

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Heiligendamm and Africa - an outstanding promise

On the day this edition of ANC TODAY is published, a delegation of African Heads of State and Government will meet with its G8 counterparts at the Heiligendamm, Germany Annual Summit Meeting of the G8. The African delegation will be led by the Current Chairperson of the African Union, President John Kuffuor of Ghana, and the new Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia.

This will be the eighth meeting of this kind, the first having taken place in Tokyo on the eve of the 2000 G8 Summit Meeting in Okinawa, Japan, the year before the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at the Lusaka, Zambia OAU Summit Meeting in 2001.

At the Tokyo meeting, the African leaders informed the G8 that the OAU would prepare a continental development plan, and would request the developed world to restructure its economic relations with Africa to respond to the OAU plan. Accordingly it was agreed that further interaction between African representatives and the G8 would take place during the 2001 G8 Summit Meeting in Genoa, Italy.

At the Genoa meeting, during which the African representatives presented what became the NEPAD programme, it was decided that the G8 would prepare its response, which would be considered at the next G8 Summit Meeting in 2002, and which was held in Kananaskis, Canada in 2002.

Thanks in good measure to the inclusive preparatory work done by the then Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien, the 2002 G8 Summit Meeting adopted the G8 Africa Action Plan which remains, to this day, the base G8 document that should guide the G8 in its interaction with the NEPAD process.

### The G8 Africa Action Plan

To underline the importance of the decisions taken at Kananaskis with regard to the relations between the developed countries and Africa, we would like to cite some portions of the G8 Africa Action Plan (AAP). The AAP said:

"The NEPAD provides an historic opportunity to overcome obstacles to development in Africa. Our Africa Action Plan is the G8's initial response, designed to encourage the imaginative effort that underlies the NEPAD and to lay a solid foundation for future cooperation.

"The case for action is compelling. Despite its great potential and human resources, Africa continues to face some of the world's greatest challenges. The many initiatives designed to spur Africa's development have failed to deliver sustained improvements to the lives of individual women, men and children throughout Africa...

"NEPAD recognises that the prime responsibility for Africa's future lies with Africa itself. We will continue to support African efforts to encourage public engagement in the NEPAD and we will continue to

consult with our African partners on how we can best assist their own efforts. G8 governments are committed to mobilise and energise global action, marshal resources and expertise, and provide impetus in support of the NEPAD's objectives. As G8 partners, we will undertake mutually reinforcing actions to help Africa accelerate growth and make lasting gains against poverty."

Consistent with these commitments, Africa will again serve as an important item on the agenda of the G8 Heiligendamm Summit Meeting. In this regard, in a policy statement on 24 May 2007, German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel said:

"The Summit will focus on seven themes. The seventh theme is the future of Africa.

Along with the economic and climate policy themes, this will be the main focus of the Heiligendamm Summit. We want to continue and expand our reform partnership with Africa...At the Africa Partnership Forum, held over the past few days, we have again felt how vital our commitment to our neighbouring continent is.

"We can see that Africa is on the move. Some impressive leaders and characters are at work. More and more states in Africa are becoming democratic. Numerous African states now show stable economic growth of over 5%, and the number of armed conflicts on the continent is falling. On the other hand, much remains to be done...

"I think we all realise that our own interest in a stable world order makes it vital for the African continent to achieve sustainable economic and political progress...Together with the Heads of State and Government of the G8 countries and the major emerging economies, we aim to give globalisation a human face. To this end we want to create the right conditions for greater growth and employment, and we want to find solutions to the major challenges facing humanity such as climate change and the future of Africa."

Naturally and correctly, ahead of, during and after the G8 Summit Meetings certainly since 2002, much of the public discussion in Africa and outside our continent has focused on an assessment and critique of the practical impact on Africa's challenges of the partnership with the G8 and the developed world in general. As it must, this has happened and will happen with regard to the Heiligendamm Summit Meeting.

