

From African Renaissance to NEPAD . . . and back to the Renaissance

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Introduction

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been described by its architects as an attempt to address Africa's vast development challenges, through inculcating into African politics a culture of democracy, accountability, and accountable governance and put this forward as a bargaining marker in order to extract commitments from the industrialised powers by forging a new partnership with them. This partnership would involve the countries of the north underwriting new African initiatives through debt relief, increases in levels of official development assistance, infrastructural development and foreign direct investment. Since its inauguration in October 2001, and even from 1999 and the draft plans that preceded it, NEPAD has been widely debated both inside and outside Africa. Because it is a development plan that explicitly tries to make the link between development, peace, security, governance and democracy, it has been taken seriously by supporters and critics alike.

So, what prompted NEPAD? NEPAD was triggered by the post-cold war reality of power imbalances between Africa and the northern industrialised countries, coupled with Western military and political disengagement from the continent; negative perceptions of Africa; growing poverty and inequality on the continent; and the need to transform the political, economic and social landscapes in Africa.

When Thabo Mbeki assumed the mantle of president of South Africa just over three years ago in June 1999, Afro-pessimism was rife, particularly in the developed world. The view about Africa prevailing amongst Western observers, governments and even investors was that of a continent inhabited mainly by a bunch of kleptocratic regimes, typically dictatorial, and with a strong penchant for violating human rights and democracy.

The view about the West in Africa in turn was that of a club of powerful white governments which are racist towards Africa, and which viewed Africa as having lost its strategic significance after the cold war. Such governments gradually shirked in their economic and political obligations towards Africa as they saw little point in sending their troops to far-off countries in the 'Dark Continent' of which they knew little and for which they cared even less.

There was a dialogue of the deaf between these two blocs. Leaders and pundits on both sides criticised one another and talked past each other. It was as if no one really listened.

Just as Mbeki set out to become the president of redress at home by seeking to close the vast gap between 'two nations' inside South Africa – one largely white and highly developed and the other largely black and chronically underdeveloped, and a growing grey area of an emerging capitalist black middle class – so he initiated the politics of restoration globally. This he did especially with regard to African-Western relations, and North-South ties. To this end, he initiated 'a new agenda for Africa'. Such an agenda could only come about through the building of new bridges between Africa and the outside world. For Mbeki, Africa and the indus-

trialised countries had to be locked into a new and genuine partnership. Africa's states had to become more democratically accountable while northern states had to recommit themselves to participating in Africa's vast development challenges. The best way to extract commitments from both sides was to lock these opposing sides into a new pact; a new deal of sorts. Such a deal had to be based on a 'genuine' partnership that would stress mutual responsibilities and mutual commitments regarding politics, democracy and socio-economic issues that would map out Africa's future. Of course, the question arises whether in fact the politics of accountability could be introduced throughout Africa on the one hand, and whether there could be 'genuine' partnership between unequals through which Western and other industrialised powers would really be willing to take Africa seriously and view it as a strategic partner that matters, on the other.

The African renaissance

NEPAD, as the policy framework for continental renewal, was preceded by the articulation of the vision of an 'African renaissance'.¹ In fact, NEPAD came to be viewed as the vehicle through which the African renaissance would be delivered; it is a concretisation of the ideas embodied in it. NEPAD, just like the African renaissance, is based on the philosophy that Africa's social, economic and political challenges can be addressed by continental initiatives, backed up by external assistance.

As early as 1995, Mbeki forcefully put on to the continental agenda the notion of an African renaissance. In fact, while critics perceived the African renaissance as little more than an empty policy vessel articulated by an ambitious dreamer, evidence suggested that at that early stage, this call for a continental revival was indeed becoming South Africa's own foreign policy doctrine. In a speech in the US in 1995 Mbeki set out the doctrine of the African renaissance. As a doctrine, the African renaissance sought the "establishment of genuine and stable democracies in Africa, in which the system of governance will flourish because they derive their authority and legitimacy from the will of the people".² The doctrine declared that "the one-party states and the military governments will not work"; it ambitiously attempted to "resist all tyranny, oppose all attempts to deny liberty by resort to demagoguery, repulse the temptation to describe African life as the ability to live on charity, engage in the fight to secure the emancipation of the African woman".³ Just as grandly, the renaissance hoped to confront "the enormous challenge of uprooting corruption in African life".⁴ The African renaissance discourse insists on such notions as 'transparency and accountability'. It was deeply free-market oriented, committing itself to "establish the conditions" that would enable the foreign capitalist community "to take rational business decisions to make long-term investment in Africa".⁵ It encouraged the continent to continue to embark "on a process of economic reform". On this score, it supported issues such as "liberalisation of trade, the reform of financial, commodity and other markets, the functioning of multilateral institutions, development assistance and resource, transfers from the developed to the developing world".⁶

