

Nepad, WSSD and the AU: abridged speech by the South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Azziz Pahad, to the South African Parliament on 12 February 2002.

Note: SARP is posting this speech because it contains some background perspectives which might be of interest to understanding Nepad's objectives.

96 years ago the founding father of the ANC, Pixley Seme, speaking in New York, said:

"The brighter day is rising upon Africa...Yes, the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period. The regeneration of Africa means that a new and unique civilization is soon to be added to the world".

Sadly, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and the Cold War defeated Africa's efforts for regeneration.

Today, we confidently proclaim the 21st century the African century. We do so because there is a new generation of African leaders who are willing to accept their responsibilities and leadership role to struggle for and to achieve an African revival.

The ANC's January 8 statement on the occasion of the 90th anniversary calls on us "to ensure that the process of globalisation does not result in the further all-round widening of the gap between the rich developed North and the poor, developing South which would condemn billions of people to poverty. This would be a certain recipe for the most catastrophic social upheavals engulfing the whole globe". Mr President, your visionary understandings of the challenges of the New World order is highly respected internationally and you have become a true champion of Africa and the South.

In September 2000, the world's leaders who convened in New York for the historic United Nations Millennium Summit declared that they "will support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy".

This is the message, Mr President; you have been giving for many years. It is therefore important for you to ignore the suggestions from the opposition that you remain at home. These ignorama fail to see the dedication relations between developments in South Africa and the world.

The year 2002 is therefore one of the most challenging for South Africa's foreign policy. Questions are often raised as to why South Africa is playing such a prominent role in international affairs? South Africa, by the very nature of its strong visionary leadership, its inept Democratic Alliance, its successful democracy, the strength of its economic fundamentals and technological base, and its efforts to address the inequalities and injustices of the past, is in a unique position to contribute positively to the reforming and shaping of the new global order, especially ending global inequality, poverty and the marginalisation of Africa.

Nepad

The greatest challenge facing us is the implementation of NEPAD. NEPAD is our hope to eradicate Africa's underdevelopment and poverty. It is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic. The initiative is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world. It is a call for a new relationship of partnership between Africa and the international community to overcome the development chasm. The partnership is to be founded on a realisation of common interest, benefit and equality.

"NEPAD recognises that there have been attempts in the past to set out continent-wide development programmes. For a variety of reasons, both internal and external, including questionable leadership and ownership by Africans themselves, these have been less than successful. However, today there is a new set of circumstances, which lend themselves to integrated practical implementation."

President Mbeki said that: "We speak here of a realistic Programme of Action and not a mere wish list. As we have taken these decisions, we have also made the commitment that we will ourselves, as African, ensure that we discharge our own responsibilities to implement what we have committed ourselves to implement. In our actions, we will be guided by the principle - nothing is done until it is done!"

I am delighted to report that good progress has been made in developing and finalising the NEPAD Strategic Framework Document.

The critical phase of implementation has now begun. The 15-member Task Force for the implementation of NEPAD established five task teams to urgently identify and prepare specific implementable projects and programmes. The five identified priority areas of the NEPAD Programme of Action are:

- * Capacity building on peace and security;
- * Economic and corporate governance;
- * Banking and the financial sector;
- * Regional infrastructural projects;
- * Agricultural development and market access for African products.

The five priority areas do not exclude overarching issues such as debt reduction, communicable diseases, capacity building and ICT.

These priority areas hold tremendous opportunities for South African business and civil society to become involved in the implementation process. The South African Government strongly welcomes their participation.

It is often stated that the crisis situation in Zimbabwe is the litmus test for the success of NEPAD. We strongly disagree with the threats that there should be collective punishment, against all in Africa because of the developments in any one country.

The meeting this week of high-level representatives of the G8 countries and members of the Implementation Team will ensure that our detailed and concrete preparations for the G8 Summit in Canada in June is on course.

We also look forward to the visit of the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr Chretien, who is visiting six African countries including South Africa, to discuss NEPAD in preparation for the G8 Summit.

