

Address by President Mbeki at the High-Level Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the New Partnership for Africa's Development

New York, 16 September 2002

President of the General Assembly,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates:

I am pleased to join the Chairperson of the Implementation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, President Olusegun Obasanjo, in commending the New Partnership, NEPAD, to this General Assembly.

At its Inaugural Meeting two months ago, the African Union confirmed the decision of the 2001 OAU Meeting of Heads of State and Government that the New Partnership for Africa's Development constitutes its programme for the socio-economic regeneration of Africa.

Accordingly, the African Union hopes that the United Nations will support the peoples of Africa as we engage in an historic struggle for the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment on our continent.

In this context, I would like to express Africa's appreciation of the adoption by the General Assembly, a decade ago, of the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa (NADAF).

The New Partnership is designed radically to change the paradigm that has driven international African development programmes. To indicate that change, we reaffirm that we, the Africans, are the architects of the NEPAD renewal plan. As Africans, we now own Africa's development agenda.

Secondly, we are determined to move forward on the basis of a partnership among the peoples of Africa, for the victory of the African Renaissance. We are resolved to act together as governments, the masses we represent, and civil society.

Thirdly, we seek to ensure that we move away from the donor-recipient relationship with the developed world, to a new partnership based on mutual respect as well as shared responsibility and accountability.

Fourth, we are committed to translate our words into a practical programme that actually changes the lives of the masses of Africa away from despair, to a common future of hope and human dignity for all Africans.

The success that we will and must achieve in Africa will be a victory for all humanity because the poverty of any people in any part of the globe is the poverty of all humanity.

In this context, all of us need to admit openly that what failed the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa was the absence of resources to translate its words into deeds.

This is the challenge to which this Assembly and Organisation must respond, to affirm the commitment made in the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development less than two weeks ago, that the representatives of the peoples of the world gathered here are not merely sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

The objectives and action plans enunciated in NEPAD are consistent with the targets contained in the Millennium Development Goals as well as those spelt out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, adopted at the World Summit for Sustainable Development.

It is therefore important that the current process of review, reprioritisation and realignment of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF), should take on

board the objectives and programmes of NEPAD.

The United Nations Organisation and its agencies have a critical role to play in the implementation of the required programme of action. However, for the UN to fulfil this new responsibility, it will need to give itself the institutional capacity to ensure that it responds to Africa's challenges in an effective, efficient and co-ordinated way.

The United Nations will have to agree on an appropriate mechanism that will enable close monitoring of the implementation of its collective agreements in favour of African development.

As Africans, today we stand in front of the peoples of the world to make the pledge that we will honour the commitment we have made to ourselves and the world, that we will act firmly to extricate Africa out of her long night of misery.

We value the readiness of the international community to enter into partnership with us, confident that together we will end the marginalisation of our continent, ensuring that the sun truly shines over the peoples of Africa.

Let this be the message that issues from this High-Level Session of the General Assembly on NEPAD. From here, together, we must make the solemn statement that Africa's time has come!