Renaissance Africa was also an attempt to promote South Africa's own selfish interests. This was clear from Mbeki's statement that "the exploitation of the continent's huge mineral resources ... can no longer be the preserve of companies from outside the continent".⁷

South Africa's diplomatic elite also has a grand sense of its leadership. For example, Vusi Mavimbela, one of Mbeki's chief advisors between 1994-99, argued that "the continent needs capable political leadership and stable societies".⁸ Such leadership, said Mavimbela, must "provide effective, national, continental and global leadership". African states must "seek to realise their African potential domestically, and ultimately project it upon the world stage".⁹

Mbeki followed suit and enjoined that "the time has come that we say enough and no more, and by acting to banish the shame, remake ourselves as the midwife of the African Renaissance".¹⁰

The consideration of the following statement should resolve any doubts about Pretoria's revisionist instincts: in 1998, Mbeki dropped a bombshell when he avowed that "[t]he call for Africa's renewal, for an African renaissance is a call to rebellion".¹¹ Mbeki said that in "the mass crusade for Africa's renewal we must rebel against the tyrants and the dictators, those who seek to corrupt our societies and steal the wealth that belongs to the people".¹²

Closing the gap between shadow and substance

Even before becoming president, Mbeki sought to go beyond mere prose and ideas in articulating the vision of an African renaissance. He attempted to give practical effect when, in May 1998, the deputy president's office directed all relevant government departments to provide detailed reports on the roles they were playing in the revival of the African continent. This exercise was seen to be laying the platform upon which South Africa would systematise its interaction – particularly its economic relations – with the rest of the continent, as well as laying the foundation for what was later to become the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan (MAP). The objective at that early stage already was to ensure the involvement of all departments in the development of Africa policy in accordance with their respective sector responsibilities. Heads of departments had to account for their realisation of this objective. Thus, for example, the department of finance made its commitment to Africa's revival in the form of setting out to design a systematised, well-articulated framework for the regulation of future inter-African economic relations. The department also set out to place the vision of an African renaissance firmly on the Lomé agenda where the republic also serves in the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Development Finance Sub-Committee.

Mbeki's office was convinced that the "real possibility exists for the emergence of a continent deserving of attention and respect accorded to the other regions of the world".¹³ The idea was to promote the notion that "the African continent has been, and still remains, the most underdeveloped continent where the worst manifestations of socio-economic dislocation and general want are played out in greater measure".¹⁴ To that extent "the people of Africa should make bold to state that the African poses the biggest, most urgent and a special development challenge to the world".¹⁵

The deputy president's office linked the future of South Africa to the region when it said that "... the success of the people of South Africa to meet their basic needs depends to a large measure on the rebirth of the Southern African region in particular and the continent in general".¹⁶ This idea served to illustrate that Pretoria's "quest for the strengthening of the Southern African socio-economic bloc as well as, the renewal of the continent is not simply born out of altruism but it is in South Africa's own national interest as well as in every interest of every people in the continent".¹⁷

According to Mbeki's office "the real *raison d'être* for the African renaissance agenda and programmes is the need to empower African people to deliver themselves from the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism and to situate themselves on the global stage as equal and respected contributors to, as well as beneficiaries of all the achievements of human civilization".¹⁸

Accordingly, Mbeki established an interministerial committee to embark on 'cabinet actions'. The cabinet adopted a 'programme of action', which included briefings with the ambassadors of other African countries. Also, its intent was to spread the African renaissance

gospel through SABC television and radio programmes, interviews with recognised African magazines and journals, and other radio and television stations. Moreover, the South African Government Communications and Information Services (GCIS) developed a 'Renaissance Africa' communications strategy.

