

Communiqué Issued at the end of the 5th Meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum, London 4-5 October 2005

The 5th meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum was held on 4-5 October 2005 in London. It was co-chaired by the Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, UK Secretary of State for International Development and, on behalf of Nigeria as Presidency of the AU, by Ambassador Tunji Olagunju, Chair of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Steering Committee and Finance Minister Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, as well as NEPAD Chief Executive Professor Firmino Mucavele. Dr M Mkwesalamba, Commission for Economic Affairs, AU, delivered a statement on behalf of the African Union.

Members of the Forum discussed how the Africa Partnership Forum can help address the great challenges facing Africa. Members welcomed the unprecedented attention that Africa had received during 2005, including at the EU Council in May, the G8 Summit in Gleneagles and the UN Millennium Review Summit. The leadership role that Africa has taken provides an historic opportunity. Commitments have been made by Africa and by its development partners. The Forum agreed that the focus now must be on implementation and that we would be judged on results.

In addressing the Forum, the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, underlined his commitment, both personally and as President of the G8 and the EU, to ensure that promises were honoured. The Prime Minister said this must be part of a continuing process, emphasising the need for a comprehensive approach. He said we had to get a successful outcome on trade at the WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong in December, and expressed his determination to do so. He described the Forum's work as of enormous importance for the future. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, also addressed the Forum. He stressed the importance of scaling up efforts to improve access to education and health, and of frontloading investment in development.

Role of APF

Members agreed that the APF is a unique forum where the members work together as equals. Its broad membership and remit allow it to monitor and advance implementation of commitments affecting Africa's development. It is a key forum for discussion at a senior political level of policy and priorities and, although it is not an implementation or funding body, its value lies in facilitating and catalysing action by others. The APF has a particularly important role in ensuring progress on cross-border, regional and continental priorities and mechanisms. Members agreed on the importance of building capacity for delivery at the regional level. The Forum agreed revised Terms of Reference for the APF, reflecting decisions made at this meeting.

Joint Action Plan

The AU/NEPAD introduced the African Action Plan, a product of wide consultations involving Ministers of Finance, Regional Economic Communities and experts. The UK on behalf of the development partners introduced a second draft paper seeking to reflect agreed priorities and actions to be taken for the development of Africa.

The Forum agreed that there should be one Joint Action Plan bringing together the commitments that Africa and its development partners have both made. This will assist

the Forum in its role in recording, monitoring and reporting on delivery of financing and policy commitments, identifying issues and difficulties and agreeing the way forward. The Plan will be focused on policies and outcomes and should have clear, time-bound benchmarks against which progress can be measured and monitored. There will be an annual report, measuring progress against some or all elements of the Plan, beginning in October 2006. To ensure meaningful value added, the Forum will focus each year on identified key priority areas.

The OECD's presentation on financing prospects underlined that, if commitments are met, there will be an additional US\$25 billion a year in aid for Africa available by 2010. These additional resources underlined the need for improvements to aid effectiveness, including implementation by development partners of the Paris Declaration commitments.

Support Unit

The Forum agreed that a small Support Unit should be established to prepare Forum meetings. It will work closely with AU/NEPAD Secretariat using joint task teams to support the APF. It will report to the APF through the Co-Chairs and will not duplicate the role of other institutions. The Forum thanked the Secretary General of the OECD for his offer to host the Support Unit at the OECD. The Support Unit will be fully funded by voluntary contributions (including contributions in-kind) for an initial period of 3 years within a fixed budget ceiling; several delegations expressed their willingness to contribute.

Africa Peer Review Mechanism

Professor Adedeji, gave a presentation on how the APRM process is being carried out. The APRM is NEPAD's centrepiece for fostering good governance in African countries. Representatives of Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal, discussed their practical experience of the process. The Forum recognised the APRM mechanism as a very significant development that will enhance governance.

Next Steps

The Forum agreed that on a temporary basis, a task team, comprising 4 representatives each from Africa and its development partners i.e. the APF co-chairs for 2005 and 2006 (UK, Nigeria, Netherlands, Norway, AU/NEPAD, Russia and another African country to be decided) and others who wish to contribute, should be given responsibility for finalising the draft of the Joint Action Plan, agreeing the terms of reference for the Support Unit and getting the Support Unit established. They should also suggest priorities and future challenges for the April meeting. A first draft of the Joint Action Plan will be circulated to members of the APF for comment by early December 2005 and formally approved at the APF in April 2006. The Task Team will seek agreement to their recommendations electronically in advance of the next Forum meeting.

The next meeting of the APF will take place in April 2006 in Africa. Russia, as G8 Presidency, will host the APF in October 2006.