

*Check against delivery*

**STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA, THABO MBEKI, AT THE OPENING OF THE NEPAD STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE: SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE, JOHANNESBURG, 22 OCTOBER 2004.**

Your Excellency, President Obasanjo, President of the Republic of Nigeria and Chairperson of the African Union and the NEPAD Implementation Committee,

Your Excellency, President Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal and Vice-Chairperson of the Implementation Committee,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome to South Africa and welcome to this NEPAD Multi-Stakeholders Dialogue. I hope this dialogue will help all of us to play our part and help accelerate the implementation of all NEPAD programmes.

- As we all know, the African continent is currently engaged in a deep and fundamental renewal process. The over-arching objective of this process is to break the vicious cycle of political instability, poverty, and underdevelopment, as well as Africa's weak capacity to defend and advance her interests in the global arena.
- In this regard, the key building blocks of this renaissance strategy are increased political unity and concerted action through the African Union, and accelerated socio-economic transformation through the AU programme, The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).
- The establishment of the AU through the Constitutive Act, with its profound vision and progressive principles, has generated high expectations for rapid political, social and economic progress. It was therefore important that this profound vision and progressive principles contained in the Constitutive Act, were complemented by a holistic, comprehensive and integrated strategic policy framework and programme of action on development. This is what NEPAD does. The Constitutive Act sets out the core values and principles that are necessary if our continent is to achieve democracy and economic development, while NEPAD seeks to implement these values and principles in a concrete manner.
- Many factors have an impact on the possibility for development in Africa. Some of these factors that are important for development are peace, security and stability. Accordingly, the leadership of the African continent saw the importance of breaking the vicious cycle of

wars, conflict and instability which contributes to a very large degree, to the deep levels of poverty and underdevelopment.

- In this regard, the AU, is paying particular attention to the important matters of peace and security. Already, as we know, the Peace and Security Council has been established and has started functioning.
- Further, the establishment of the Pan African Parliament ensures that the public representatives of our countries have an opportunity to engage, in a structured way, among others, with the challenges of NEPAD.
- Indeed, in their sitting recently our continent's public representatives deliberated on the NEPAD challenges and the role they would play as African parliamentarians.
- Clearly, through these parliamentarians, we would be able to reach the mass of our people, as these public representatives report back to their communities about the many issues that they are discussing, including NEPAD, and engaging their constituencies. This would ensure that the mass of our people have the opportunity to understand NEPAD and therefore be able to make whatever contribution to the success of NEPAD.
- The issues of democracy, good political, economic and corporate governance, and regional integration are necessary conditions for development. These necessary conditions, coupled with other NEPAD priorities such as infrastructure development; banking and financial standards; agriculture and market access are creating positive conditions conducive for better investment, reducing business costs and increasing Africa's competitiveness in the world economy.
- In addition, the AU adopted NEPAD with an express understanding that this is new partnership for the development of Africa, which is owned, managed and driven by Africans, has a huge responsibility to end the centuries of poverty and underdevelopment brought about by the brutal system of slavery, colonial conquest of Africans and their lands, exploitation of African resources and marginalisation of African people.
- Accordingly, it is also very important that we assess the level of participation by Africans in the programmes of NEPAD, particularly the involvement of the different sectors of our African people – the women, youth, businesspeople, workers, intelligentsia and others, as well as the many Africans that are now in the Diaspora.

It is also important that we should use this Dialogue to look at the overall progress that we have made with regard to the achievements of the various programmes of NEPAD.

Although NEPAD's programmes are work-in-progress, there are many areas where we have made a lot of progress and I am sure these would be discussed during this Dialogue. For us to move forward, we need to examine the ground that we have covered so as to build on the progress that we have made.

- We should also critically examine the areas where we have not made the required progress and offer suggestions as to how we can make improvements. One of these areas is the lack of capacity at regional levels such that even when we have mobilised the necessary resources, we are held back by the fact that we cannot translate some of the good and visionary ideas into concrete implementable programmes.
- I think this multi-stakeholder dialogue should assist in working solutions for us to draw on the available human resource base of the partners that are represented in this meeting.  
Regional integration is very important because as we all know, African economies are generally small, weak and fragmented and the majority of countries have relatively small populations. While there has been some progress made in achieving regional integration in Africa, there are still challenges that remain and they need to be addressed urgently.
- We need to Strengthen Regional Economic Communities (RECs) including the rationalization of RECs and the involvement of the private sector and civil society.  
We also need to improve macroeconomic frameworks for development and deeper integration.
- We have to improve regional trade by, among others, eliminating barriers to intra-regional trade.
- And we should accelerate physical integration through infrastructure development.
- There is a need to clarify the relationship between the RECs and the African Union, particularly as they relate to mandates.  
Clearly, the private sector has a key role to play in the future development of the continent. We need increased participation by the private sector in the NEPAD programmes such as infrastructure development, the diversification of production and in the drive to add value to products.  
In this regard, public-private partnerships are essential if NEPAD is to succeed.
- I am confident that by systematically working together – government, business, civil society – we can as Africans, begin to realise the goals of NEPAD. Further, we need to strengthen South-South partnerships. We also need to ensure enduring partnership with the developed countries.
- Your Excellencies, distinguished guest, I am confident that we are on the right path, because if we look at the recent history of the continent, at least since the beginning of the 1990's, democracy and democratic processes have been on the increase. There is no doubt that the African people and leaders are committed to stay this course because many of us fought against colonialism and apartheid so as to bring democracy to our countries.
- Clearly, through the democratic processes on the continent, the work that the AU is doing through the Pan African Parliament, the Peace

and Security Council, NEPAD and other processes, I think, we can say that, despite the occasional setbacks, the renaissance of our continent is on course.

Once again, on behalf of the government and people of South Africa, you are welcome to South Africa.

I thank you.