Mbeki sought to mobilise the concept and sell it to pertinent leaders and institutions on the African continent. Both the ministry and the department of foreign affairs would, for example, identify appropriate occasions or forums for SADC leaders to be consulted on the vision and a possible SADC programme for its implementation. This would include SADC ministerial and heads of state meetings.

To illustrate the point, on 16 and 17 July 1998, Mbeki convened a meeting with his counterparts where the vision of the African renaissance was raised and discussed.¹⁹ The department of foreign affairs also consulted with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – now the African Union (AU) – on modifying the agendas of summit meetings so as to provide an opportunity for African leaders to discuss the goals of the African Renaissance.

South Africa planned to facilitate a process that would culminate in the staging of an African forum under the auspices of the OAU. The World Bank consultative process with African leaders was identified as another opportunity for advancing the idea of an African renaissance and the first meeting of this nature was held in January 1998 in Kampala, Uganda.²⁰ At the second meeting, held five months later in Senegal, an African renaissance co-ordination committee was constituted composed of Senegal, Gabon, Uganda and South Africa.

Mbeki also embarked on sports diplomacy and committed his government to making the All Africa Games scheduled for September 1999, and the Commonwealth Summit of November 1999, special events at which the African renaissance came under consideration.

Since assuming presidential office, Mbeki has stressed that domestic practices and policies should reflect a new paradigm: the incorporation of the continent's affairs into the national agenda.

Because South Africa and Botswana are the only African members of the International Development Association (IDA), South Africa sought to play a major leadership role by representing Africa's interests in IDA replenishment negotiations. In its interactions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank group and the Commonwealth, the South African Department of Finance not only catered for the interests of the republic, but also set out to ensure that policies and practices implemented were not detrimental to growth and development on the continent in general; hence, Pretoria's support for the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative.

With regard to HIPC, Pretoria recommended a reduction of the three-year period between the decision point and completion point, during which a country is expected to demonstrate economic and political adjustment. It also pushed for greater flexibility in the implementation of the HIPC initiative with the aim of significantly reducing the external debt overhang of the large number of eligible countries. For example, South Africa supported Mozambique's request for its end-1998 completion point to be brought forward to mid-1999. South Africa, as one of Mozambique's bilateral creditors, also agreed, in principle, to grant Mozambique debt relief at a level not less than that granted by the Paris Club creditors.

One of the problems for South Africa's trade policies is that the region's economies are highly incompatible. Also, South Africa is industrialised while most of the other countries are not. If these circumstances persist, then trade will continue to flow in one direction, development will become more polarised, and investment will continue to go to a few 'safe havens'.

From the African renaissance to MAP to NEPAD

By the time he became president in June 1999, Mbeki expressed the strategic need to turn the vision of the African renaissance into concrete policies and plans of action. Mbeki explicitly expressed the need to turn the 'new Agenda for African Recovery' on the basis of 'genuine partnership' into concrete plans of action. Such an agenda, policies and plans of action had to generate new forms of cooperation and articulate mutual interests between Africa and the developed world. NEPAD is a concrete manifestation of this 'new agenda'. NEPAD has its origin in this 'new Agenda for African Recovery'.

Mbeki deliberately went out to court Africa's multilateral regional and sub-regional organisations to back such a new agenda. He also recognised the need for partnerships with some key African states. For example, in July 1999, the OAU summit in Algeria, as well as the OAU extraordinary summit held in Sirte, Libya during September 1999, mandated three countries – Algeria in its capacity as chair of the OAU, South Africa in its capacity as chair of the non-aligned movement (NAM), and Nigeria in its capacity as chair of the Group-of-77 within the UN – to engage the developed countries on the 'total cancellation of Africa's external debt' and to promote efforts to close the digital divide between the continent and those industrialised countries. One year later, during the 2000 OAU summit in Togo, these three countries received a broader mandate to engage the developed north with a view to building a constructive partnership for the regeneration of the continent. Following from this, the three presidents raised the issue of a partnership with the leaders of the G8 at its summit in Japan during July 2000. The work of developing MAP then began in earnest when an extensive programme on bilateral and multilateral engagement started. A presentation on MAP was made to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in January 2001.

