

## UN Panel Focuses On African Devt Challenges



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The crisis of development in African countries, including Nigeria yesterday came under scrutiny at the United Nations (UN) as the 2006 UN Panel Discussion on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) highlighted various institutional challenges confronting African countries in implementing NEPAD's action plans.

The panel, which was made up of technocrats and stakeholders in various institutional sectors concluded that there is greater need on the part of all to address the problems of weak and incapacitated institutional structures if the goals of NEPAD are to be realised.

The session, drew active participation from members of the diplomatic community, staff members of the UN system organisations and agencies, delegates to the 61st session of the UN General Assembly, and representatives of non-governmental organisations accredited to the United Nations. It calls on African countries to realise the goals of NEPAD and launch themselves into the league of developed nations. It also stresses the need to address the problems of weak institutional capacity to manage and implement development programmes which has emerged as one of the major constraints limiting the progress of the implementation of NEPAD at all levels.

The panel declared: "these institutional weaknesses show up both in form of technical capacity to formulate and manage progress and in insufficiently developed rules to govern collective action. At the continental level, the lack of the full integration of the NEPAD Secretariat into the AU Commission has resulted in a number of problems, such as inefficiency in the use of limited resources, and high risk in the duplication in activities. Thus, there is an urgent need for African leaders to develop an acceptable, appropriate and coherent framework to resolve the crucial question of the relationship between the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat".

The 2006 UN Roundtable Session on NEPAD, which was moderated by Mr Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa had the following speakers; Ambassador S. Olukerede Willoughby, Deputy Chief Executive, NEPAD Secretariat in South Africa, Mr Ejeviome Eloho Otobo, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, United Nations(UN), Mr Francis Gatare, Adviser to the President of Rwanda on NEPAD and Mr Oma Djebah, a Deputy Editor, THISDAY Nigeria.

While Ambassador Willoughby focused on the challenges and Progress so far made, Otobo examined the contribution of the Private Sector to the implementation of NEPAD.

Gatare's paper harped on the Rwanda Experience on the challenges in implementing NEPAD while Djebah's paper examined the various media perspectives to the institutional challenges facing African countries as far as NEPAD's implementation is concerned.

In his explanation on how to designate NEPAD's projects, Otobo in his paper declared: "What is NEPAD Projects? Two definitions. A Project that falls within the priority areas of NEPAD and even if it predates NEPAD, has now been adopted as a NEPAD project. A project that is in the agreed portfolio of NEPAD projects (e.g. STAP for Infrastructure, the evolving MLTF for infrastructure and in other priority sectors of NEPAD".

On his part, the Rwanda President's representative at the session called for a revisiting of of the role of Regional Economic Communities (RECS) in the implementation of the development agenda programme in various countries in Africa.

He said: "It is my view that a strategy for the accelerated implementation of NEPAD programs must focus at country level efforts, where both the political and administrative leadership is strongest. The RECs have a legitimate coordinating role, but they must be liberated from the implementation responsibilities wherever possible".

The panel session which coincided yesterday with the UN General Assembly debate on NEPAD was attended by many participants from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, US, Europe, Middle East, the Carriibbean and the Americas.

Every year since 2003, OSAA has organised a panel discussion on a pertinent theme during the United Nations General Assembly. In past years, the themes covered are as follows:

Potentials for Financing the New Partnership for Africa's Development, 2003; Promoting Domestic Private Sector in Africa: A Key Element in the Successful Implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), 2004; Multi-Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), 2005.

This year the Panel Discussion on Institutional Challenges in Implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) will be organised by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to coincide with the joint debate of the General Assembly on African issues, including the implementation of NEPAD. The panel would be chaired by the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa.