

**NEPAD REGIONAL MEETING
EASTERN AFRICA REGION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
NAIROBI, KENYA
OCTOBER 28TH 2003**

**Address by Hon. P. Anyang' Nyong'o
Minister of Planning and National Development**

“GIVING DEVELOPMENT A CHANCE IN EASTERN AFRICA”

Your Excellency the Vice President of Kenya, Hon. Moody Awori,
Hon. Ministers
Permanent Secretaries
Secretary Generals of COMESA, EAC, and IGAD
Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors
Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Chief Executives,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of the Ministry of Planning and National Development, to welcome our visitors to Nairobi and to wish you an extremely happy stay in our City in the Sun.

Mr Vice President, I have been assured that the discussions held by the technical team and the Permanent Secretaries have been cordial and very constructive. The Report that the Ministers are to deliberate on today in preparation for the Summit tomorrow is well thought out and brings to the fore the key issues that should spearhead the NEPAD agenda in this region.

But let me care to add, Mr Vice President, that we in this region have not really given development a chance since our various countries achieved independence from foreign rule. We have stifled entrepreneurship. By under-developing infrastructure, we have denied our people access to external markets, both national and international.

Little has been done regarding value addition to our agricultural products in spite of the tremendous potential that can be seen from our own traditional practices in the preservation of grains, tubers, meat products, fish and vegetables. Making the leap from limited circulation of preserved food within a subsistence economy to industrial value addition for wider commodity circulation has somehow eluded us.

Your Excellency, NEPAD should provide us an opportunity to give development a chance in this region. Time is not on our side. Instead of wasting valuable resources on wars and internal conflicts, we should concentrate on using these resources for food production, education, provision of health care and the creation of national wealth through investment and increased productivity in our various economies.

One of the biggest nations on earth – the People's Republic of China – is a nation at peace with itself. It is at war with nobody. It trades with everybody. It imports from everywhere. It boasts of the biggest home market in the whole world, yet it still

aggressively seeks for foreign markets for its exports. It is the fastest growing economy in the whole world. In fact it is growing so fast its economists say: “the economy is overheating”.

Yet, in 1978 when China started its reform process, it had close to half its population living below the poverty line. That ignominy in China’s political economy may soon simply be a relic of the past in Chinese history. If China can do it, we too can do it.

The lesson is simple: stop wars, reform deeply, fight poverty, develop infrastructure, empower the people, stop being petty in national and regional politics and give development a chance. It requires determination. It requires a sense of purpose.

Mr Vice President, the people of this region could easily add up to 300 million. That is a viable home market especially if rural incomes could grow so that the purchasing power of peasants goes beyond subsistence. The market, as it were, needs to engulf all our people in the production of wealth. Indolence and dependency must be fought at all costs.

Mr Vice President, this Council of Ministers of NEPAD comes at an opportune time. The peace process in Sudan is advanced, and soon development will be given a chance in this great country after over 3 decades of internal conflicts. The peace process in Somalia is sure to follow in the footsteps of the Sudanese success. We must therefore resolve to have a peaceful eastern Africa where development will be the only item on our agenda until we catch up with the developed world.

The role that His Excellency the President, the Hon. Mwai Kibaki, is playing in this peace building process is commendable. Please convey our heart felt congratulations to him for having received the Gandhi-King Memorial Peace Award in recognition of his contributions to peace in Africa.

Mr Vice President, it is now my honour to request you humbly to officially open our meeting.