While these countries worked on MAP, Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade and other francophone African countries worked on the OMEGA plan, essentially an infrastructural development plan.²¹ The OMEGA plan was first presented at the Franco-Africa summit in Yaounde, Cameroon in January 2001. It was also presented at the OAU extraordinary summit in Sirte.

However, concerned that a possible clash between francophone and anglophone states would reinforce a false political divide, the MAP leaders mandated South African president Thabo Mbeki to interact with his Senegalese counterpart in order to bring about a merger between MAP and OMEGA. Just before the 2001 OAU summit in Lusaka, Zambia, Wade visited South Africa, and the two leaders and their respective teams finalised plans and successfully merged MAP and OMEGA and named the integrated plan the New African Initiative (NAI).²² The Lusaka summit endorsed NAI and mandated the leaders to fine tune the new plan into a partnership between Africa and the industrialised powers of the world.

In October 2001, African leaders met in Abuja, Nigeria and launched NEPAD.²³ NEPAD represents a vision by those African states, which signed on, together with the OAU, of repositioning Africa globally, eradicating poverty and placing the continent on the road to sustainable development. It is premised on the attainment of peace and stability through sound governance based on democratic values and principles.

As stated above the overall purpose of NEPAD is to give practical effect to the African renaissance vision. NEPAD is a comprehensive plan to foster 'genuine partnership' between Africa and the industrialised powers, based on mutual interest and benefit, shared commitment and binding agreement, under African leadership. It is premised on the idea of a pact, a trade-off: in exchange for Africa's governing elites holding each other politically and economically accountable, the industrialised powers of the world will supplement Africa's peacemak-

ing and peacekeeping efforts, and their attempts to eradicate poverty, by renewing their commitments to greater flows in official development assistance (ODA), debt relief, enhanced flows in private capital (foreign direct investment), and investing in infrastructure, information technology, human resource development – notably in education and health – and providing greater market access in the north for Africa's trading goods. In short, NEPAD is premised on the attaining of peace and stability in Africa through sound governance, based on democratic principles and values. This is to be reinforced by new commitments by northern powers in the form of financial assistance and enhancing the continent's capacities to consolidate peace and democracy. But, in proposing the new partnership, NEPAD recognises that Africa holds the key to its own development.

The logic of NEPAD is thus to make a clear link between development and stability. NEPAD singles out three prerequisites for social and economic regeneration, poverty alleviation and empowerment. These are peace and security, democracy and political governance, and economic and corporate governance. This resonates with the dictum 'no peace without development; no development without peace'.

NEPAD goes further and asserts that, of crucial importance to Africa and the rest of the world, is the establishment and protection of a political order and system of governance that is:

- legitimate and enjoys the support and loyalty of the African people;
- strong enough to advance the interests of African people;
- able to address the fundamental development interests of African people; and
- able to engage effectively with various global processes that characterise the world economy.

NEPAD acknowledges that in those regions and countries marred by armed conflict, the overwhelming priorities are to achieve peace, to disarm and demobilise combatants, and to resettle refugees. Africa's capacity to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts on the continent must be strengthened, including its ability to deploy African peacekeeping forces when necessary.

NEPAD recognises that if peace and security is to lead to sustained growth and development, it is of the utmost urgency that the capacity of the state in Africa to fulfil its responsibilities be strengthened. These responsibilities include poverty eradication and development, entrenching democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law, creating an environment conducive to private sector mobilisation, and responding appropriately to the process of globalisation.

Only if the state is equipped with the capacity to deliver can it provide an unambiguous and tangible indication that good governance offers a better alternative to the practices of the past. It is therefore vital for the industrialised powers to realise that a new partnership between themselves and African multilateral institutions on the one hand, and African states on the other, are vital to bring about peace, democracy and development in Africa.

