

## **Taking the New Partnership for Africa's Development seriously: a response to NEPAD from the Advocacy Network for Africa (USA)**

The Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA) is a progressive non-partisan network of over 200 US organizations at the national, regional, state, and local level. Our initiatives address issues of peace and security; human, civil, political, and women's rights; environmentally and economically sustainable development for poverty eradication; social justice, popular participation, and good governance; and humanitarian and crisis relief.

Our network, under the name of the Southern Africa Working Group (SAWG), was founded to mobilize action in solidarity with the anti-apartheid and grassroots liberation movements in southern Africa. With the successes of those movements during the late 1980s and early 1990s, we adopted a new name - the Advocacy Network for Africa - and began to address a broad spectrum of US-Africa foreign policy issues, with an expanded focus on sub-Saharan Africa. NEPAD naturally became a recent focus of our attention.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), emerging from African government initiatives and endorsed by the African Union, is receiving increasing attention internationally, including among the G-7 countries and within the United States. NEPAD seeks to create a strategic common vision among African governments, with a commitment toward eradicating poverty and supporting sustainable development based on improved access to capital, technology and human skills and resources. In the process, it outlines conditions for development and conditions for relationship that originate in Africa, not in the West, and envisions partnership rather than subservient relations. Its emerging African Peer Review Mechanism is seeking to set standards within Africa for good political governance.

As advocacy organizations concerned with justice and sustainable development in Africa, and justice in US policy toward Africa, we are well aware of the criticisms directed toward NEPAD from progressive NGOs and civil society in Africa and around the world. We deeply regret the absence of African civil society participation in the evolution of the document itself, and we affirm that this renders NEPAD seriously flawed. We will be listening closely to African NGO partners as they are now becoming more familiar with and responding to the NEPAD agenda.

We also recognize that NEPAD embraces a neo-liberal economic agenda. It may well prove to be true that this approach renders NEPAD fatally flawed. We look skeptically at the view that NEPAD seems to articulate, namely that while economic globalization has failed Africa, Africa needs more of those same policies.

Nevertheless, we see in NEPAD an opportunity for a deeper and broader debate about development as more than the mere absence of poverty, disease, violence and basic human rights violations. We see this even though we recognize that

NEPAD's proponents underscore its political process aspects over its sustainable economic development agenda. We therefore emphasize, in this document, the breadth of issues NEPAD raises, with primacy toward that which would affirm the dignity of all citizens of African countries. This document then proceeds to identify appropriate strategic indicators that would measure the seriousness with which the United States treats issues and citizens alike.

Fundamental to our approach is the conviction that partnership with Africa is defined by a concern for the common good, and that the definition of the common good is not limited to such global economic indicators as GDP, trade balance and foreign reserves. What follows, then, are statements of what we have read in the NEPAD document and - influenced by African civil society responses to NEPAD - what we believe would be appropriate indicators related to US policy.

They appear under the following rubrics:

1. Peace and security
2. Democracy
3. Human rights
4. Economic development
5. Education
6. Health
7. Gender equality and opportunity

## 1. Peace and security

**NEPAD's vision:** NEPAD commits African governments to establish mechanisms to be accountable for securing the rights of minorities, nationalities, and ethnic groups; to protect natural resources from exploitation, especially during times of conflict; and to demonstrate the will to confront root causes of conflicts in a manner that respects human rights and moves nations toward just conflict resolution.

**US responsibility:** To support these aspirations, as a recognition of a common concern for a just peace and of the US responsibility to contribute toward that peace in the international community, we note the following indicators for US policy:

- a. The US government will have as its primary focus a people-centered common security interest in its security relationship to African countries.
- b. The US government will respect the sovereignty of African countries and will refrain from unilateral activity aimed at undemocratic regime changes.
- c. The US government will contribute its fair share to multilateral peace-keeping initiatives.

d. The US government will ratify the landmines treaty and the child soldiers protocol, and will actively support multinational efforts to control the arms traffic, including small arms.

e. The US government will take concrete action to prevent US economic activities from serving to fuel and exploit African conflicts, including, but not limited to, oil and diamonds.

