

**Secretary-General's message to the Second Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit**  
**[delivered by Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Administrator, UN Development Programme]**  
**Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 19 January 2011**

Your Majesties, Distinguished heads of State and government, Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured by your invitation to address this important Summit.

I thank President Hosni Mubarak and Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber and the Governments of Egypt and Kuwait for their continuing support.

I also thank Mr. Amre Moussa, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, for his role in making this gathering possible.

Arab States have achieved important progress on sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals. Many have made strides towards gender equality and increased access to education, particularly among girls. I hope the region can go further by making sure that the well-schooled girls of today become the women leaders of tomorrow.

At the same time, we must recognize that these gains have been uneven, both within and between countries. Levels of poverty and unemployment remain high, particularly in non-oil-producing States. Governments must do more to ensure that job opportunities keep pace with population growth. In this region as in others, a greater emphasis on inclusion and equity can strengthen social cohesion.

Climate change, desertification and dwindling water resources are also having a growing impact, despite the Arab world's relatively small contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. New spikes in food prices are yet another challenge.

Local and regional conflicts continue to exacerbate the region's development challenges. I am concerned about the impasse between Palestinians and Israelis, settlement activity and conditions in Gaza. In Lebanon, I continue to stress the need to ensure dialogue and calm. In Sudan, the United Nations is committed to fully supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Stability across the region remains an important priority.

In Tunisia, I renew my concern about the growing violence and urge all efforts be made to restore peace and stability. I appeal for broad based consultations to establish an inclusive interim government leading to the holding of timely and credible elections through which the people of Tunisia can freely choose their leadership. The United Nations stands ready to provide assistance.

I commend the generosity of many Arab countries in supporting development and humanitarian initiatives in this region and beyond. I hope you sustain and even increase this assistance. I will also look to the region's leaders to make the most of the Arab world's rich human and material resources to generate jobs, strengthen economies, manage natural resources, promote trade and ensure effective, responsive governance.

The United Nations stands ready to support Arab governments and their partners -- including civil society and the private sector -- in striving to achieve our shared goals. By joining forces, we can elevate the status of women, provide greater opportunities for youth, and lay the groundwork for a more peaceful and sustainable future for all. Please accept my best wishes for a productive summit.