

**JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS OF
REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND THE NEPAD SECRETARIAT
29 - 30 October, Abuja, Nigeria**

At the invitation of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Chief Executive Officers of the Africa Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the NEPAD Secretariat met on 29 - 30 October 2003, in Abuja, Nigeria. The meeting was hosted by the Secretariat of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) and sponsored by the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The Chief Executive Officers or their representatives from CEN-SAD, CEMAC, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IOC, SADC and UEMOA attended the meeting. The RECs and NEPAD partner institutions comprising the regional and international development or investment banks or institutions (AfDB, EBID, DBSA and World Bank), ABR, ATU, CSIR, Commonwealth Secretariat, EU, FAO, IMO, NEPAD Business Group, NEPAD Nigeria and UNECA also participated in the meeting.

His Excellency, President Olusegun Obasanjo guided the deliberations of the meeting by his keynote address and interaction with the dignitaries in a closed-door session. The Chairman of the African Union (AU) Commission, His Excellency Mr Alpha Oumar Konaré also made a speech, which provided key complementary guidance to the deliberations of the meeting. He reiterated that the Abuja Treaty provides the basis for regional integration and identifies the RECs as critical stakeholders for economic integration. He also drew the attention of the meeting to the need for member countries to decide to which one regional grouping they would like to belong, for purposes of African Regional Integration, in accordance with the Treaty.

Based on the guidance, the presentations made on theme topics and the subsequent deliberations, the meeting reached agreements and made undertakings as follows:

A. General Understanding of NEPAD

1. The meeting acknowledged that NEPAD represents an expression of the will and determination of the African (AU) leadership to steer Africa to higher levels of sustainable development and, therefore, rid itself of poverty and marginalization from the global economy and body politic. The meeting re-affirmed the understanding that NEPAD is a new engine of Africa's socio-economic renewal program which is underpinned by the energizing and revitalization of development institutions through the adoption of policies and strategies, which will enable accelerating implementation of development initiatives and sustain economic growth over time.

2. The meeting noted that the international community has accepted the NEPAD framework as a basis for cooperation and socio-economic development of Africa. The meeting, therefore, joined the broad African and international community in acknowledging that NEPAD is Africa's best hope for a brighter future. Consequently, the meeting accepted the challenge by the Chairman of the HSGIC, President Obasanjo, for the RECs to be part of the process of taking Africa's destiny in her own hands and to chart a way forward that will ensure that this hope is realized.
3. The meeting re-affirmed that NEPAD is the socio-economic program of the AU. The meeting recognized the role of RECs as pillars and building blocks for continental integration and acknowledged that overall coordination and harmonization at the continental level should be under the AU Commission and that the work on the Protocol on Relations between the AU and the RECS should be accelerated to this end. The meeting also endorsed the view of the Chairman of the HSGIC that NEPAD is the development framework for Africa and is widely considered to be an engine of socio-economic growth. He also underscored the need to consider some major roles expected from the RECs and other stakeholders in the area of designing, developing and facilitating implementation of these projects and programmes at country levels.

B. Promoting NEPAD Ownership

1. The Chief Executive Officers of the RECs made a commitment to take steps to promote the ownership of NEPAD in their respective organizations and Member countries by:
 - Placing the review of implementation of the NEPAD programmes and projects developed under the framework as a standing agenda item of the meetings of the RECs' Summits and other various key committees or institutions.
 - Establishing a NEPAD focal point for advocacy, liaison and coordination with member country agencies and stakeholders.
 - Promoting the establishment of similar NEPAD focal points or desks in the member countries.

However it was recognized that this would require adequate financial and manpower resources.

2. The meeting supported the call by the Chairperson of the HSGIC and the Chair of the AU Commission to the RECs to take the programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework as their own. The CEOs of the RECs, therefore, undertook to work towards ensuring that their respective REC's overall and sectoral development strategies and programs are consistent with those of NEPAD. They further recognized that the implementation of these programmes require capacity and resources.

C. Role of the RECs

The meeting observed that, in line with the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the RECs are essential building blocks for the integration and economic development of Africa. Therefore, the RECs have a pivotal responsibility to mobilize and oversee translation of the NEPAD objectives, goals and strategies into practical, implementable programs, projects and activities at sub-regional and member state level. The specific responsibilities in this regard include:

