



Report of the

Second Africa Regional Media Dialogue

**organised by the
Advocacy and Communication Cluster (ACC)
of the
Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa)**

**Maseru Sun Hotel
Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho**

(7-9 June, 2011)

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfDB	African Development Bank
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COMESA	Common Market of East and Southern Africa,
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EAC	East African Community
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OSAA	Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
PAP	Pan African Parliament
PEPFAR	Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructural Development
REC	Regional Economic Community
SABC	South Africa Broadcasting Corporation
UN	United Nations
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UMA	Union du Maghreb Arabe (Arab Maghreb Union)
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

I. BACKGROUND

The Advocacy and Communication Cluster (ACC) of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) organised the second Africa Regional Media Dialogue (ARMD-II) under the theme “*The Role of Media in Africa’s Development*” in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho from 7 to 9 June 2011 at the Maseru Sun Hotel, Maseru. It was the largest meeting ever organised by the UN in the Kingdom of Lesotho which was highly appreciated by the authorities, who provided crucial support to the meeting.

ARMD-II was intended to expand the dialogue that began at the 1st ARMD (ARMD-I), which took place in The Vaal, South Africa, from 19 to 20 February 2009. Two years later the ACC agreed on a follow-up meeting, not only as a continuation of that dialogue, but also in accordance with its mandate to mainstream advocacy and communication in the cluster system of the RCM-Africa. To this end, the cluster made structural changes designed to make it more effective in responding to the communication needs of the RCM-Africa. In January 2011, the Directorate of Communication and Information (DCI) of the AUC officially began co-chairing the cluster and assumed joint leadership of the cluster, as recommended by the 11th session of the RCM-Africa held in November 2010.

Earlier, from 21 to 22 June 2010, ACC organised a brainstorming session for the coordinators and communication focal points of all the clusters of RCM-Africa in Dakar, Senegal. The purpose of the meeting was to help cluster members establish a common understanding of the methodology and framework for enhancing advocacy and communication efforts, through the RCM cluster system for an effective and efficient UN support to the AUC and its NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency).

1. Objectives of ARMD-II

The main objective of ARMD-II was to increase understanding of and support for African Union development priorities through its NEPAD programme by engaging the media as partner in Africa’s development and encouraging them to provide greater publicity of NEPAD activities. In particular, ARMD-II was meant to clarify the enhanced role of the NEPAD Agency following its transformation to a planning and coordinating agency And its integration into the AU structure.

More specifically, the objectives of the meeting was were to:

- (i) Clarify the NEPAD Programme and the role of its implementation units, particularly of the NEPAD Agency;
- (ii) Strengthen the collaboration between the UN, the AU and media;
- (iii) Discuss specific steps for effectively promoting NEPAD’s achievements at the regional, subregional and national levels;
- (iv) Iron out any delivery inadequacies, especially as they relate to the follow up to The Vaal Consensus;

- (v) Seek ways of strengthening the reporting skills and capacities of African media.

2. Format and Management of the Meeting

The proceedings of the three day meeting were divided into presentations, plenary sessions and group discussions. Simultaneous interpretation service was provided in English and French. The last day was devoted to field visits to three development projects near Maseru, facilitated by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the UNDP Country Office.

The workshop management team was made up of AUC and OSAA which chaired most of the sessions (Habiba Mejri-Cheikh and Mieke Ikegame), NEPAD and ECA that facilitated other sessions, while NEPAD and UNDP provided the reporting inputs and the ECA drafted this final report.

Participants showed enthusiasm and openness during the debates. Each participant was given an opportunity to air his/her views and to effectively take part in the dialogue.

