



Office of the Special Adviser on Africa  
Department of Public Information

**NEPAD@10**  
Working for the people of Africa

**PANEL DISCUSSION ON “NEPAD AND THE MDGs: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND  
THE WAY FORWARD**

**(HIGH LEVEL EVENT TO MARK 10 YEARS OF NEPAD AT 66<sup>TH</sup> UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY)**

**7 OCTOBER 2011, UNHQ, NEW YORK**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

## **Background**

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a programme of the African Union (AU), adopted at the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2001. It provides an overarching policy framework and vision for Africa's economic and political renaissance. The four primary objectives of NEPAD include: poverty eradication, promotion of sustainable growth and development, increasing Africa's integration into the world economy and the empowerment of women through building partnerships at country, regional and global levels.

NEPAD is an Africa-led and owned initiative that reflects African leaders' common vision, shared commitment and acceptance of primary responsibility for eradicating poverty and placing their countries, both individually and collectively, on a sustainable growth and development path and, to actively participate in the world economy and global politics. Adopted after the Declaration of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, it draws on the Declaration and embraces many of its goals and targets, including the ambitious 7 per cent growth rate and a reduction by half of the population living in extreme poverty by 2015. In a sense, the MDGs are embedded in NEPAD which serves as Africa's response to the internationally accepted development objectives.

To achieve these broad objectives, NEPAD identifies key priority sectors in which targeted interventions would be required. These include: agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, science and technology, the environment and tourism.

Based on past experience, African leaders recognised the centrality of achieving peace, security and good governance—broadly defined to encapsulate political, economic and corporate governance as a pre-requisite for sustainable development. To demonstrate their commitment to good governance, African countries through the NEPAD process, adopted the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The willingness of participating countries to subject their policies and practices to peer review represents an important innovation of the APRM. Given the small size of most African economies and limited financial resources, NEPAD emphasized strengthened regional integration and cooperation. This focuses on joint efforts and pooling of resources among African countries and stakeholders, as well as enhanced engagement with development partners.

## **Progress**

The February 2010 14th African Union Assembly decision to integrate NEPAD into the structures and processes of the AU has added further impetus to the role of NEPAD as the continent's flagship development programme. The establishment of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) as a technical body of the AU to replace the NEPAD Secretariat is also a significant milestone with the new Agency performing the role of the main institutional vehicle to deliver the vision and agenda of NEPAD. With a focus solely on results based performance and programme implementation, the NEPAD Agency is the major catalyst for coordinating and implementing national and regional development programmes and projects in Africa.

NEPAD has provided an overall broad policy framework around which African countries can articulate their development objectives. It has helped in developing public policy around key important economic fundamentals considered necessary for generating better and sustained economic growth. NEPAD has also informed Africa's engagement with bilateral and multilateral development partners, including the United Nations system.<sup>1</sup> On a sectoral basis, the continent has

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations General Assembly endorsed NEPAD in its resolution A/RES/57/2.

pushed forward targeted development policies and programmes in agriculture and food security, infrastructure, education, health, trade and market access, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), environmental sustainability and science and technology. In the area of infrastructure development for example, a number of regional and trans-regional initiatives such as the Infrastructure Short Term Action Plan (STAP) of the NEPAD and the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) have been undertaken to improve connectivity and regional integration.

Thanks to NEPAD, African countries are making steady progress on the economic and social fronts. In the last decade, economic growth has accelerated in many countries leading to increased investment in the social sectors, including health and education. Though increase in commodity prices contributed significantly to improved growth performance, as the McKinsey Global Institute observed in its 2010 report<sup>2</sup>, efforts by African governments aimed at reducing conflicts, improving macroeconomic environment as well as the creation of business friendly climate have had equally an important impact on the continent's growth acceleration. Furthermore, notable progress has been recorded in governance and the consolidation of democratic practices as evidenced by the increasing number of countries organising democratic and multi-party elections.