## 2. Democracy

**NEPAD's vision:** NEPAD commits African governments to address democratic governance issues from a standpoint that goes beyond institutional reforms and technical adjustments toward a willingness to be more fully engaged with civic organizations, where critical alternatives may be advanced from civil society and the NGO community without being perceived as threats to power. Further, African governments commit themselves through NEPAD to be more attuned to gender inequality and to take concrete steps to advance participation of African women in governance; to establish and sustain independent mechanisms to provide reliable assessments of election processes, and to provide multinational avenues to demand adherence to internationally-recognized standards for political participation; and to demonstrate commitment to democratic institutions by taking no actions to undermine the independence of the judiciary, the capacity of political opposition to function, a free press, and the right of civil society to organize, meet, and publish.

**US responsibility:** To support these aspirations for greater freedom of expression and participation, and as a recognition of the US responsibility to support, though not to define, democratic processes, we note the following indicators for US policy:

a. The US government will respect the political integrity of each county, acknowledging that the internal political process must be settled, fundamentally, by the people of that country or region.

b. While recognizing and acknowledging its own democratic failures, the US government will contribute to multilateral election monitoring initiatives, and will provide appropriate support for independent monitoring initiatives in African civil society.

c. The US government will neither fund nor otherwise involve itself in assisting or undermining political parties on the continent.

d. The US government will seek opportunities to support and strengthen African civil society in civil society efforts to define their own agenda and to articulate alternatives, including civil society representation in the African Peer Review Mechanism.

e. The US government will find avenues to indicate its support for a free press, including a commitment to an African-controlled independent press.

### 3. Human rights

**NEPAD's vision:** NEPAD commits African governments to establish a human rights code of conduct, and to acknowledge the interdependence of all human rights, including economic and social. Further, it commits African governments to develop detailed provisions as to how human rights are to be monitored, inter alia the establishment of a peer review mechanism that is independent and credible; to ensure that human rights protections will be a key element in any peace-keeping and peace-building initiatives; and to create structures and processes to ensure accountability.

**NEPAD's failures:** In and of themselves, these are positive provisions. However, we note that the document fails to acknowledge the progress made in defining and protecting human rights, shown in the absence of reference to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, to the African Commission, or to the OAU's commitment to the establishment of an African Court. The document lacks clear benchmarks for human rights performance, and it fails to support the ratification of such human rights initiatives as the Additional Protocol on Women's Rights of the African Charter.

**US responsibility:** To support these human rights aspirations, we note the following indicators for US policy:

- a. The US government will name human rights abuses wherever they may be found.
- b. The US government will participate actively in international human rights fora.
- c. The US government will provide a meaningful contribution to multilateral human rights initiatives, including assistance to aid victims of abuses.
- d. The US government will participate actively in programs that respect fundamental workers' rights, as defined by the International Labor Organization, both as human rights, and as an avenue toward more equitable economic development and more effective democratic governance.
- e. The US government will reverse its decision repudiating the International Criminal Court.

### 4. Economic development

**NEPAD's vision:** It is in the realm of economic policy that the debate about NEPAD is the most intense. It does indeed espouse a free market formula in a manner that seems to differ little from the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that have fallen into such disrepute. Some have suggested that the only difference between SAPs and NEPAD is that the former is imposed upon Africa by the international financial institutions, while the latter is imposed upon Africa by African governments themselves.

**Our concerns and hopes:** We share with our partners in Africa and elsewhere serious questions about the foundation of NEPAD's economic policy. Nevertheless, we also read in NEPAD a commitment by African governments to embrace the concerns of poor and marginalized Africans rather than the priorities of an African elite or of northern donor nations. To our mind this requires that they advance economic policies consistent with their vision for economic development, in active consultation with the breadth of African civil society, as opposed to adopting policies demanded by the G-7 nations and international financial institutions.