3. Key Outcomes

The main outcome documents of the ARMD-II were the *Maseru Declaration* and a number of recommendations to be implemented by three categories of stakeholders: the media, the NEPAD Agency, and the African Union Commission (AUC) as well as development partners, including the UN system, and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The key achievements and outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

- (i) Clarification of the role and responsibilities of the NEPAD Agency.
- (ii) Strengthening of the collaboration between the UN, the AU and media outlets. Agencies and organisations in attendance brainstormed on how to collectively improve and increase the engagement of the media.
- (iii) Identifying specific steps for effectively promoting NEPAD's accomplishments at the regional, sub regional and national levels.
- (iv) Discussion of strategies for strengthening the reporting skills and capacities of African media.

4. Participants

Senior media personnel from all five sub-regions of Africa and the Diaspora, representing various organisations including government-owned and private media outlets, regional institutions and organisations such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), East African Community (EAC), Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Pan African Parliament (PAP), attended the meeting. Advocacy and Communication Cluster members from the following agencies and organisations were present:

African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). A complete list of participants is attached in Attachment 2.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

1. Opening session

The opening session was co-chaired by Habiba Mejri-Cheikh, Director of the AUC's Directorate of Information and Communication, and Mieke Ikegame, Chief of the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit (CAPDU) of OSAA. The UNDP representative and UN Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, delivered an inspiring address on the role of the media in regional development. Richard Mkandawire, Head of Directorate Partnerships Resource Mobilization and Communication of NEPAD Agency also addressed the meeting. The keynote address was delivered by the Minister of Communication of the Kingdom of Lesotho, H. E. Mothejoa Metsing.

In her opening remarks, Habiba Mejri-Cheikh underlined the important role of the media in Africa's development and said that ARMD-II has gathered prominent media representatives from throughout Africa. This has created an opportunity to discuss how providing African media with reliable information about NEPAD successes and challenges can help advance the AU vision and the NEPAD agenda. The latter also wondered why there is so little media coverage on AU activities and asked the media to upscale their coverage of Africa's development.

Mieke Ikegame underscored the importance of making joint concerted efforts to promote Africa's development achievements and urged the participants to generate fruitful deliberations leading to actions in the years ahead.

According to the UNDP representative and UN Resident Coordinator Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, this was a platform to share positive stories as well as challenges facing Africa's development. She praised the role of the media in publicizing MDGs. She urged the participants to tell more of the African story to more people of the continent.

Richard Mkandawire indicated that the ARMD-II is meant to provide guidance and orientation to African media personnel to enable them to report authoritatively on Africa's positive development efforts. International media continues to focus on negative news from Africa even though many positive changes are taking place on the continent. This gathering, he said, will explore the opportunities for African media to engage with the AUC and the NEPAD Agency in telling more of those positive stories, such as how NEPAD is improving the accountability and transparency of African governments function. Africa is also a continent of opportunities and growth and enhanced rule of law.

Thanks to NEPAD, the global development community has started to listen to African voices and African priorities. The media can and should play a pivotal role. The AUC and NEPAD

Agency are keen to empower the media to showcase these gains. An independent media will help change the perception of the continent and by doing so, contribute to a better future for all Africans.

The Minister of Communication of the Kingdom of Lesotho, H. E. Mothejoa Metsing, welcomed the meeting as a forum to enhance the understanding of the media about NEPAD and Africa's development in general. He mentioned the ARMD-I and underlined the importance of following up on its outcomes. He reiterated that the constructive engagement of the media is important to ensure that the world sees Africa in a different light. He underscored the increasing importance of the media in reporting development activities and regretted the media's focus on poverty, diseases, unemployment, hunger and other negative aspects. He asserted that the media has a responsibility to provide objective and responsible reporting on Africa. He added that the participants needed to identify what should and could be done to foster more balanced reporting on Africa. As an example, he cited the NEPAD e-schools that have changed the education landscape in Lesotho by providing ICT skills to students. He invited the media to continue to be an agent of change and intensify their reporting on positive development efforts of this sort in Africa. In conclusion, he thanked the AU and the ACC for organizing this media dialogue and declared the meeting officially opened.

