

Nepad's peer review mechanism

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It is a privilege and pleasure to be amongst you at this Gala Dinner on the occasion of the 2nd meeting of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons. We are all very grateful to the Members of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons for accepting this difficult but necessary task and express our unqualified support.

Allow me, to congratulate Prof Wiseman Nkuhlu, and the team at the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat, for all the good work that they are doing in relentlessly and successfully forging ahead with the implementation of NEPAD.

We all have a responsibility to be part of this titanic struggle for the renewal and rebirth of our continent. The struggle that should see a democratic, secure and prosperous Africa at peace with itself and the rest of humanity. This unfortunately is taking place at a time when the world is probably facing the most challenging time since the Second World War.

The unequal distribution of political, economic and military power has meant that whilst globalisation has created immense opportunities of wealth for some, it has produced two contrasting global villages- one which is indeed prosperous, rich and democratic for a few who live in it - and the other, in which the majority are poor, alienated and marginalized with hardly any voice to determine their own destiny. The rich village still dominates the other.

Some of us have just returned from various international engagements, such as the WTO Cancun meeting, the recent 58th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the recent 2003 Annual meeting of the IMF/World Bank and the TICAD III meeting in Tokyo.

From all these gatherings it is clear that the United Nations (UN), which is the centre, is not quite holding. As our President said, "the UN is the legitimate expression of the collective will of the peoples of the world, the principal guarantor of international peace and security and sustainable development among other global issues". Because of its importance, we have a responsibility to ensure that the centre holds and that things do not fall apart.

This requires determination and commitment on our side as Africans to speak with one voice and act in unison. It requires a heightened level of solidarity amongst all developing countries.

We witnessed this in Cancun at the WTO negotiations. If anything, Cancun succeeded in galvanising the developing countries together in defence of the common development agenda and in dealing with the countries of the North.

At the 58th UNGA the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his address pointed out the challenges and made concrete suggestions about the process of reform of the UN, the Security Council and other international institutions.

As developing countries we support him fully and are ready to cooperate with him and the developed countries in doing what needs to be done. We are aware that only through our collective voice at the UN can we be heard. Singularity, we are weak.

For us on the continent, the establishment of the African Union (AU) and the development of its programme NEPAD, present us with a framework for the creation of peace and stability, democracy and good governance. We are convinced, correctly so, that in NEPAD, we have the blueprint for dealing with the indignity of poverty, ignorance, and economic marginalisation.

There is a sense of pride and dignity amongst all Africans that we are ready to reclaim the shaping of our destiny. The AU is off to a good start with the important recognition that women must play a central role in shaping the future of our continent with its Commission consisting of 50% of women.

The Commission must ensure the urgent establishment of the PAP, the Peace and Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the adoption of a Common Defence and Security Policy, and the installation of the African Court of Justice and the financial Organs of the AU. All of these will advance the course of African Peace, African Solidarity and Africa's sustained development.

All of these instruments are based on programmes and projects founded on solid principles of democracy, good political and economic governance, social justice, respect for human rights and a culture of tolerance, transparency and accountability, as stipulated in the Constitutive Act.

The creation of NEPAD has helped to place Africa at the apex of the global agenda, by:

- * Creating an instrument for advancing people-centred sustainable development in Africa;
- * Using the rich natural resources and people for the benefit of Africans and ensuring that these masses are themselves the agents of change; and
- * Providing a common African platform from which to engage the rest of the international community in a dynamic partnership that holds real prospects for creating a better life for all.

In all interactions with the international community, they urged that African countries should continue to press forward with the region-wide implementation of NEPAD, particularly to strengthen the foundations for investment and private sector-led growth.

We know that significantly faster growth will be needed to reduce poverty and meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out in the UN Millennium Declaration. This requires stronger policy frameworks and institutions, better governance, higher and more effective aid flows, and improved market access.

As we all know, the APRM is a process voluntarily acceded to by member states of the AU as an African self-monitoring mechanism. Indeed we would wish to see in time all African countries accede to peer review, because the APRM is a mechanism designed by AU, to assist our countries, individually and collectively to achieve our development goals.

It is not an instrument for punishment or exclusion, but rather it is a mechanism to identify strong points or areas, share them and to rectify weak areas. The APRM will require that each country carefully develop a Programme of Action with time-bound objectives.

The APRM will enable participating Member States to adopt policies and practices that conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards. Thus, the APRM would be more about ownership of the process and adapting it to circumstances that are relevant to Africa through identified areas of priority.

The APRM is a critical instrument for advancing reforms in governance and socio-economic development and in building capacity to implement these reforms. The APRM will seek to identify the deficiencies in implementation with a view of improving its compliance of the Constitutive Act of the AU by Member States.

The APRM process is designed to be open, participatory and to include all stakeholders,

including non-governmental organizations, professional associations and civil society organizations, in particular women, youth, trade unions and the private sector.

It is expected that the APRM will engage all key stakeholders to begin an exchange of information on good governance, and thereby demystify policy-making processes and build trust in the pursuit of national development goals.

The countries that have acceded to the APRM must see this as an opportunity. They will have to take ownership of their national process, and ask themselves: What can we do to get the most out of this process? How can the APRM assist us in overcoming our country-specific bottlenecks? And, how can we best include all key stakeholders to allow the process to be truly inclusive?

South Africa, like many other African countries, subscribes to the principle that the APRM should be primarily funded by the participating countries. We must ensure the independence and African ownership of the process.

I wish to reconfirm the undertakings made by President Thabo Mbeki, at the AU Summit of Maputo regarding the readiness of South Africa in meeting its financial obligations to the AU and NEPAD. Please be assured that South African will contribute towards the implementation of the NEPAD, and in particular the APRM, both financially and in human resources.

As far as our readiness to involve all stakeholders in the APRM process, the presence of representatives of so many institutions and organisations in this room speaks for itself. South Africa is also well ahead in the preparation of its own Programme of Action and timetable with regards to progress in achieving the agreed standards and criteria. We are also making grounds on the appointments of APR Contact Point and Country Co-ordinating structures for the APRM.

I assure the APR Panel that I would personally lend all the support necessary to facilitate your work here in South Africa. The APR Secretariat being an integral part of the NEPAD Secretariat would be granted its legal status.

Let me also reconfirm that South Africa stands ready to be amongst the first countries to be reviewed. We would gladly welcome your technical teams and yourselves for country visits as prescribed within the APR process.

Having attended these various international gatherings I can assure you that there is a tremendous amount of goodwill in the world directed towards Africa's renewal and development.

The UN has adopted NEPAD as the world's collective development programme of Africa. The G8 have accepted NEPAD and formulated their programme of action. So too, has TICAD from where I have just returned today.

Next year, regional economic, political and social organisations from the shores of Africa and Asia will come together, here, in our country to re-invigorate our mutual bonds, commitments and programmes that seek the development of both our continents.

However, notwithstanding all the goodwill that exist, we as Africans must take the lead, in Africa's titanic struggle of renewal and rebirth, in ensuring that NEPAD succeeds in all its manifestations.