

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

ON THE NEPAD CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ON BUILDING STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ELMINA, GHANA, MARCH 25TH-28TH, 2003.

In Africa, 340 million people or half the population live on less than US\$1 per day. The mortality rate of children under five years of age is 140 per 1000, and life expectancy at birth is only 54 years ... The objective of the New Partnership for Africa's Development is to consolidate democracy and sound economic management on the continent. Through the programme, African leaders are making a commitment to the African people and the World to work together in rebuilding the continent. It is a pledge to promote peace and stability, democracy, sound economic management and people centred development and to hold each other accountable in terms of the agreements outlined in the programme (Extracts from The Introductory and Concluding Statements of the NEPAD Framework Document, October 2001).

Introduction

The NEPAD Secretariat in South Africa in collaboration with the NEPAD Secretariat of Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development held a three-day Forum for civil society organizations with the theme “***Building Stronger Partnerships with Civil Society***”. The forum was the beginning of a series of fora to be held to engage Civil Society Organisations on the continent on the implementation process of NEPAD. This draft report is a brief synthesis of the issues addressed at the Forum and highlights the main recommendations. The full and final report will be presented at a later date.

Objectives

The seminar was designed to achieve the following objectives

- Strengthen the capacity of civil society institutions in Africa to enhance their appreciation of NEPAD
- Improve participation and Empowerment of civil society institutions in the NEPAD process and
- Empower civil society organizations to contribute to and monitor the implementation process of NEPAD.

Attendance

More than sixty participants drawn from civil society organizations, government agencies, the diplomatic community, private sector, academia and the media from the region, including Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Benin, Senegal, Algeria, Botswana, Ghana and delegates from other countries outside of Africa and international and local organizations attended. Also present were Ghana's Minister for Economic Planning and Regional Co-operation, Kenya's Deputy Minister of Planning and Ambassadors from the NEPAD Steering Committee countries.

Structure of the Forum

The Forum was structured such that there were formal opening and closing sessions and plenary and breakout sessions. Papers presented at the plenary sessions were discussed in detail at the break out sessions. The reports from the breakout sessions were then further discussed at the plenary sessions.

Topics discussed

Nine topics were discussed at the Forum as listed below:

- Mobilizing Civil Society for the African Renaissance: Experiences from South Africa
- Civil Society and Economic and Regional Integration
- Infrastructure Barriers to Continental Development: The Role of Civil Society in Bringing about Further Development
- Articulation of the Global African Society and NEPAD
- The Role of African Society in Dealing with Communicable Diseases
- Civil Society on Poverty Reduction, Food Security and Analysis of Agricultural Subsidies
- Peace and Conflict Resolution
- Dialogue and partnerships with African Civil Societies in the context of the NEPAD and the African Union : Challenges and practical questions for the establishment of an enabling environment
- Conflict Resolution : The Role of Civil Society in general and women in particular-A Case Study from Senegal

Main Recommendations

Taking note of the Peer Review Mechanism and Civil Society participation, the Forum was an opportunity to improve trust between governments and civil society. The Forum was a groundbreaking one as civil society engaged government representatives in civil and frank exchanges and this set the tone for regular interface between civil society and government.

The Forum explored the role of civil society in the implementation of the NEPAD process and what partnership it should have with other identified actors, namely, African Governments and the Private Sector.

After three days of deliberations, Civil Society indicated their support for the NEPAD and noted that it could make crucial interventions in the health, agriculture, infrastructure, education and economic governance spheres to actualize the objectives of NEPAD.

Below were highlights of the main recommendations

- For Civil Society to participate meaningfully in the implementation of the NEPAD process, the Forum suggested consistent capacity building. Civil society must also organize itself and firm up its accountability structures.
- The Forum also noted that civil society could educate and sensitize its constituents and the public on the NEPAD .
- Civil Society could also act as a watchdog by monitoring and evaluating the process of NEPAD implementation.
- The Forum also noted that Civil Society could act as pressure groups to facilitate economic integration at regional, sub regional, national and local levels.
- Civil Society was also urged to organise a database of information and good practices from Africa to input into the implementation of NEPAD.
- The Forum noted that NEPAD is anchored on good governance and for the objectives to be achieved, it is imperative that Civil Society enjoins African governments to provide the kind of leadership that would create an enabling environment in the political and economic governance spheres to guarantee peace and stability as well as the removal of imposed barriers to effective trade.
- The Forum also urged African governments to hold regular consultations with Civil Society and provide information on the implementation of the NEPAD process to enable them participate meaningfully in the process and sustain the partnership.
- Tied to the provision of information on the objectives of the NEPAD, the Forum further suggested that governments must embark on a vigorous and coherent public education campaign to educate the public on the objectives of the NEPAD and solicit their participation. The NEPAD document could be translated into local languages, and further developed into leaflets, brochures, and posters and integrated into our curricula for teaching in our schools.
- The Forum noted that the successful implementation and attainment of the objectives set out in the NEPAD document would require resources. All African governments were encouraged to commit themselves and in particular, resources, to actualize the objectives of the NEPAD.

- The implementation of the NEPAD requires resources which governments alone cannot provide. Since the private sector, and ultimately, the nation stands to benefit from contracts that would be awarded for the development of infrastructure, the Forum encouraged the Private Sector to take active interest as a partner in the implementation of the NEPAD process. It further urged governments to consider the issue of affirmative procurement in the award of contracts.
- The Forum urged the Private Sector to establish a partnership and network with Civil Society to build civil society capacity in such areas requiring technical expertise to better enable civil society monitor projects like road construction, buildings etc
- For the Private Sector to participate meaningfully in the implementation of the NEPAD process, the Forum called for capacity building for the private sector to enable them promote the NEPAD.

Challenges

The Forum noted that although some progress was being made on civil society's participation in the implementation of the NEPAD process, challenges still remain, particularly on building trust and confidence between civil society and governments. Additional challenges noted are on the issues of Information and Communication Technology and Conflict Resolution and Peace Building.

Way forward

The Forum suggested regular interface amongst civil society and between civil society, government, the private sector and other partners to address the challenges and monitor progress made. The Forum also called upon member states to establish NEPAD desks at their various Ministries, Departments and Agencies and the NEPAD Secretariat to establish a Civil Society desk to coordinate their activities toward the achievement of NEPAD goals.

In this regard, the Forum commended the Government of Ghana for the establishment of a 'Ministry of Regional Co-operation and NEPAD' and urged other member countries to emulate Ghana's example.

Conclusion

The Forum came to a consensus that partnership between civil society and the NEPAD process was essential and that the nature of that partnership ought to be one that preserves the independence of civil society.