But it may very well also be that it is time that we, as Africans, should go back to the vision we developed as we formulated and launched NEPAD. In this context we would assess what we ourselves have done to give effect to the objectives we set ourselves, a critical part of which was the strengthening of a new and dynamic partnership for development and progress within and between our own countries.

#### NEPAD founding principles

Our vision was spelt out in the base document of NEPAD, whose framework was adopted at the 2001 Lusaka OAU Summit Meeting of African Heads of State and Government, and which was finalised by the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee at its meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2001. Among other things, this founding document said:

"This New Partnership for Africa's Development is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development and, at the same time, to participate actively in the world economy and body politic. The Programme is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world.

"The poverty and backwardness of Africa stand in stark contrast to the prosperity of the developed world. The continued marginalisation of Africa from the globalisation process and the social exclusion of the vast majority of its peoples constitute a serious threat to global stability...

"We are convinced that an historic opportunity presents itself to end the scourge of underdevelopment that afflicts Africa. The resources, including capital, technology and human skills, that are required to launch a global war on poverty and underdevelopment, exist in abundance and are within our reach.

"What is required to mobilise these resources and to use them properly, is bold and imaginative leadership that is genuinely committed to a sustained human development effort and the eradication of poverty, as well as a new global partnership based on shared responsibility and mutual interest.

"Across the continent, Africans declare that we will no longer allow ourselves to be conditioned by circumstance. We will determine our own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement our efforts. There are already signs of progress and hope...

"The New Partnership for Africa's Development seeks to build on and celebrate the achievements of the past, as well as reflect on the lessons learned through painful experience, so as to establish a partnership that is both credible and capable of implementation. In doing so, the challenge is for the peoples and governments of Africa to understand that development is a process of empowerment and self-reliance. Accordingly, Africans must not be wards of benevolent guardians; rather they must be the architects of their own sustained upliftment...

"The New Partnership for Africa's Development centres on African ownership and management. Through this programme, African leaders are setting an agenda for the renewal of the continent. The agenda is based on national and regional priorities and development plans that must be prepared through participatory processes involving the people. We believe that while African leaders derive their mandates from their people, it is their role to articulate these plans and lead the processes of implementation on behalf of their people.

"The programme is a new framework of interaction with the rest of the world, including the industrialised countries and multilateral organisations. It is based on the agenda set by African peoples through

their own initiatives and of their own volition, to shape their own destiny."

Questions we must answer

Based directly on these extracts from the 2001 founding document of NEPAD, these are some of the questions we must pose to ourselves as Africans:

- \* Have we in fact succeeded to develop a common vision and a firm and shared conviction throughout Africa about the future of our Continent?
- \* What steps have we taken to determine our own destiny, ensuring that we are not wards of benevolent guardians, but architects of our sustained upliftment?
- \* What programmes have we put in place to respond to the pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place our countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development?
- \* Are these programmes, if they exist, based on national and regional priorities and development plans prepared through participatory processes involving the people?
- \* What initiatives have we taken to ensure that our Continent and peoples in fact participate actively in the world economy and body politic, to end the continuing marginalisation of Africa from a globalising world?
- \* What have we done to ensure that NEPAD actually serves as a new framework of interaction between Africa and the rest of the world, including the industrialised countries and multilateral organisations, causing the interventions of the rest of the world with regard to our Continent to complement our efforts, which are based on an agenda we have set voluntarily and at our own initiative?

As we prepared the comprehensive NEPAD programme, we had to take a hard and objective look at the global political-economy, to assess Africa's actual and evolving place within this system, at all times resisting the comfort of any delusion about a world loyal to the principle and objective of summum bonum - the greatest good.

Chastised by our life experiences, we knew that our Continent could not and would not win its rightful place within this self-centred globalising world merely by appealing to the ethical principle of human solidarity, critically important as it is, and immanent as it is in the African worldview - our Weltanschauung as expressed, for instance, in the concept of ubuntu.

Africa and the world

This meant that we had to answer the strategic question, objectively - what is Africa's place within the global political-economy, which makes it an important, major and inalienable part of the interlocking jigsaw that constitutes contemporary human society!