Participants then introduced themselves, and voiced their expectations from the dialogue. Most were interested in identifying the main impediments to the implementation of The Vaal Consensus of 2009, especially the several recommendations made following ARMD-I. Furthermore, they expressed similar desires as those expressed at ARMD-I, namely:

- (i) To share experiences in development reporting, particularly in terms of successes, constraints, challenges and difficulties encountered in the implementation of recommendations adopted at the first Media dialogue in 2009;
- (ii) Developing a Plan of Action for implementing The Vaal Consensus and the new recommendations to be adopted in Maseru;
- (iii) To share knowledge of on-going development initiatives by the NEPAD Agency;
- (iv) Improve reporting on the various NEPAD programmes and projects;
- (v) Enhance understanding of NEPAD financing mechanisms;
- (vi) Improve understanding of the relationship between the NEPAD Agency and the African Union Commission following the integration of NEPAD into the AU structures;
- (vii) Build enhanced partnerships with media by developing specialised networks in the area of reporting on development issues;
- (viii) Enhance the capacity of African journalists in their reporting on development issues in general and on the core activities of NEPAD in particular;
- (ix) Further improve the existing relationship between the media and key development institutions in Africa such as the AUC, the AfDB and the UN system.

2. Communication Strategies for promoting NEPAD

This session was co-chaired by the AUC and the UN-OSAA. ECA played the role of moderator; three presentations were made, followed by discussions.

The AU Deputy Director for the Information and Communication, Mrs. Wynne Musabayana, provided an update on the Commission's overall communication strategy, emphasising the following priorities:

- The establishment for a coherent media policy by engaging the media in getting AU activities on local and regional media;
- The development of social media, in order to augment the AU current dynamic website, and also its strategies;
- The alignment of a number of proposals for audio and video materials in preparation of the anniversary of the AU;
- Branding the AU by highlighting the new flag in order to build harmony with the AU various organs logos;
- Upgrading the AU audio and video facilities;
- Building capacity of African journalists through training programmes on the Commission's various activities.

Participants were informed that the current overall communication strategy is being revised and upgraded as new issues arise, emphasising the necessity for the AU to cooperate with NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) the UN and the RECs.

Professor Richard Mkandawire, Head of Directorate Partnerships Resource Mobilization and Communication of the NEPAD Agency, articulated the genesis of NEPAD and reflected on the significant progress made in the thematic areas. He invited the media to report on these positive changes and on projects like the NEPAD e-schools initiative, which were successfully implemented in nine African countries.

In presenting the UN communication strategy, Mr Masimba Tafirenyika, Head of Africa Section of the UN Department of Public Information (DPI), elaborated on the department's cooperation with media. He also talked about DPI's plans to create a database of journalists across Africa reporting on specific thematic issues. He spoke about the recent improvements in the design and content of DPI's quarterly magazine, "Africa Renewal", published in English and French, which has been published for 24 years. The magazine targets youth.

Following the presentations, participants discussed how to promote NEPAD and Africa in general, and what can be done to encourage the press to report positive stories on development in Africa that bring about real improvements to its people, and how to work together. The participants, therefore, recommended the following:

Recommendations:

- a. The need to harmonise and reinforce the reporting capacity of African journalists on AUC major activities;
- b. Publication of the UN quarterly magazine "Africa Renewal" in other African languages in addition to English and French in order to reach more African readers;
- c. Target youth as an audience;
- d. Use updated information technology to disseminate stories via the internet, mobile phones, etc;
- e. Engage stringers to write stories on Africa;
- f. Use interactive methods to sustain media network, such as broadcast emails and online platforms;
- g. Capitalise on the network of UN Agencies to disseminate information;

- h. Counteract negative reporting on Africa with positive examples of progress at the continental level;
- i. Invite major media entities such as the BBC and CNN to the third meeting and brief them on various achievements in Africa;
- j. Support and assist African media in taking an independent stand free from political pressure;
- k. Provide credible information on NEPAD activities to the media;
- l. Encourage to write positive stories which could attract investment;
- m. Improve and streamline the AU database of media actors categorized by topic/region/area of interest to be managed by the AU and NEPAD;
- n. Engage mainstream media via the establishment of a continent-wide AU radio broadcast;
- o. Request the AU media spokesperson to distribute AU press statements to comment on, and counterbalance, negative stories.

