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Commission-wide Symposium on

ECA's Support to AU and its NEPAD Programme

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A CONCEPT NOTE

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 accelerated the need for African countries to develop a policy framework to guide fundamental continent-wide socioeconomic development and take ownership of and responsibility for their own development. This led to the launch, in 2001, of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)—a vision of the African Union (AU) designed to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment in Africa, while uplifting the lives of African people, reducing their marginalization and increasing their role in the global community.

However, five years after it was launched, NEPAD is still not well known and many of its objectives have not been fulfilled, making it difficult for many African countries to attain the MDGs by 2015. Hence, the central challenge is how to make NEPAD fulfil its promise; that is, how to successfully achieve its objectives at the regional, subregional and national levels. This is the key challenge facing African Union, the regional economic communities, member states and development institutions such as ECA.

In 2002, the UN General Assembly through resolution 57/7 of 4 November charged the UN to adopt NEPAD as the framework for its support to Africa's development. In this context, ECA was given the responsibility of coordinating UN System-wide support to the implementation of NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels based on ECOSOC Resolution 1998/46 and General Assembly resolutions 57/2 of 16 September and 57/7 of 4 November 2002. Since 2002, ECA's mandate as the coordinator of UN agencies and organizations working in Africa in support of NEPAD has been reaffirmed by various documents and resolutions.¹ Accordingly, ECA has gone beyond its prominent role in the conceptualization of NEPAD, in promoting intra-

¹ These include the reports from various reviews of the effectiveness of the UN system-wide support to the implementation of NEPAD, including the Second Report of the Secretary-General's Advisory Panel on International Support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (2006); "Further Measures to Strengthen United Nations System support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development" (2005), the report of the Joint Inspection Unit; ECA's "Assessment of UN System Support to NEPAD: Rethinking the Collective Approach" (2004); Report of the Sixth Regional Consultation Meeting (2004) and S-G's report on "Enhancing the Role of the Subregional Offices of the Economic Commission for Africa" (2006)

UN cooperation in support of NEPAD and the cooperation between the UN and African continental organizations to providing strong and tangible support to the implementation of NEPAD. ECA has also supported NEPAD implementing organs at the subregional and national levels, the NEPAD Secretariat and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Furthermore, the Commission has provided technical support in specific areas of NEPAD, conducted studies and organized meetings and seminars that support the implementation of NEPAD, in addition to promoting and advocating for NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels.

ECA's leadership role in strengthening intra-UN coordination in support of NEPAD and in managing the relationship between the UN and African continental organizations was reaffirmed during the 7th and 8th Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM) in November 2006 and November 2007 respectively. Indeed, during these meetings, ECA's role was redefined from that of a convener of RCMs to a strategic coordinator of UN support to AU and NEPAD. This strategic coordination role requires ECA to provide, through its NEPAD Support Section, secretariat support to the 9 UN Clusters that support NEPAD as well as monitor processes, outputs and resources. Furthermore, ECA's role was expanded to include coordination of the relationship with AU as well as coordination and support to AU/NEPAD at the subregional level and the RECs through the SROs.² The creation of two new clusters of the RCM—Peace and Security and Industry, Trade and Market Access—will further increase the demand on ECA's resources as well as ECA's role as the coordinator of the UN Ten-year Capacity Building Programme for the African Union.

This expanded responsibility in support of AU/NEPAD calls for quick and resolute action and a more coordinated response by ECA to upscale its efforts. It requires ECA to develop a strategic framework for accomplishing its role in support of AU and NEPAD. The fundamental argument is that for ECA to build upon the success of the 7th and 8th RCMs and effectively play its leadership role in coordinating UN system-wide support to AU and NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels, it must have a stronger, more coherent and better coordinated commission-wide effort in support of AU and NEPAD.

What this means is that the Commission needs to determine not just the resource implications of the expanded mandate but also the institutional arrangements that will enable ECA to successfully fulfil its role. The natural question that comes to mind is: how can ECA meet the challenges presented by this expanded coordination mandate and make its support to the AU and NEPAD more effective? More specifically:

1. How does each ECA division and SRO play a more determined role in the **strategic coordination of the regional consultation mechanism** and in support of the clusters?
2. How do the SROs effectively play their newly assigned role of **sub-regional coordination and integration of UN support to AU and NEPAD**?
3. How can the Commission more effectively **support the regional and subregional institutions** that support the implementation of NEPAD—the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Secretariat and the RECs?³

² The GA Resolution (A/61/L.70) of September 2007 called for the implementation of the Declaration and requests UN agencies, funds and programmes to intensify their efforts to support cooperation with the AU; enhance support to the AU Commission in the implementation of its strategic plan; intensify assistance to the AU in strengthening institutional and operational capacity of its Peace and Security Council; and cooperate with the AU in the implementation of policies for the promotion of the culture of democracy and good governance.

³ It is important to think in terms of the UN-AU Framework Agreement and the UN Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme for the African Union, the ECA-NEPAD Secretariat MOU and the Multi-year agreement between the SROs and the RECs.

4. How can we improve **commission-wide coordination** of actions and **programme alignment** in support of the AU and NEPAD in order to improve information flow, minimize wasteful duplication of efforts and maximize impact?
5. What are the programmatic and resource implications, how will the needed **resources and capacity** be mobilized and how can we best **monitor and evaluate outcomes and impact**?

To adequately respond to the above-stated questions, ECA needs to develop a commission-wide understanding of how best to undertake the expanded task of leading the regional consultations, how to make its coordination and support efforts more effective as well as determine the implications of the expanded mandate on various divisions and arms of the commission. This will involve commission-wide input to the development of a strategic framework that takes into consideration ECA's existing partnerships in support of the implementation of NEPAD, namely the ECA-NEPAD Secretariat MoU, The UN ten-year capacity building programme for the African Union, ECA-UNDP Strategic Partnership and the ECA-AfDB Aide Memoire.

Developing the strategic framework requires brainstorming with representatives of various divisions, SROs and IDEP in a symposium to determine best ways of aligning the Commission's support to AU and NEPAD into divisional work programs as well as creating more coherence in performing AU/NEPAD-related activities.

To strengthen ECA's leadership role in coordinating UN System-wide support to AU and NEPAD, serve the AU Commission and NEPAD Secretariat better, and contribute towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Africa it is argued that a coherent strategy underpinned by a well defined and adequately resourced institutional structure is needed to better respond to the challenges facing the implementation of NEPAD. The strategic framework will, therefore, spell out clearly how the Commission's resources should be aligned with its programmatic activities to meeting its obligations in support of AU and NEPAD. In particular, the strategic plan will articulate roles, goals and activities for accomplishing ECA's role as a Strategic Partner in NEPAD.

The strategic framework will enable the Commission to ensure the most effective use of available resources by focusing them on the key priorities and provide a base from which progress can be measured and establish a mechanism for informed change when needed. Likewise, the framework will bring together everyone's best and most reasoned efforts in building a consensus on how to maximize the benefits of ECA's support to the implementation of AU vision and NEPAD priorities and to member states.

As time is of essence, it would be better to seize the opportunity that the 2008 Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development presents since all SRO Directors and OICs will be in Addis Ababa. The symposium would take place right before the Conference of Ministers on 25 March 2008.

The symposium will consider a presentation made by the NEPAD Support Section of NRID. Based on the outcome of the symposium as well as submissions received from various divisions and SROs, a strategic framework will be developed by the end of April and distributed for consideration before it is finalized.