Toward that end, we embrace those features in NEPAD that commit African governments to advance economic policies that place the private sector firmly in the context of societal needs. This means, for example, that issues of human need and poverty reduction take precedence over a rigid free market economy. Access to water, health care, and education, for example, need to remain in the public sector. In the private sector, labor rights, gender opportunity, and the furtherance of African initiatives rather than those of multinational corporations need to be secured.

To the extent that the NEPAD process affirms such principles, there are aspects of the NEPAD agenda that may well lead to such UN Millennium Development goals of halving the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day, by 2015; halving by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water; and demonstrably improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

We profoundly regret the decision to remove from the final version of NEPAD a previous commitment to give legal expression to the protection of the rights of local communities, farmers and breeders, and for the regulation of access to biological resources as envisioned in the OAU Model Legislation. We lift up the strong and growing support it has received from many African governments and from civil society organizations in Africa, North America and throughout the world, and we applaud its recognition by the US Congress in the AFRICA Resolution (107th Congress, H.Con.Res. 260).

**US responsibility:** To support these development aspirations, we note the following indicators for US policy:

a. The US government will respect the rights of African governments to define their economic policies and priorities, without insistence upon rigid free market provisions or other economic conditions perceived by African civil society and African governments to be against the interests of African development.

b. The US government will actively pursue full debt cancellation of multilateral debts owed by African governments.

c. The US government will remove the barriers which discourage African agricultural exports to the US.

d. The US government will not only avoid retaliation but will actively support African initiatives to secure access to affordable medicines.

e. The US government will pursue limits upon the US extractive industry operating in Africa requiring that they meet environmental standards at least equivalent to those required within the US. Such operations should benefit, not hinder, local communities.

f. The US government will demonstrate a serious commitment to African economic development and community rights through adherence to the principles of the AFRICA Resolution supporting the OAU Model Legislation.

g. The US government will engage in negotiations leading to the payment and provision of reconstruction assistance to countries where the US was involved, overtly or covertly, in policies or programs of destabilization.

h. The US government will move forward aggressively toward development assistance levels approaching 0.7% of GNP, without proscriptive structural-adjustment-style conditions.

i. The US government will remove "tied-aid" conditions for development assistance, by which African nations are required to purchase US products as part of development activities.

j. The US government will ensure that at least half of development assistance under the Millennium Challenge Account will be directed toward sub-Saharan Africa.

k. Until the TRIPS agreement is reviewed - as has been requested by African trade ministers - the US government will refrain from negotiating any trade agreement with TRIPS obligations any more stringent than those obligations outlined by the Uruguay Round and held by WTO member nations.

## 5. Education

**NEPAD's vision:** NEPAD commits African governments to approach access to education as a right, and therefore places education in the context of social rights as an expression of transparent and accountable governance. Implicit in this understanding is a commitment to the UN Millennium Development goals of ensuring that boys and girls alike, everywhere, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; and that gender disparity in all levels of education will be eliminated no later than 2015.

We simply add that the acute shortage of a trained workforce, the serious under-investment in education, literacy rates of less than 50% in many countries, the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system, and the importance to education to stemming the tide of HIV/AIDS, make a compelling case for the critical importance of education to sustainable development in Africa.

**US responsibility:** To support these educational aspirations, we note the following indicators for US policy:

a. The US government will seek ways, including development assistance and, in particular, a substantial increase in assistance for basic education

and vocational education, to support the educational agenda of African governments.

b. The US government will oppose "user fees" for basic education, either directly or through international financial institutions.

c. The US government will aggressively pursue debt cancellation as an avenue to increase revenue for education.

## 6. Health:

**NEPAD's vision:** NEPAD commits African governments to approach access to health care as a right to health, and therefore places health in the context of social rights as an expression of transparent and accountable governance. Implicit in that understanding is a commitment to a significant increase in the percentage of people with access to health facilities, and to the UN Millennium Development goals of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015, reducing by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate by 2015; and halting and reversing the incidence of malaria and tuberculosis by 2015.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, we see in NEPAD a commitment by African governments to establish participatory mechanisms to involve diverse community groups in crafting AIDS programs and defining priorities regarding funding. We envision a significant increase in the percentage of people with access to voluntary counseling and testing in conjunction with treatment programs, a reversal in the infection rate, a significant increase in the numbers of women receiving mother-to-child transmission treatment, and a major expansion in the provision of antiretroviral medications.