Nepad and the AU

To achieve the objectives of NEPAD we need strong institutions. We are therefore proud that in July we will host the first session of the AU, a continuation of the OAU which is aimed at consolidating the unity of African states in order to place Africa in a better position to take advantage of the benefits flowing from globalisation and, simultaneously, to be able collectively to withstand the negative consequences of this process. The transition to the AU reflects the continuation of Africa's own resolve to deal with the legacy of colonialism, and underdevelopment and focus on meeting the human basic needs of its people.

Our immediate objectives will be to put in place the core structures of the AU. These are the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government, the Executive Council of Ministers, the Permanent Representative Committee of Ambassadors, and the Commission that will be providing the secretariat services of the Union. We are currently negotiating the Rules of Procedure governing the functioning of these structures and we aim to ensure that these structures meet with the goals and ideals of the African Union.

In addition, we are negotiating the restructuring of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, to empower this organ to pro-actively fulfil its mandate of conflict prevention, management and resolution on the continent. In particular, this Mechanism should be provided with the means to fulfil its primary objective, and the anticipation and prevention of conflicts.

Apart from the core organs which will all be housed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, South Africa needs to decide which one of the other organs, if any, we may want to host.

WSSD

We will also be hosting the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002. It will be the largest international conference ever with approximately 65 000 people attending.

The main goals for the WSSD are the reinvigoration, at the highest political level, of the global commitment to sustainable development, the forging of a North - South partnership to promote sustainable development, and the acceleration of the implementation of Agenda 21.

Three broad themes reflect the essential prerequisites for moving towards sustainable development, namely alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable livelihoods, realising sustainable consumption and production, and protecting the integrity of life-supporting ecosystems.

Some of the important issues for the WSSD include:

* Establishing the link between global security and development, and strengthening the international commitment to global peace and security and the need for increased multilateralism;

* Strengthening the system of international governance for sustainable development by developing smart partnerships aimed at poverty eradication;

* Ensuring that all stakeholders are committed to the improved implementation of Agenda 21;

* New issues to be addressed include the biotechnology revolution, combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other pandemic diseases, as well as the explosive growth in information and communication technologies.

The Johannesburg Summit should mark a turning point by putting people at the centre of sustainable development.

The question frequently asked is why is South Africa the favoured destination for so many major international conferences.

The President, in his State of the Nation Address said: "The nations of the world elected to come to our country because they understand and appreciate what we have done in the last seven-and-half years to address within our own borders precisely the same questions that constitute the global agenda."

On September 11 the world was shocked by the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. The South African Government immediately and unequivocally condemned these acts of terrorism, we have committed ourselves to co-operate against all forms of terrorism under the aegis of the UN.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations speaking in the UN General Assembly:

"Let us remember that none of the issues that faced us on 10 September has become less urgent. The number of people living on less than one dollar a day has not decreased. The numbers dying of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other preventable diseases have not decreased. The factors that cause the desert to advance, bio diversity to be lost, and the Earth's atmosphere to warm have not decreased. And in many parts of the world afflicted by the scourge of war, innocent people have not ceased being murdered, mutilated, or dragged or driven from their homes.

In short, the agenda for peace, development and human rights is no less pressing. If anything, it has taken on a new urgency. Seldom has the danger of division within the human family, and the need to resist that danger, been more clearly understood.

We face two possible futures: a mutually destructive clash between so-called "civilisations" based on the exaggeration of religious and cultural differences: or a global community, respecting diversity and rooted in universal values. The latter must be our choice - but we can achieve it only if we bring real hope to the billions now trapped in poverty, conflict and disease".

The Secretary-General's statement confirmed South Africa's long-held view that in order to defeat terrorism we must adopt a holistic approach by dealing with the root causes, inter alia, conflicts and underdevelopment. There can be no "good terrorists" and "bad terrorists".

In this regard conflict prevention; management and resolution on the African continent will remain a key foreign policy objective of the South African Government. There can be progress and development in Africa if there is peace, democracy and stability.