



**ADVOCACY AND
COMMUNICATION CLUSTER
(REGIONAL COORDINATION
MECHANISM)**

Regional Dialogue on NEPAD with Senior African Media Personnel

Aide Memoire

I. Background and justification

As the vision of the African Union (AU), NEPAD provides a holistic and integrated strategic framework for addressing Africa's development challenges. Its primary objectives are eradicating poverty, placing African countries individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development, halting the subjugation of Africa in the global economy, and accelerating the empowerment of women.

Two of the cardinal pillars of NEPAD are African **ownership** and “**deep participation by all sectors of society**”. The second principle feeds on the first: participation depends on “ownership” which is predicated upon a clear understanding of the whole NEPAD initiative – its goals, priorities, vision and mission. Over the past five years, NEPAD programmes and priorities have been implemented in many respects. African leaders are managing conflicts, championing democracy, embracing human rights, adopting sound macro-economic policies and increasing space for civil society engagement. Also, many African countries, twenty-seven countries so far, have acceded to the APRM, although only three have completed all of the phases. Overall, NEPAD is fast becoming a true movement for socio-economic renewal in Africa.

Yet, there are clear indications that a large proportion of the African population still lacks clarity and understanding of NEPAD. Furthermore, there is little awareness of the connection of many initiatives in African countries with the NEPAD.

In many African countries, there is little reporting and even much less advocacy on NEPAD, its priorities and implementation. This has a direct impact on the goodwill and understanding that the programme needs and requires for its popularisation and sustainability. There have been several suppositions as to why the media appears lukewarm about NEPAD, ranging from sheer apathy to a lack of understanding of NEPAD itself. The Brainstorming session on the Regional Media Dialogue held 9 October 2007 identified some of the general challenges faced by African media, which could explain the overall absence of NEPAD in media. These include: lack of physical resources and specialized reporters on Africa, low level of local contracting as governments and RECs tend to prefer foreign media, problems of understanding key and technical words and NEPAD issues, and access to free information.

To address this, the Advocacy and Communications Cluster decided to have a pilot regional dialogue between senior African media personnel, senior officials of the NEPAD Secretariat and the African Union Commission to, among others, discuss and come to a consensus on critical issues, including the following:

- Reporting NEPAD: Challenges and Constraints faced by Journalists (led by a media personality)
- Understanding the NEPAD project: its priorities and programmes
- How to measure and report progress made by NEPAD.
- Challenges and prospects of NEPAD implementation.
- Bridging the information gaps between government and citizens
- Identifying a methodology to assist people who have a special interest in African affairs.

- Creating an environment for accountability, responsibility and integrity
- Understanding the informational needs of the public in relation to NEPAD and how to target it
- Broad development agenda of NEPAD and how to feature “development stories”.

Some funding has been secured from UNDP for this pilot project. Additional funding will be mobilized from other sources, including ECA. The experiences garnered during the dialogue will inform similar larger sub-regional dialogues which will be organized in all five subregions.

II. Objective of the regional dialogue

The overall objective of the dialogue is to increase understanding of and support for NEPAD as a development framework through wider and deeper journalistic coverage. The regional dialogue will aim to achieve this by creating opportunities for direct contact and interface with senior officials and decision makers from NEPAD Secretariat and the African Union Commission. The dialogue will create the necessary space for frank and open discussions targeted at clarifying NEPAD and for arriving at specific steps for effectively promoting it at the regional, subregional and national levels.

III. Expected outcomes

- Formation of stronger linkages between journalists across Africa and senior officials of NEPAD Secretariat and African Union Commission.
- Journalists armed with a deeper knowledge of NEPAD, its processes, priorities and programmes as well as progress made since inception.
- Greater media coverage that reflects diversity of information, different point of views and perspectives of the continent
- Greater leadership by media to take up responsibility of communicating for advancing development
- Better designed editorial policies that ensure adherence to professional standards

IV. Dates, Venue and Accommodation

The dialogue is scheduled to take place on 19 and 20 February 2009 in South Africa.

V. Organizers

The regional dialogue is an initiative of the Advocacy and Communication Cluster of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism in support of NEPAD, in collaboration with the NEPAD Secretariat and the AU Commission. This project will be led by ECA on behalf of the cluster.

VI. Contact names and Addresses

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