The governing structure of NEPAD is composed of an implementation committee of heads of state and government, a steering committee and a secretariat. President Obasanjo has been elected chair of the implementation committee, and Presidents Bouteflika and Wade as his deputy chairs. The Midrand headquarters of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) was chosen as the location of the NEPAD secretariat.

NEPAD members have worked on developing action plans for five sectors:

- the peace, security, democracy and political governance initiatives;
- the economic and corporate governance initiative;
- bridging the infrastructure gap;

- ◆ the human resource development initiative, especially education and health; and
- ◆ the market access initiative.

These efforts include the establishment of political and economic good governance peer review mechanisms, those sets of norms, values and criteria by which African elites commit themselves to holding each other accountable.²⁴ Both peer review mechanisms stress the need to generate the necessary political will to keep the core values, commitments and obligations of NEPAD and other legal instruments. These mechanisms 'pledge' to empower people and institutions in order to ensure an active and independent civil society that can hold government accountable; to adhere to the principles of constitutional democracy, the rule of law and the strict separation of powers; to promote political representation; ensuring the periodic democratic renewal of leadership; to ensure impartial, transparent and credible electoral administration and oversight systems; to ensure the effective participation of women, minorities and disadvantaged groups in political and economic processes; and to combat and eradicate corruption.

For example, the draft of the political and good governance peer review mechanism²⁵ stress the importance of 'political will' to keep to core values, commitments and obligations on democracy, human rights and good governance. These initiatives also recognise the need to "empower people and institutions of civil society" so as to ensure "an active and independent civil society that can hold government accountable to the people". It stresses the need to "adhere to principles of a constitutional democracy, the rule of law and the strict separation of powers, including the protection of the independence of the judiciary". It hopes to ensure "the periodic democratic renewal of leadership, in line with the principle that leaders should be subjected to fixed terms in office". It is committed to the "freedom of expression, inclusive of a guaranteed free media".

Importantly for those who work in electoral administration, the peer review process commits those signed-up members to ensuring "impartial, transparent and credible electoral administration and oversight systems". It promotes a "dedicated, honest and efficient civil service", and wishes to "establish oversight institutions providing necessary surveillance, and to ensure transparency and accountability by all layers of government". It is also strongly in favour of the creation and strengthening of "institutional capacity to ensure the proper functioning of democratic institutions and instruments".

The economic and corporate governance peer review mechanism²⁶ for its part goes beyond just neo-liberal economic and fiscal dictates. It recognises that good political governance is a prerequisite for good economic and good corporate governance. It says the ability of the state to deliver on its promises is key. The peer review singles out a number of areas in need of institutional reform. These include: strengthening the administrative and civil service; strengthening parliamentary oversight; promoting participatory decision-making; adopting effective measures to combat corruption and embezzlement; and undertaking judicial reforms. It states that the key factors that enhance good governance of economies are transparency, accountability, an enabling environment for private sector development and growth, and institutional capacity and effectiveness.

NEPAD's proponents are pushing for SADC and ECOWAS restructuring processes to converge with NEPAD action plans. This is an attempt to influence regional integration processes such as the SADC review framework in the direction of NEPAD priorities. Such convergences will also place South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, Egypt and other NEPAD countries in an advantageous strategic position from which to manage the development of synergies between these different initiatives.

From planning to implementation

Between December 2001 and June 2002, African leaders and their delegations rushed frantically to put together action plans so as to engage with the leaders of the G8 industrialised powers. African leaders put together actions plans on infrastructural development, debt relief, market access, and capacity development. African leaders also finalised their political good governance and economic and finance good governance peer review mechanisms. The hope was that, to demonstrate seriousness on their part, the G8 would respond by showing commitment to the principles and practice of mutual responsibility and mutual accountability. In other words the G8 would make commitments in favour of debt relief, Official Development Assistance (ODA) reform, market access, and resources for capacity building and consolidation.

However, if the outcome of the June 2002 G8 Summit in Kananaskis is anything to go by, then two problems are clearly exposed: first, there is a typical gap between promise and delivery on the part of Western powers. While they make promises in terms of ODA, debt relief and market access, there is no real commitment to do so, nor is there a commitment to turn pledges into commitments. Second, there is unwillingness on the part of Western powers to subject themselves to mutual accountability. In other words, there is no support on the part of such powers to support a process through which both Africans and industrialised powers alike will have to live up to commitments made, and therefore subjected to performance reviews.