**US responsibility:** To support these health aspirations, we note the following indicators for US policy:

a. The US government will increase annual US contributions for global AIDS efforts, including the Global Fund, to a minimum of \$2.5 billion.

b. The US government will oppose "user fees" for basic health services, either directly or through international financial institutions.

c. The US government will actively support affordable access to medicines, including good faith commitments to support the spirit of the Doha statement ("Declaration of the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, at Doha, November 2001), broad interpretation of third-country access to medications, and development of indigenous pharmaceutical industries and capacity in Africa. In particular, the US will offer explicit support of the right of African nations to obtain or produce generic medications in order to address their domestic public health concerns.

## 7. Gender equality and opportunity

**NEPAD's vision:** NEPAD commits African governments to the empowerment of women, to be demonstrated by an increase in income earning power, as a share

of professional and managerial jobs, and as a share of parliamentary seats held by women. Where major gender discrepancies exist in life expectancy data, we consider that a key empowerment indicator will be the narrowing of those discrepancies.

**NEPAD's failures:** We note with regret, however, that NEPAD is lacking in details regarding gender empowerment, and the failure to endorse existing African-initiated action plans, standards and goals - including those of the Africa platform of the 1994 Beijing women's conference - is glaring.

**US responsibility:** To support these aspirations for gender equality, we note the following indicators for US policy:

a. The US government will give high priority to development assistance programs, especially through the African Development Foundation, that empower women and support grassroots initiatives.

b. The US government will seek to address, through development assistance, educational opportunities for girls.

c. The US government will respect the women-led African initiatives and decisions on issues of family planning, birth control and HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

d. The US government will support United Nations efforts to advance the rights, skills and leadership of women.

## Conclusions

Through all of these topics we have sought to note what we have heard from the NEPAD document as an African agenda, and indicators that would demonstrate that the US was supportive of principles articulated in NEPAD that seek to serve the common good.

Fundamentally, we believe that the point of departure of a "new partnership" should be human need, not Africa's integration into the global economic system. As the African Social Forum of NGOs (meeting in Bamako in 2001) helpfully observed, this means that the issue of clean water does not begin by opening up the provision of water to international market forces, but rather by considering access to safe water as a right rather than an economic privilege. To the extent, therefore, that NEPAD inspires a partnership that goes beyond a narrow economic prescription toward a vision of Africa where wealth is shared, equity is affirmed, hopes for health and education are met, human rights are respected, gender inequality is overcome, and peace, security, and good governance become the norm, then this initiative by African leadership - despite the neglect of civil society in its preparation - is a contribution to the good.

For this to happen, the affirmations that appear in the declaration of the Joint CODESRIA-Third World Network Conference on Africa's Development Challenges in the Millennium, held in Accra in April, 2002, need to be heard by African and Western governments alike, and heard far more clearly than



appears up to now to be the case. Our African partners in Accra spoke of "a state for which social equity, social inclusion, national unity and respect for human rights form the basis of economic policy; a state which actively promotes and nurtures the productive sectors of the economy; actively engages appropriately in the equitable and balanced allocation and distribution of resources among sectors and people; and most importantly a state that is democratic and which integrates people's control over decision making at all levels in the management, equitable use and distribution of social resources."

It is our firm hope and desire that this vision of Africa, articulated so well by leaders in African civil society, will become the dominant theme in the NEPAD process. NEPAD may provide an opportunity for broad-based and intense African-defined discussion. It may not. In either case, our contribution, as US-based NGOs, is to hear the need-based and rights-based agenda that is implicit in NEPAD; to serve as a medium through which African civil society voices are heard widely as they reflect upon NEPAD; to coordinate our initiatives with those on the continent to the greatest extent possible; and to challenge the US government to respond to NEPAD, both as presently designed and as it may evolve, in a manner that respects the indicators set forth here, and in a supportive rather than dominant relationship with African governments and African civil society.

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