



**SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY a.i. OF ACBF ON THE
OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN UNITAR AND ACBF**

Ouagadougou, 2 March 2009

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Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Director of UNITAR,

Directors and Coordinators of ACBF-supported Institutions,

Colleagues and Guests,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are assembled here this morning to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which formalizes the relationship between the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF).

This ceremony however signifies more than an enshrinement of the promising co-operation between UNITAR and ACBF. Firstly, it reaffirms our recognition of the central importance of capacity development and capacity utilization as tools

for reducing poverty and inducing sustainable growth and development in Africa and around the world. Next, it symbolizes our awareness of the critical role of training and research in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Lastly, it reflects our resolve to join forces and trigger positive and sustainable change in many African countries as they face manifold challenges.

On behalf of ACBF, let me begin by expressing genuine gratitude, once again, to the Government and people of Burkina Faso for the warm hospitality and for facilitating the success of this important event. Without such support, we would not have been able to put this ceremony together in such a short time.

Let me also thank Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Director of UNITAR, whose vision, intellect, energy and flexibility have made this Memorandum of Understanding possible. For those who might not know, let me inform you that Dr. Lopes is a long-time champion of ACBF, a reliable friend who has always given quiet but resolute force to the proposition that capacity building is a prerequisite for sustainable development in Africa. He was present at the creation of ACBF, has witnessed the Foundation's evolution and, through this Memorandum of Understanding, is contributing concretely to its maturation.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By signing this Memorandum today, UNITAR and ACBF pledge to work closely in the areas of governance, environmental policy, and conflicts prevention.

As regards governance, we will focus on the training of officials in public finance in areas such as debt management, trade and intellectual property; local governance; and e-governance. The ultimate objective will be to develop African leaders of tomorrow in these critical areas in order to enhance the effectiveness of service delivery to the people.

As concerns the environment, we will foster the training and development of future leaders in selected domains, including climate change. In fact, there is a broad consensus today that, for development policy to be holistic and sustainable, it must take environmental factors into account.

In the area of conflicts prevention and peace building, we will support innovative efforts to strengthen the skills of senior officials in government and outside government in Africa. At the heart of this focus is the recognition that training and research in aspects that prevent conflicts and promote peace are central to the success of long-term development initiatives in any country or region.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world today is a challenging place for all. The continents that enjoy relative plenty are teetering on the brink of economic catastrophe. Africa is struggling to push back the twilight of poverty. In either case, the old ways will no longer do. We must rethink the rules of the road to opportunity and prosperity. To achieve this, we must quicken the arrival of the day when the people and institutions we support will play a more transformative role in development policy and practice.

This is why collaborative endeavors in training and research, which create, incubate and disseminate fresh ideas and novel approaches offer a unique opportunity to shine a new light on prospects for collective progress and to pull us out of the trenches of economic ruin. UNITAR is an autonomous body within the United Nations with a mandate to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations through training and research. ACBF is an autonomous African organization vested with the mission to help African countries to build, utilize and retain the requisite capacity for their development. Therefore, the work of both organizations intersect in that they foster the delivery of innovative training, the

conduct of evidence-based research, and the generation of advocacy that helps to optimize and distil knowledge, and to develop the capacity of beneficiaries. The flow of knowledge is the lifeblood of both organizations.

As gatekeepers of excellence in capacity development, UNITAR and ACBF must be actors, not cheerleaders, in the global crusade for change, for the world around us will not prosper for long without the steady infusion of new ideas, new methods, new experiments. Clearly, UNITAR and ACBF will not necessarily determine the destiny of Africa. However, their joint efforts will help to alter the course of development policies and practices in many African countries. For this reason alone, this Memorandum of Understanding is very important.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this moment of reckoning, as we prepare to confront common challenges with creativity and resolve, UNITAR and ACBF must listen to Africans North and South; Africans West and East; Africans within Africa and in the Diaspora; and Africans of all genders, ages and social backgrounds – so that the work that both institutions carry out may yield the expected results for the benefit of the Continent.

Let this Memorandum of Understanding, which I dare to call the Ouagadougou Accord, mark the first step in our journey towards concrete and better outcomes, the dawn of a new era of collaboration not only between UNITAR and ACBF, but also among the institutions that they support. We owe this expectation not only to our donors, but also, and especially, to our African partners. So let us roll our sleeves. Let us plant the seeds. Let us begin – quickly, boldly, and wisely.

Thank you for your kind attention.