- i. Establishing capacity building requirements and mobilizing assistance to develop necessary own capacity and reposition the RECs to fulfill their functions in coordinating and monitoring implementation of the programmes adopted under the NEPAD Framework for sustaining growth.
- ii. Establishing capacity to integrate regional programs with Programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework.
- iii. Facilitating mainstreaming of NEPAD principles and priorities into the national development frameworks.
- iv. Taking a leadership role in enabling countries to adopt common or harmonized policies and priorities, regulatory frameworks and standards, and to implement regional programs and projects located within their countries or at bilateral level.
- v. Making use of the window of opportunity generated by NEPAD for more beneficial engagement with development partners and managing relationships with them, through greater awareness of their interests and the design of programs or projects that will attract and motivate their participation.
- vi. Creating special funds for regional integration and for strengthening capacity for analysis of issues, program and project implementation.
- vii. Streamlining mechanisms on how to cooperate and establish synergetic working modalities with other sub-regional organizations.
- viii. Engaging the private sector and civil society more intensely to secure their participation and investment in the regional programs and programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework.
- ix. Engaging knowledge institutions such as universities and research institutions to enhance their technical and analytical capacity.

- x. Approaching the NEPAD Secretariat and the HSGIC through their regional representatives for assistance in resolving constraints to economic development.
- xi. Coordination and harmonizing of NEPAD/REC programs and promoting their complementarity, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of their implementation by member states.
- xii. Establishing effective systems to harmonize, coordinate, ensure complementarity, monitor and evaluate implementation of NEPAD/REC programs by member countries and designated implementation agencies, and advise the REC leadership accordingly.
- xiii. Exchanging and sharing information between NEPAD Secretariat and RECS on the implementation of the programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework.

D. Role of the NEPAD Secretariat

The meeting acknowledged that the NEPAD Secretariat has a critical role in energizing and supporting planning and implementation of the programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework. The meeting noted and expressed expectation for the Secretariat to deliver on the following main responsibilities:

- i Coordinating preparation of implementation of better focused programs and time bound action plans for identified priority areas.
- ii Coordinating programs and projects which cut across several RECs or sub-regions.
- iii Invoking the capacity of HSGIC to deal with political impediments to program implementation.
- iv Bringing high priority programs and projects to the attention of development institutions and international development partners.
- v Mobilizing additional resources from the development partners and the private sector.
- vi Assessing progress and report to the HSGIC and AU Commission on the implementation of programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework.
- vii Managing the inter-RECs coordination and sharing of information, experience and good practices, by organizing regular coordinating meetings and developing and disseminating information toolkits for

advocacy of programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework, successes or emerging good practice.

- viii Building networks and facilitating exchange of information and experience between NEPAD Secretariat and the National and REC focal points.

E. Strengthening the Capacity of RECs and NEPAD Secretariat

The meeting agreed that the speed of implementation of programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework should be accelerated and that this is hampered by the limited capacity of the principle coordinating and/or implementing institutions particularly the NEPAD Secretariat, the RECs and national Governments. The meeting, therefore, urged the institutions concerned to develop clear and well elaborated capacity building programs. On the basis of such elaborated needs, the Secretariat and the HSGIC should then lead the mobilization of resources for capacity building.

F. Regional Integration Issues

The meeting noted the statement of the Chairman of the African Union Commission on the provisions of the Abuja Treaty on the integration of the Continent. The meeting agreed that the CEOs of the RECs would attend the meeting called by the AU Commission Chairman, to be held in Addis Ababa 21-23 November 2003, to deliberate, among others, on the implementation of these provisions.

G. Role of the Private Sector

The meeting acknowledged the importance of the African Private Sector and corporate friends of Africa and recognized that they have a critical role in the implementation of the programs under the NEPAD Framework and called upon NEPAD, RECs and National Governments to draw upon their capital, technical and human resources.

H. Role of Partners

The meeting acknowledged the support of the development partners in the implementation of programs under the NEPAD Framework and urged them to continue to do so.

I. Way Forward

1. The meeting decided that this seminar should be a launching of future regular meetings of the CEOs of RECs to facilitate coordination and exchange of information on implementation of programs adopted under the NEPAD Framework.

2. The RECs and the NEPAD Secretariat shall implement the agreements and undertakings made at this seminar. In this regard appropriate reports on action taken shall be produced by the parties concerned for dissemination to appropriate stakeholders. Such progress reports will be reviewed at the RECs CEOs regular meetings as referred to in paragraph 16 above.
3. The meeting endorsed the TOR for the preparation of the Medium to Long Term Strategic Framework (MLTSF) and the RECs shall participate fully in its preparation. It was agreed that any further comments should be submitted to AfDB by end of November 2003.

J. Appreciation

The meeting expressed its profound appreciation to President Olusegun Obasanjo, the people of Nigeria and the ECOWAS Secretariat for their hospitality and excellent facilities put to the disposal of delegates, which ensured the success of the meeting. The meeting also expressed its gratitude to the AU Commission Chairperson for his guidance, and the AfDB for providing support in the financing and organization of the meeting.

Done at Abuja, this 30th Day of October 2003