

Workshop takes critical decisions on capacity building

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The Nepad Secretariat in collaboration with the African Development Bank, recently held a two day workshop in Abuja, Nigeria, to address issues of:

- Capacity building of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)
- Identification of infrastructure projects that are ready to be accelerated for implementation
- Institutional Coordination.

This workshop brought together all Regional Economic Communities to take a further look at their role in the implementation of Nepad, as was done at an REC seminar held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2003.

In his opening remarks President Olusegun Obasanjo said: "... those of you that attended the last Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) meeting in Algiers would recall my undertaking to convene this workshop, in order to bring together the relevant stakeholders, particularly the AU Commission, the Nepad Steering Committee, RECs, African Development Bank (ABD) and other development partners.

"As a matter of fact, this workshop avails us of another opportunity to respond in a more concrete way to the concerns expressed even much earlier, indeed at the 9th HSGIC Summit in Kigali, regarding capacity constraints that have continued to impede the effectiveness of RECs, as promoters of sub-regional Nepad projects..."

After two days of intensive brainstorming on mechanisms for capacity building of RECs and for accelerating implementation of Nepad STAP infrastructural projects the workshop agreed on the following critical interventions.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The capacity of RECs and other Nepad implementation agencies, both on a short term and long term basis needs to be dramatically increased for accelerating effective implementation of Nepad Secretariat and member states. Increased capacity needs to be supported by political will to implement the reform measures in order to ensure compliance with decisions reached at the regional and continental level.

Actions agreed to:

- i) The Nepad Secretariat and African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) should expedite finalization of the Terms of Reference for the Capacity Building Needs Assessment Study that the ACBF is to undertake on behalf of the Secretariat.
- ii) The Nepad Secretariat and ACBF should launch no later than April 2005, the capacity needs assessment study. The assessment should differentiate short term needs to accelerate and implement the priority Nepad projects from medium to long term needs to implement Nepad Infrastructure Programmes. The assessment should differentiate between overall capacity needs and specific project-by-project needs for the priority projects. The assessment should be completed within three months of launching the exercise.
- iii) Within the framework of the capacity needs assessment study, the RECs in collaboration with ACBF should, among other things, assess their capacity needs in terms of:
 - Policy harmonisation and facilitation to ensure implementation of regional agreements/treaties;
 - Project preparation, development, and implementation for both facilitation and capital investment projects;
- iv) Within the framework of the capacity-needs assessment study, the RECs, in collaboration with ACBF should design capacity building programmes and initiatives, cost them, and package them into project/programme proposals to be submitted to development partners for funding. The proposed programmes should also draw on the use of African capacity in the diaspora.
- v) The Nepad Secretariat and the ADB should assist the RECs in mobilizing funds for the capacity building programmes.

CO-ORDINATION FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The creation of a co-ordination framework is a critical necessity. The co-ordination framework must assign the rules, responsibilities and functions for the respective parties (African Union commission, Nepad HSGIC/Steering Committee/Secretariat, RECs, Members States, implementing Agencies) and clearly define broad coordination principles, mechanisms/platforms and lines of communication among parties. The RECs with coordination and assistance provided by the Nepad Secretariat and the ADB should initiate definition of this coordination framework.

Focal points in the respective RECs, member states and the Nepad Secretariat were crucial, so as to enhance both co-ordination and communication.

The framework will take into account the overlapping responsibilities of the Nepad Secretariat, RECs and member states. It will also devise mechanisms to avoid both duplication of effort and to ensure clarity on the lead agency for each project. Where the projects cut across the RECs, the workshop recommended that leadership of co-ordination needs to be resolved by the affected RECs.

Actions agreed to:

- i) The Nepad Secretariat should convene a meeting of the RECs within a period of three months to agree on the basis principles of a formal coordination framework that defines clearly the coordination mechanism that shall be adopted to facilitate smooth and factor implantation of the Nepad infrastructure programme.
- ii) As a first step towards the above proposed meeting, RECs should each create an internal Task Force or hold an internal workshop to brainstorm and make some basic recommendations on the coordination principles, mechanisms/platforms, lines of communication, roles and responsibilities that should be adopted for member country-REC coordination, Intra-REC Coordination; Inter-REC Coordination, REC-Implementating Agencies and REC Nepad Secretariat Coordination. The recommendations should be shared with the Nepad Secretariat, which shall in turn, with support from the ADB, consolidate the recommendations into a base document for the Coordination meeting. It is envisaged that the RECs shall inform their recommendation from existing formal and/or informal coordination initiatives they are already utilizing. The RECs should submit their recommendations within two months of the Abuja Meeting.
- iii) The Nepad Secretariat will convene meetings of all RECs to review implementation of Nepad projects at least once a year, The first meeting will be in June 2005.
- iv) RECs should plan to acquire video conferencing facilities, where they do not already exist, with the view to facilitate and enhance interaction among themselves, with development partners and with the Nepad Secretariat. RECs should submit requests for financial assistance for acquisition of these facilities to the various development partners. A consolidated proposal could be coordinated by the Nepad Secretariat and submitted for co-financing by a number of development partners, if necessary.

FRAMEWORK FOR MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES

The Nepad Secretariat and the ADB together with the RECs shall develop a coherent framework and action plan for the mobilization of required funding resources for each REC. This framework would seek to pool resources and channel them appropriately to the RECs. This will assist in ensuring a coordinated approach to development partners and avoid duplication of efforts. The workshop called upon the development partners to support the Project Preparation Facility at the ADB and this facility to include facilitation projects.

The RECs support the idea of raising domestic resources such as pension funds and other domestic resources for funding Nepad infrastructure projects.

- i) The Secretariat with support from the African Development Bank, the World Bank, Development Bank of Southern Africa and European Union shall convene by end of June 2005 a donor's meeting to review each of the priority projects retained by the Abuja meeting and a) agree on concrete steps to move each project forward, and b) make indicative pledges for financing and co-financing of each project.
- ii) In preparation for the above meeting, RECs shall provide detailed project briefs of each project, indicating the financial and technical assistance requirements.

INFORMATION SHARING AND MONITORING

The sharing of information should be between RECs with the Nepad Secretariat and AU Commission, RECs with member countries, as well as with Africa's development partners both continentally and internationally.

Actions agreed to:

- i) Each REC shall establish a data base of its projects and keep it up to date. Capacity building plans of RECs must include the establishment of these databases.
- ii) That the Nepad Secretariat shall establish a continental database of projects and that will be linked to the database developed by the RECs. Capacity building plans of the Nepad Secretariat must include the establishment of this database.
- iii) Nepad Secretariat and development partners will assist RECs in establishing the latter's databases.

Noting that the UN will be conducting a review of progress made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals this year, the following was discussed and agreed by participants at the workshop.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs):

- i) Each REC shall coordinate and work with its member states in preparation of the MDG Report for its region.
- ii) The RECs review must include an assessment of current funding by member states and additional external funding required for achieving the MDGs. These reports shall be submitted to AU/Nepad for consolidation of the African position on MDGs. The Secretariat will consult and coordinate with the RECs and AU Commission to agree on schedule for the various stages for the preparation and submission of the RECs inputs to the AU MDG Report.

The workshop finalized with each REC confirming its Nepad STAP priority projects in each specific sub-region.