In its Africa action plan that was adopted at the Kananaskis Summit,²⁷ the G8 merely stated that it would be "looking for ways" to help Africa resolve conflicts; "offer technical and financial assistance" to sub-regional organisations for capacity development; "assist in" combating illicit weapons; assist to help combat corruption and embezzlement; "help to bridge" the digital divide and the use of technology for socio-economic and political development; "support access" for African agricultural products. Thus, G8 countries were deliberately vague on the commitments they made.²⁸ They were particularly non-committal on issues pertaining to debt cancellation, market access and infrastructural development. Indeed, the lack of concrete commitments on the part of the G8 was pronounced. There was not even talk of the important idea of a G8 peer review mechanism to ensure that it is held accountable for delivery on the promises made.

Apart from the weaknesses in the G8 Africa action plan, NEPAD faced a more serious challenge in Africa itself. Criticisms against NEPAD came in two forms. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations (CSOs) complained about the lack of consultation with that sector and that NEPAD was a 'top-down' process. This sector was also highly critical of what it saw as the 'neo-liberal' economic prescriptions embedded in NEPAD which, according to it, smacked of a self-imposed structural adjustment programme. On a more positive note, many CSO organisations came out in support of the political aspects of NEPAD, in particular the insistence on democracy, accountability, and good and democratic governance.²⁹

The second challenge came from other African governments. Just like CSOs, many such governments also complained about the lack of consultation by the NEPAD architects. Concern was also expressed that some supporters of NEPAD wished to see it as some super programme outside the confines of the AU. To be sure, many autocratic African governments were critical of NEPAD because they were visibly threatened by its strong emphasis on democratic and accountable governance.

In the end, a revised NEPAD was adopted by the AU as the 'economic programme' of the

union, and the steering committee was increased from 15 to 20 African states during the official launch of the AU in Durban, South Africa in July 2002. It was also decided that the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) will be integrated into AU structures but it remains unclear how this is to be achieved.

Challenges facing the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

While the G8 have clearly stated that their compliance will depend on the ability of the African states to keep their commitments to economic and political reform, African members committed to NEPAD have stressed the need for incentives to do so. In turn, such states have also announced that they will police themselves through the establishment of a peer review mechanism, rewarding states that uphold the norms of market or democratic policies – positive sanctions.³⁰ (African states have yet to resolve whether they should impose negative sanctions on recalcitrant states).

Proponents of the APRM suggest that the mechanism's operations be directed by a panel of between five and seven Eminent Persons. The members of the panel must be Africans who have distinguished themselves in careers that are considered relevant to the work of the APRM. In addition, members must be persons of high moral stature, with a demonstrated commitment to Pan-Africanism; that is to say a commitment to African unity, prosperity and security. In short, they must put Africa first in everything they do.

However, while the APRM holds the promise to become the most important breakthrough in African governance in history, it faces an uncertain future. First, the independence of the APRM will not automatically be guaranteed. Indeed, five to seven Eminent Persons might be too small a grouping as it would be important for NGOs and other civil society organisations to be included.

On another front, the track record for both the African countries and the G8 in fulfilling promises is poor, and this could prove to be NEPAD's greatest problem. The enforcement and compliance capacity of the mechanism is thin.³¹ Africa remains a polarised continent and is increasingly becoming divided between those in favour of good governance, and those against it. NEPAD membership remains voluntary, even though NEPAD is a programme of the AU. There is a risk that even those signed up members will resort to opting out if the governance criteria are applied too stringently. And, even in situations where members will not disengage, they could evoke the idea that there are no uniform standards of democratisation and democracy in Africa – the 'one-size-fits-all' argument. In short there are no guarantees that countries would live up to the APRM's criteria and requirements.