3. Role of African Media as Strategic Development Partners

Session II was co-chaired by AUC and UN-OSAA and moderated by Mondli Makhanya, Editor-in-Chief of Avusa Media newspapers which includes The Times, The Sowetan, and Sunday World.

NEPAD is a story of hope, but the information needs to be made more available. Mr. Mondli Makhanya initiated the session with a brief reflection on the struggles journalists face in telling the African story and the need to make choices in complex situations. A multiplicity of factors comes into play, he said. Ultimately, he said, deciding whether or not to pick a story boils down to personal choices. As an example, a Nigerian journalist working in post-apartheid South Africa was conflicted by a decision presented to him by his editor: Travel to Rwanda to report on the unfolding genocide, or postpone travel and witness a momentous event in Africa's history, which resulted in Nelson Mandela's victory. He wondered whether it was a mistake not to go to Rwanda to tell the story of the unfolding genocide from an African point of view. He also felt that he had covered enough wars and conflicts, and now had a chance to cover a positive event that uplifted Africa and inspired the world. Ten years later, he went to Rwanda and was able to report positively on a country emerging from a painful chapter to a much brighter future.

Mr. Makhanya's said the point was to illustrate the difficult choices journalists make, which often mean that the African story is told by others who may not have the same clarity or contextual understanding.

He also commented on the great divide between AU/NEPAD and the media, even at the headquarters level. He pointed out that this was not the case when President Mbeki was in power, because he utilised his presidency to champion the NEPAD vision.

Presentations were made by Mr. Sheriff Moumina Sy, Chair of the African Editors Forum, and Mr. Charles Onyango-Obbo, Executive Editor Africa & Digital Media Division at Nation Media Group (NMG). The presentations focused on the need to tell stories that focus on the lives of people and their portrayal beyond the stereotypical images of Africans as 'poor and helpless'. Examples abound of journalists that depict Africa realistically. This, however, does not mean that Africa's problems are not persistent. Corruption and poverty also exist, but there are also

many examples of Africa making progress in eradicating poverty, with or without institutional support. With respect to how the media can be more supportive of the NEPAD vision, participants emphasised the need for NEPAD and the AU to provide information in a consistent and timely manner. Journalists work under many constraints, including capacity and time; therefore, the more succinct the information, the easier it is for journalists to follow-up and use. AU/NEPAD must capitalise on existing media networks on the continent, such as the African Editors Forum, to package and disseminate information on the issues that concern AU/NEPAD, which will strengthen its relationship with the media.

The use of social media, including Twitter and Facebook, as tools for institutional visibility was strongly emphasised in light of the potential for instant feedback by users and followers. Charles Onyango-Obbo, for instance, noted that NEPAD has only 400 followers on its Twitter account, but has not made enough effort to broaden that constituency. In addition, its Facebook page is not updated regularly, even though both the social media and its users are interacting in real time. Therefore, institutions should be more interactive and innovative, and not use these tools simply as bulletin boards.

Participants also emphasised that institutional press releases are often bland and without much information to offer. In terms of stories, much more could be achieved by improving the writing and focusing on the issues that matter to readers.

In addition, a better understanding of the media landscape is needed. Castigating the western media as 'enemies of the true African story' is not helpful. They have their own interests, circulation and editorial lines. However, it should be noted that there are now more African journalists working for western media. These journalists want to write more hopeful stories that the public can relate to.

