challenge facing the continent, in harmony with other partners.

We are grateful to the AfDB for all its interventions. However, DR Congo’s electric power needs for the coming 10 years, the region’s and Africa's needs are so huge that the AfDB is called upon to increase and coordinate its operations.

The electric power potential in the territory of the DRC is, as you know, immense. Their harmonious development requires that they be included in a unique, orderly and consistent framework.

I encourage you to develop the heralded strategic partnership, which can help transform Energy for Africa.

Thank you for your kind attention.