There are two important instruments that both the AU and NEPAD have at their disposal to incentivise and kick-start the peer review process: first, economic, social and political incentives that should be carefully crafted to ensure that each side complies with commitments;³² and second, engaging NGOs and organs of civil society. On the score of incentives, there is a crucial onus on both African states and industrialised powers to make available such incentives on the basis of rewarding good behaviour and conduct, and threatening bad behaviour with disincentives. Without incentives and inducements, governments that will come under review for the APRM will not take the process seriously, and will even disengage from the process unless they believe there is something in it for them. This is simply a reality about the power political dynamics in Africa that needs to be factored into our analyses about the peer review process.

On the front of NGOs and African civil society actors, we have already stated above that Mbeki and other NEPAD partners have committed themselves to constructive relations with

such non-state actors. There is an important window of opportunity with the nascent AU Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).³³ This is the organ entrusted with forging relationships with NGOs and civil society actors. Within the context of ECOSOC, non-state actors can play both advisory roles in terms of peer review criteria, as well as watchdog roles in terms of whether governments take the peer review processes seriously. Apart from ECOSOC's role, there are a number of key regional and continental organs that should be empowered to play a role in the peer review process. These include the Pan-African Parliament, the Peace and Security Council and the AU Commission.³⁴ This naturally presupposes that these organs should be properly set up; it is therefore in South Africa's interest as first chair of the AU to invest both resources and political energy in setting up these instruments.

The APRM also faces major funding constraints. While the architects of NEPAD and APRM state that "funding for the mechanism will come from assessed contributions from participating member states", South Africa should lead by example and make the first major contribution to this important initiative. Indeed, a lack of funding for the APRM could become another alibi that those states which are against the APRM will use to try and exterminate the initiative.

Conclusion

The paper has argued that NEPAD has its origins in the African renaissance discourse, which was in vogue between 1994 and 1999. The paper further argued that, while critics saw this call for an African renaissance as a shallow vision devoid of content, in reality it was a simple call for action. It was an appeal for African leaders to commit themselves to clean and accountable governance, democracy and to respect the basic tenets of human rights. It was a quest to reintegrate Africa back into the free market global economy.

The paper further argued that NEPAD became the plan of action of the African renaissance. NEPAD rightly accepted that development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance. Therefore, with NEPAD, those members who have signed up and are committed undertake to respect the 'new' African standards of democracy, including political pluralism, allowing for the existence of several political parties, workers' unions, and fair, open and democratic elections that are periodically organised.

The paper posits that it is not only Africans that would have to show seriousness in committing themselves to new commitments and obligations. The countries of the industrialised north would also need to respond to Africa's willingness and efforts to put in place these aspects of responsible government by opening their markets to Africa's basic trading commodities and helping to end the continent's vast debt burden of some US\$300 billion. However, it came as little surprise when many such powerful states failed to respond in a really serious way to the call for 'genuine' partnership. The problem is that, without such seriousness on the part of the industrialised powers, the chances of coming up with incentives that will form the hallmark of the APRM remains shaky. This in turn threatens the very viability of the APRM.

Just as we should appreciate that NEPAD is an extension of the African renaissance – a concretisation of it, in essence the vehicle through which the renaissance would be delivered – so the challenge of implementing NEPAD will be a long and sustained one. While NEPAD is based on a straightforward deal, a trade-off that wishes to end the dialogue of the deaf by locking both African leaders and the G8 and other industrialised powers into a partnership, realising this partnership is by no means guaranteed. There clearly is a need for a pact: that in exchange for Africa holding itself politically and economically accountable, and thereby creat-

ing conditions for the attraction of foreign capital to the continent, the industrialised powers will give Africa greater access to its markets, reduce and ideally end the massive debt burden, and guarantee greater aid flows to Africa. Such resources would help to build infrastructure and to revamp the health and education systems that the continent so badly needs. Indeed, African leaders have determined that it will require an astronomical seven percent economic growth rate per annum across the board on top of a massive US\$64 billion to help turn the continent around.

But there is a crucial point that many analysts in this country and abroad tend to conveniently miss. It is not only African states that will hold one another accountable. The northern (white) states will also make new commitments to help end deadly poverty in Africa. They too need to be held accountable. It is not only Africa that will put in place peer review criteria in which the peers (leaders) will constantly review (accountability) each other. These are just some of the questions we have to answer and come to terms with if we are to grasp NEPAD's chances of success or failure.