Another important element of the positive progress registered is the successful establishment of a wide-range of Africa-led institutional innovations to drive and secure growth and facilitate progress toward MDG attainment. These include new and expanded social protection programmes, MDG-based planning, decentralization of MDGs mechanisms to lower tiers of government for improved service delivery, and enhancing national policy coordination and harmonization of systems

All these have translated into better social outcomes as evidenced in progress on a number of MDG targets, most notably in net primary school enrolment, gender parity in primary education, political empowerment of women as well as access to safe drinking water in a number of countries. Despite this progress, most African countries lag significantly behind other countries in terms of progress towards the MDGs and on current trends are unlikely to meet most of the goals by 2015.

## **Challenges**

Despite the encouraging progress made over the past 10 years, a number of challenges still remain. Undoubtedly, one of the major challenges to the implementation of the NEPAD agenda relates to lack of adequate domestic financial resources to finance Africa's development. This undermines the sustainability of NEPAD. Though partnership was recognised as essential for promoting Africa's development, it must be underpinned by domestic resources, with external support being complementary. The reliance on aid causes some constraints in fostering economic diversification and lack of resources hampering efforts to scale up investment in critical sectors, particularly in infrastructure – energy, roads, rail, ports, etc.

Another related challenge has been the limited success in mobilising private sector involvement in the implementation of NEPAD<sup>3</sup> despite its central recognition in the NEPAD agenda. Engaging the private sector is critical to further advancing the implementation of the NEPAD especially in the area of infrastructure development given the sector's expertise and resources.

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<sup>2</sup> McKinsey & Company – McKinsey Global Institute, July 2010 – Lions on the move: The progress and potential of African economies.

<sup>3</sup> See UN-OSAA report "The contribution of the Private Sector to the Implementation of NEPAD", 2006.

While the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger remains the main development challenge, most African countries are also grappling with the problem of climate change, high disease burden, violent conflicts and inadequate productive capacity. The continued reliance on a narrow export base and primary commodity production is an impediment to faster poverty reduction and more broadly shared welfare improvements. These challenges are jeopardizing efforts by African countries to achieve the MDGs.

A number of African countries may not be able to achieve these internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs with less than five years remaining to the set date of 2015. The Doha Round remains stalled with various international commitments, including those made at Monterrey and Gleneagles, yet to be fulfilled. These challenges pose serious risks to MDGs attainment in Africa. Serious concern still remain in attaining the MDGs, breaking the vicious cycle of increasing poverty, under-development and marginalization that has characterized the continent over the past decade. Slower progress is recorded in addressing poverty reduction, unemployment, environmental sustainability and most health-related goals. And, factors such as the additional burden posed by the adverse impact of the global financial, food, energy crises and climate change; and weak unemployment growth in the continent have constrained MDGs achievement.

### **The Way Forward**

Clearly, Africa is at a critical turning point, much as it was fifty years ago. Growth has accelerated over the last decade, governance is improving, the spectre of conflict is receding and leadership is improving. Africa is on the radar screen of international investors with the adoption and implementation of NEPAD contributing positively to the state of affairs. However, a number of daunting challenges still remain. Addressing them and building on the gains already made will be crucial in advancing the NEPAD agenda over the next 10 years. Thus, the question of how best to advance the NEPAD agenda over the 10 years is germane.

Among the key strategic issues, it is important to support continental resource mobilization and public-private partnerships to finance the implementation of NEPAD. In this regard, African governments, national and regional institutions including the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) need to be strengthened in their developmental role in, support of promoting intra-Africa trade and other key objectives.

The commemoration of the tenth anniversary of NEPAD provides an opportune time to review the extent to which the vision of the NEPAD initiating fathers and African leaders has been realized. It is an opportunity for deeper reflection at all levels on the success and challenges in actualizing Africa's transformation agenda. How can the various opportunities be leveraged to advance sustainable development in Africa? These and other issues will be examined in depth at the panel discussion on "NEPAD and MDGs: Progress, Challenges and Way forward", to be organised by UN-OSAA in collaboration with UN Department for Public Information and African Union Commission's NEPAD Agency. Given its mandate of coordinating United Nations system-wide support for NEPAD at the global level, UN-OSAA is in a vantage position to bring together key stakeholders in the implementation of NEPAD, including African governments, UN agencies, African Regional institutions, the private sector and civil society to explore these topical issues.

