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Greetings to All,

This letter comes to you at a trying time in the history of foreign relations. A time when we should sadly admit to ourselves the failure of diplomacy in the resolution of the crisis in Iraq. Nepad therefore, needs to examine the impending effects of the war on the African continent. The fear of many that we have spoken to is that the agenda of reversing the desperate state of the African Continent, as promoted by NEPAD, will be relegated to the bottom of the developmental agenda. This fear is real, despite the assurance by many of our development partners, that the emphasis placed on continuing to together develop the African Continent remains.

In the next few months our activities will take place against a backdrop of a historical tapestry of great achievement and challenges of varying degrees in the African continent.

In this regard, the NEPAD process has brought to the debate a sharp convergence of approach between development and democracy. It has become clear to Nepad that the balance of forces whose objectives are to cultivate democracy must establish it on the foundation of justice, broad participation of all stakeholders and the maintenance of an environment worthy of the growth of such noble ideals.

ABUJA MEETING

The Sixth Heads of State and Government Implementation summit of NEPAD was held in Abuja on the 9th March 2003.

The milestone achievement of the summit saw 10 countries signing the Memorandum of Understanding on the African Peer Review Mechanism; Algeria, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda . Other countries have indicated their intention to soon sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the APRM.

This was a confirmation of the commitment by our leaders to make the NEPAD process a practical and pragmatic vision.

FOCUS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

The Civil Society Forum in Elmina, Ghana from 26th to 28 March, 2003, drew more than sixty participants from Civil Society Organisations Government agencies and Academics from various countries of the African Continent and the world at large.

Several topics were discussed during the period of the Forum. These included among others: (i) Mobilizing Civil Society for the African Renaissance, (ii) Civil Society on Peace and Conflict Resolution, (iii) Civil Society on Poverty Reduction, Food Security and Analysis of Agricultural Subsidies and (iv) Dialogue and partnerships with African Societies in the context of NEPAD and the African Union; Challenges and practical questions for the establishment of an enabling environment.

The Forum took note of the discussions and made some recommendations and identified various challenges of Civil Society participation in the implementation of the NEPAD process. The following were some of the highlights of the recommendations and statements;

- African Civil Society supports NEPAD wholeheartedly
- For Civil Society to participate meaningfully in the implementation of the NEPAD process, it was suggested that consistent capacity building should be conducted and civil Society should organise itself, in order to enable it to participate more meaningfully in the NEPAD process.
- There needs to be a Civil Society desk set up at the NEPAD Secretariat. This desk will enable constant communication and interaction between the NEPAD process, AU organs and Civil Society Globally.
- Civil Society needs to be involved and need to consider itself a partner to the various African governments. This involvement needs to be from planning to implementation. Civil Society should not consider itself the official opposition to government.
- Civil Society should educate and sensitize its constituents and the public on NEPAD.

Strengthened partnership between the NEPAD process and Civil Society will prove to be a catalyst in the implementation of various

initiatives covered by the NEPAD process. See the preliminary report on www.nepad.org

Gender Forum

NEPAD will be hosting its first Gender Forum in Libreville, Gabon from the 28th to 30th April 2003. As part of its communications and outreach strategy, NEPAD Secretariat has embarked on a programme to involve all stakeholders i.e. Business, Government, Civil Society, Youth, and Gender associations in its programmes and activities in order to create ownership of the NEPAD process. A total of 100 delegates from various African and international gender associations, government representatives and experts in various areas of concern are expected to attend this forum.

NEPAD regards Gender as a central cross cutting issue in all its programs, and hopes that this forum will establish a partnership that is both credible and capable of implementation. It is also expected that gender activists will rise to the challenge of ensuring that NEPAD brings about real and positive change in the lives of women. The forum will help establish contact with organisations to work together on an effective NEPAD gender sensitive programme.

The forum will take place at the Palais International des Conferences of the "Cite de la Democratie" in Libreville, Gabon.

