Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you to the African Development Bank. Your large number, the diversity of your skills profiles and geographical origins are an encouraging reflection of the performance of the ongoing recruitment drive. Indeed, since 1 January 2004, you are 42 new staff members from 27 different countries, assigned to 21 different organizational units who have joined the Bank’s staff complement. We are expecting even more new colleagues by year-end. You were selected from several thousand applicants representing most of the 77 member countries. Allow me to congratulate you on such a performance. You owe this achievement to no one, either within, or outwith the Bank. You were quite simply selected on the basis of merit and your own personal skills.

You are now fully fledged Bank staff members and as such I invite you to take your rightful place, a place which true professionals, dynamic and conscientious, should occupy within an international and multicultural institution open to change; an institution with 40 years of history with its successes and sometimes failures, but mostly successes. The reasons for these successes, and the failures, should be the source of enriching lessons for all those wishing to make a lasting and effective contribution in the service of the Bank. I encourage you all to develop an interest, and satisfy your curiosity in this area. You will then better understand the reasons for the efforts that Management will often urge you to make.

I invite you to assume the core values that your colleagues, who have served the Institution a little longer than yourselves freely adopted for themselves. Excellence, team spirit, professionalism, integrity and transparency must indeed dominate your new lives as international civil servants in the service of the
African Development Bank. It is because of some of these values that you are among us today after a recruitment process, which though long, was rigorous and transparent. Only by strictly adhering to these core values will you successfully retain your status as a staff member and advance within the hierarchy of this Bank.

I would ask your supervisors who are here today to take all the necessary measures to facilitate your integration into this new professional environment. I know, that, at first, you may encounter material or psychological difficulties. Management is, however, making, and will make, every effort to spare you the frustrations and disappointments of these early days. I urge the Human Resources Department to identify and appoint a mentor should you so desire.

Once again, I welcome you to a Bank, which, in recent years, has undergone deep reforms in every area. In operations, the Bank has adopted new policies and guidelines the quality of which is recognized by all our partners. The Bank has regularly and, within reasonable timeframes, successfully mobilized the necessary resources to finance its loan and grant activities. The quality of its interventions is constantly improving.

On the financial front, the Bank has introduced new financial products for the benefit of our borrowers, has adopted new policies, which have significantly strengthened the Institution’s financial situation and launched new initiatives that have enabled it to play a lead role in resolving the debt problems of the continent’s poorest countries. The crowning achievement of these reforms was the restoration of the AAA rating, the highest possible rating, by all the international rating agencies working with it.
However, the most tangible impact of the reforms on the everyday life of staff has been at the corporate level. The success of the other reforms would have been impossible had appropriate measures not been taken to motivate staff, the institution’s principal capital.

I am sure that you have all noted the quality of the bank’s computer and telecommunications infrastructure. It compares well with that of the most efficient international financial institutions in this area. The general services have, in a difficult context, been able to meet the bank’s rapidly changing needs in this area in recent years.

With regard to human resources management, performance, equity and transparency henceforth form the basis for all decisions on recruitment, promotion, compensation and disciplinary action. Overall, the Bank’s salaries have attained the same level as those of sister institutions. Thanks to the review of annual salary movements at comparator institutions, the Bank will continue to ensure that our salary scale evolves in proportions similar to those of other institutions. In some cases, staff benefits are far more generous in the ADB than in sister institutions.

A new division exclusively responsible for staff training and development activities was set up in January 2002. These activities will be the focus of the Bank’s priorities in the coming years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talking to you as new staff members, I would like to stress some of the key challenges facing the Bank, in other words, facing you. As several Deputies of the African Development Fund said during their recent meeting in Kampala in the wake of the undeniable success of the reforms undertaken in recent years, the Bank is at a crossroads. It behooves on all, shareholders as well as staff, to
ensure that the African Development Bank continues to remain the continent's leading financing institution.

Maintaining and improving the confidence that our partners now have in our Institution are in themselves major challenges to the Board of Directors, Management and staff. Expectations and demands will become ever higher. You should organize yourselves and work to successfully meet them.

The debate on aid effectiveness is bound to grow in proportion among multilateral development banks. The Institution’s relevance will no longer be judged by the volume of its operations or the quality of its policies, but rather by its contribution to the continent’s attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The Bank should be ready to fully play its role, present convincing results and share positive experiences. In that regard, ongoing initiatives with a view to introducing performance-based management and broader decentralization of Bank activities, accompanied by a more significant delegation of authority, all constitute powerful instruments to use in that connection.

Before the African and international community, the Bank has the responsibility to successfully conduct two major initiatives for the social advancement of the continent’s population. First, African heads of state entrusted the Bank with responsibility for NEPAD’s infrastructure and financial components. Furthermore, the Bank took the initiative to develop and submit for its partners’ appreciation its own Water Initiative. The Water Initiative has received considerable support worldwide and raised high expectations, witness the number and quality of participants during the Water Week that we have had the honor to organize and host since yesterday. Given the importance of these
initiatives for the continent’s development and the confidence reposed on our Institution, we must at all cost succeed.

By accepting the Bank’s offer of employment, you decided to serve the men and women of the world’s poorest continent. This is both an honor and a heavy responsibility. Your professionalism, integrity and drive for excellence should always rise to meet the hope that the people have in you.

The Board of Directors and Management have adopted generous working and service conditions for you, comparable to those offered by the most competitive international institutions. Therefore, by your comportment at work and everyday activities, it is your duty to be equal to the task that the Bank’s mission represents, on the one hand, and the trust that the shareholders have put in you, on the other. It is on the basis of these criteria that several observers who, with interest and cause, monitor the trend of the ADB, your Bank, will measure your individual and collective performance.

I wish you a pleasant stay in Tunisia, while hoping for a change in the situation in Cote d’Ivoire that would enable the return of the Bank and its staff to its Headquarters in Abidjan.

To each and every one of you, I wish a brilliant career in the African Development Bank.

Thank you.