## **Objectives of the panel**

- To assess progress and challenges in the implementation of NEPAD and propose a way forward for accelerating the NEPAD agenda;
- To share lessons learned from the partnerships over the past decade, and explore new ways to strengthen these partnerships between the NEPAD Agency and international development partners;
- To further strengthen awareness of the NEPAD Agency within the UN system, other international development partners including - private foundations, the private sector, NGOs, think tanks, and academia;
- To reflect deeply on the success and remaining challenges for actualizing Africa's transformation agenda, including the necessity of mobilizing domestic and external resources;
- To encourage the implementation of NEPAD Agency's priorities in African countries through reliable monitoring and assessment mechanism on shared goals and commitments in support of the continent's sustainable development; and
- To identify how the international community, including the UN system can better support NEPAD.

## **Suggested Questions**

- To what extent has NEPAD contributed to Africa's socio-economic sustainable development since its adoption in 2001?
- What are the key factors shaping the future of the NEPAD Agency? And how can the international community effectively support the NEPAD Agency?
- What are the key challenges to the implementation of NEPAD?
- How can the various opportunities be leveraged to advance sustainable development in Africa?
- How can the international community better support NEPAD over the next decade?
- How can the UN system strengthen its support to NEPAD?
- How can NEPAD help achieve the MDGs in Africa?
- Given that the MDGs target date of 2015 is fast approaching, how does Africa fit in the possible post-MDG UN development agenda and, importantly how to ensure that focus on Africa is not lost?

## **Expected outcome**

- Awareness-raising of the successes and the remaining challenges facing the NEPAD Agency<sup>4</sup>;

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<sup>4</sup> The panel discussion will be webcast live throughout the UN system. A recording of the event will be made available on the UN YouTube channel as well as on the Africa Renewal and Special Adviser's websites. It will also be made available to the UN Information Centres in English-speaking Africa and other parts of the world. There will also be live tweets on Africa Section's Tweeter Account during the discussion.

- Provide some ideas and guidance in order to facilitate the implementation of NEPAD in the future;
- A set of action-oriented recommendations on measures for enhancing the contribution of various development partners to the achievement of the AU/NEPAD objectives and of the MDGs;
- Enhanced partnership support which is critical to ensuring that Africa attains the MDGs;
- The panel proceedings will be published in a booklet as a special issue to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of NEPAD; and
- Use the outcome of the discussion to better orient global intergovernmental processes and development partners' interventions towards the new priorities of NEPAD.

### **Panel format**

The panel will encourage interactive dialogue and free flowing exchange among the participants. The panel will be moderated by Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, UN Special Adviser on Africa. At some point during the dialogue, the moderator will open the floor to all participants in the panel inviting them to make brief inputs or field questions to the members of the panel.

### **Expected participants**

United Nations Members States, UN system agencies, and other international development partners (private foundations, e.g. the Gates Foundation, Oxfarm, ONE, Africa Progress Panel), African Development Bank (AfDB), RECs, Commission of the European Union, League of Arab States private sector, NGOs, Centres of Excellency and Academia and Media. Others may include African private associations (i.e. Africa Leadership Forum; Mo Ibrahim Foundation, AGRA, Africa Monitor; and companies and initiatives – MTN, Vodacom, Ecobank, UBA, Standard Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank, NBF/NBG, ABR, etc.

### **Expected results**

A transcript of the panel discussion, as well as webcasts and other multimedia products, will be posted on the websites of: the NEPAD Agency; Africa Renewal Online, the African Union webpage and UN Office of the Special Adviser's Office

### **Contact**

All communications on the panel should be directed to:

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