A time to Reflect and Celebrate

25 May is Africa Day, and this marks the 40th Anniversary of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU).

NEPAD seeks to advance the gains made by the OAU.

The OAU has played a pivotal role in the development of the African Continent with respect to the end of colonialism.

The celebrations of Africa Day this year take on special significance, because we will be entering the second year as the African Union (AU).

In addition the NEPAD Secretariat as a program of development of the AU will be participating in the various ceremonies marking this important date on the African Calendar. We will keep our readers informed on all the activities planned for this date.

African Renaissance Conference

The fifth Annual Renaissance Conference took place on the 28th of March 2003 in Durban, South Africa. The theme of this year's conference was 'NEPAD: The quest for an African Renaissance'.

Mayors from cities in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora were part of delegates at the conference.

The NEPAD Steering Committee Chairman, Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu delivered a keynote address on the overview of NEPAD and its importance in the renewal of the Continent. He elaborated that much as the chains of colonialism and oppression were no more, greater challenges lay in confronting persistent conflicts, weak governance and accompanying corruption and inefficiencies, poverty and under development and inequitable international order.

He also mentioned that call for the African Renaissance made by President Mbeki had a special significance, both in terms of timing and the fact it was now backed by a concrete programme of action and led by the HISGC of NEPAD, responsible for its implementation.

The Chairman also highlighted the importance of African Scholars, intellectuals and opinions makers and urged them to believe in the regeneration and reconstruction of Africa so that through their utterances and writings the message of hope would facilitate the launching of an African Renaissance.

Coming Event

EXPERTS' TASKTEAM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAMME ON WEATHER PREDICTIONS, DISASTER MANAGEMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND FOOD SECURITY

Africa's food insecurity is the result of a confluence of factors over a long period of time. Droughts, floods, and related natural disasters have been some of the major causes exacerbated by other factors such as conflict, poverty, HIV/AIDS etc. On the one hand, the scientific predictions and predictability of the climate-induced disasters has considerably improved. Yet, on the other hand, the region continues to suffer from the impacts of these events. Despite the very well assembled body of knowledge, and the establishment of early warning systems, the region has been unable to adequately respond to the continued recurrence of droughts, floods, and other extreme events and natural disasters.

The now regular food crisis in Africa has prompted many scientists and policy makers to start asking whether the causes of this crisis are solely due to a lack of scientific data on weather and climate predictions, or

if we need to look beyond just the provision of the data to policy makers. Why is it that, despite the improved availability of scientific information on weather predictability, African governments are failing to take adequate measures to ensure that the region has food security? Is it a matter of lack of weather technology, or does the problem lie in other areas of the economy where decisions are made to export staple crops during bumper harvests, without taking into account what the climate predictions forecast? Do we need to have a closer and more integrated planning and working approach between various government departments whose policies and activities impact on food security?

Whatever the cause of this crisis, there is clearly an emerging need for the establishment of disaster and emergency preparedness systems as well as longer-term risk reduction approaches in the region to mitigate, and manage the region's vulnerability to these natural disasters and extreme events, as well as policies on agriculture and agricultural exports and imports.

It is in this context that the NEPAD Secretariat is mobilizing a team of regional technical experts to work with the Secretariat and the Regional Economic Communities to develop a comprehensive project proposal that can be implemented to address the impacts of climatic and rainfall variability, natural disasters, and extreme events, taking into account the role of policy making in food security.

The outcome of this task will be the identification of a set of activities to be implemented by governments, Regional Economic Communities, the scientific community, the private sector, and Non-Governmental organizations (NGO's), to improve the region's food security in the short and long term.

Aim of workshop

To develop a regional programme for implementation, aimed at understanding and then addressing Africa's continued food crisis due to the continent's vulnerability to rainfall variability, extreme events, climate change, natural disasters, and various socio-economic and agricultural policies. It is envisaged that each REC will take a lead in implementing the outcomes of this workshop, or integrating them into existing programmes where relevant and appropriate.

For details of the workshop please consult the NEPAD website, [check under events Calendar](#)