Let us now conclude with some questions. How will Africans hold each other accountable? Can governments really be trusted to hold each other accountable? Who will hold the north accountable? What about power politics in Africa? Will this not again bedevil this project? Can Mbeki and his NEPAD partners take most African states along with them? Will we not see that some states will inevitably form counter-NEPAD alliances, particularly those that are threatened by the governance and democracy contours of NEPAD? How do we ensure that the northern powers go beyond rhetoric and bolster commitments with real plans?

These questions should not be avoided. They suggest that the real work is only now beginning. Instead of raising unrealistic expectations, such that the industrialised powers will undergo a Damascus road experience as far as Africa is concerned, we should realise that turning the African tanker will depend largely on African commitments and partnerships amongst Africans. Maybe we should recognise that NEPAD was a bold initiative but will fail to take off for as long as the West is not committed to the African renewal. Turning the juggernaut may mean that Mbeki and his partners should rather return to promoting the political, economic and social values and norms embedded in the African renaissance, rather than punting a partnership with the outside world. Instead, the focus should be on credible partnerships with and amongst African actors, including NGOs and other civil society actors within the context of organs such as ECOSOC.

Endnotes

- 1 The African renaissance can simply be defined as a call and a push for Africa's political, economic and social renewal through the dictates of democratisation, the continent's integration into the global economy and restoring the dignity of Africans as human beings.
- 2 Thabo Mbeki, 'Africa's time has come', address to the Corporate Council on Africa's Attracting Capital to Africa Summit, Chantilly, Virginia, United States of America, 19-22 April 1995.
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- 5 Ibid.
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- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Statement by deputy president Thabo Mbeki, 'The African Renaissance', SABC Event, Gallagher Estate, 13 August 1998.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Office of the Executive Deputy President, 'Programme of Action — African Renaissance, proposed government programme for the cultural, socio-economic and political renewal of the African continent', 21 August 1998. Unpublished paper.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
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- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 See *The OMEGA Plan*, Dakar, Senegal, February 2001
- 22 See *The New African Initiative (NAI)*, a Merger of the Millennium African Recovery Program (MAP) and the OMEGA Plan, Pretoria, South Africa, July 2001.
- 23 See Organisation of African Unity (OAU), *The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*, Addis Ababa.
- 24 See the communiqué issued at the end of the second meeting of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee of the NEPAD, Abuja, 26 March 2002.
- 25 See NEPAD Secretariat, Draft document, 'NEPAD: Democracy and political governance initiative', Midrand, South Africa, February 2002.
- 26 See Economic Commission for Africa, 'Draft Codes and Standards for Economic and Corporate Governance in Africa: Summary of Key Issues and Declaration of Principles', Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 2002.
- 27 See G8-Africa Action Plan, G8 Kananaskis Summit, Canada 2002.
- 28 For a critique of the G8 Africa Action Plan, see the comments by some OECD countries even before the summit, contained in the 17 May 2002 reports of the NEPAD Steering Committee and Personal Representatives meeting, held in Maputo, Mozambique.
- 29 For the elements making up the democracy and governance dimensions of NEPAD see New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), 'Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance', June 18, 2002, cited online at www.nepad.org/Doc004.pdf, paragraphs 7-15.
- 30 For a critical perspective of the APRM, see Alex de Waal, 'African Governance', in *The Conflict, Security and Development Group Bulletin*, May-June 2002.
- 31 For a critical analysis of the APRM see Dorina Bekoe and Chris Landsberg, *NEPAD: African Initiative, New Partnership?*, Report of the International Peace Academy workshop on NEPAD, in partnership with the Missions of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa and Netherlands to the United Nations, 16 July 2002.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Discussion with Dr Musifiky Mwanasali from the Interim AU Secretariat, Johannesburg, 26 August 2002.
- 34 Also see NEPAD Secretariat, *NEPAD at Work, Summary of NEPAD Action Plans*, Midrand, South Africa, July 2002.

Notes for Contributors

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