Key issues

The key issues discussed were media coverage of African stories and capacity building programmes for African journalists. Particular mention was made of:

- The need to report in more languages, in order to reach as many African readers as possible in Africa;
- Targeting civil society (youth and women) as an audience for information dissemination;
- Use of information technologies to interact with the public;
- Developing community media in rural areas using local languages;
- Introduction of new technologies at the level of local communities;
- Engaging international media organisations in telling positive stories about Africa;
- Provision of credible information to journalists;
- Development of measurable outcomes with targets and timelines to report on progress tackling Africa's communication challenges;
- Reporting on sustainable projects with consistent messages that the public can understand easily;
- Designation of high level champions to speak on behalf of Africa;
- Capacity building programmes for African journalists need to be reinforced and harmonised; UNESCO for example, proposed an evaluation of the effectiveness of training workshops organised for journalists. Training programmes should enhance the

understanding of journalists about development in general and, in particular, how NEPAD is boosting development;

- Adoption of structured engagements with media experts;
- Incentive mechanisms for journalists to present a balanced view of Africa;
- Persuade African governments to appoint Press Officers for purposes of communicating with journalists;
- Develop a glossary of acronyms used by AUC, NEPAD Agency and the UN and make them available to the media;
- Adoption of 'freedom of the press' as one of the evaluation criteria in the APRM process;
- South/South media dialogues to share experiences and lessons learned.

In terms of challenges and lessons learned the following points were raised:

- The media in Africa are not immune to the economic crisis that has affected most sectors in Africa in recent years. Development news in general and the NEPAD story in particular are usually the first victims of the competition for news space between politics, sport and development news. Under those conditions, journalists and editors have a tendency to give little prominence to "news that does not sell newspapers".
- Many journalists have a limited understanding of development-related issues because of a lack of access to reliable information. Development reporting requires well informed and motivated journalists who write regularly on development issues.
- Editors too often view reporting on development-related issues as 'publicity for development partners' for which the media organisation should be paid.
- A proposal by UNESCO to develop a module on reporting development issues for journalism institutions deserves to be looked into seriously.
- Development reporting should be urgently recognised as a major challenge throughout Africa. The media should no longer be seen as a convenient amplifier for interest groups. They need to be recognised as stakeholders. Editors and owners of news outlets should be regularly contacted by the Press Officers of each African Government (yet to be appointed) for discussions on media issues.
- Encourage media to develop outreach programmes for communities at the local and rural levels to facilitate community participation to enhance the media's understanding of the positive impact of NEPAD programmes on the ground.
- The organisation of future dialogue will take into account the lessons learned from this meeting in order to improve the preparation of other Media Dialogues.

The meeting agreed that:

- In order to institutionalise the establishment of "Development *Columns/programmes*" in newspapers and radio networks, documentation from presenters, together with the tool

kits shared during the dialogue, would form the basis for a handbook on 'Reporting on Development Issues';

- Media workshops should follow the guidelines established by UNESCO;

3. Update on Key AU/NEPAD Programmes

Experts at AU/NEPAD made presentations on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Programme for Infrastructural Development of Africa (PIDA), and the Infrastructure Programme of AU/NEPAD.

4. Adoption of the Maseru Declaration

The meeting adopted the Maseru Declaration, in which participants agreed to:

- (i) Define and develop a continent-wide framework for structured engagement with the media and deepening of their involvement in informing about AU and NEPAD related programmes;
- (ii) Improve messaging and packaging and provide more regular dissemination of information to the media on successes and challenges in implementing AU/NEPAD programmes;
- (iii) Deepen knowledge about AU/NEPAD programmes among African journalists/editors to facilitate media coverage of African initiatives and programmes;
- (iv) Ensure civil society organisations, women and youth own the NEPAD vision programme;
- (v) Adapt creative strategies for using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and social media to improve the outreach to the public and also engage the youth about the African development agenda;
- (vi) Reinforce training for community media and media professionals as well as at the level of journalism training institutions;
- (vii) Develop capacity to monitor and evaluate media coverage of AU/NEPAD initiatives and programmes;
- (viii)** Urge the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to consider adopting media freedom and pluralism as one of its evaluation criteria.