Responding to this question, the 2001 NEPAD founding, base document made the bold statement that - "Africa's place in the global community is defined by the fact that the continent is an indispensable resource base that has served all humanity for so many centuries."

On the face of it, this statement which asserts Africa's critical place in the global chain of development that enhances human welfare, suggests that NEPAD, strangely, sought to argue that our Continent should continue to serve as a source of the raw materials without which the manufacture of tradable goods is not possible!

However, the NEPAD founding document went on to explain what the assertion means that Africa is an indispensable resource base that has served all humanity for many centuries. It identified and disaggregated this resource base, which constitutes the objective material base for the fundamental transformation of our Continent for the benefit of the millions of our working people, as being composed of:

- \* Component I: the rich complex of mineral, oil and gas deposits, the flora and fauna, and the wide unspoiled natural habitat, which provide the basis for mining, agriculture, tourism and industrial development in Africa;
- \* Component II: the ecological lung provided by the continent's rainforests, and the minimal presence of emissions and effluents that are harmful to the environment, a global public good that benefits all humankind;
- \* Component III: the palaeontological and archaeological sites containing evidence of the origins of the earth, life and the human race, and the natural habitats containing a wide variety of flora and fauna, unique animal species and the open uninhabited spaces that are a feature of the continent; and,
- \* Component IV: the richness of Africa's culture and its contribution to the variety of the cultures of the global community.

As the NEPAD founding document said, these distinguishing features of African reality have, in the past, served to benefit societies and peoples outside our Continent, at the expense of the African masses. It argued that as opposed to all false starts in the past, the command post we must occupy to achieve the Renaissance of our Continent must enable us to take ownership of our resource base, and use it for the benefit of the African peoples.

Fundamentally, it argued for the construction of such relations among ourselves, and the restructuring of such relations with the rest of the world, as would end the alienation and expatriation of the extraordinarily rich African patrimony.

It therefore argued that the resource base it defined is the material base on which we would base our historic effort to ensure that no longer do we remain wards of benevolent guardians, dependent on aid and condescending goodwill, should be African owned.

As we regained ownership of our patrimony, so would the rest of the world be obliged to accept the reality that, objectively, inter-dependence must define its relations with our Continent, contrary to a relationship built over half-a-millennium of slavery, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, which obliged the African masses to accept that they were dependent and subservient underlings.

Picasso's creativity & Africa

Early in 2006, the Standard Bank Gallery in central Johannesburg hosted the exciting exhibition, "Picasso and Africa", at which 84 works of the outstanding artist's creations were exhibited, thanks to collaboration between the Gallery and other South African institutions with the Picasso Museum in Paris.

The only other Picasso exhibition in Africa had taken place in Dakar, Senegal, 34 years before, in 1972. On that historic occasion, the outstanding Africanist, Senegalese President Leopold Sedar Senghor, a friend of Picasso, a poet, a prominent African intellectual, a leading proponent of the theory of "negritude", paid tribute to Pablo Picasso by characterising him as an artist "who, like the ancient Mediterraneans and black Africans, used analogical images, form-symbols, both to express his inner vision and make it known."

During the first decade of the 20th century, as he developed as an artist, Pablo Picasso paid visits to the now famous Museum of Mankind in Paris. He described the Museum at that time as a dingy, musty place located in an equally dingy and musty neighbourhood. Nevertheless, despite this reality and an overwhelming disagreeable odour inside and outside the Museum, he felt drawn to the Museum of Mankind, which he visited a number of times. What, in fact, had caught his mind and his eye was the African sculptures and masks displayed in the Museum.

In this context, the "Wikipedia" website says: "During this time the French empire was expanding into Africa, and African artifacts were being brought back to Paris museums. The press was abuzz with exaggerated stories of cannibalism and exotic tales about the African kingdom of Dahomey (Benin). Also talked about was the mistreatment of Africans in the Belgian Congo with Joseph Conrad's popular book Heart of Darkness.

It was natural therefore in this climate of African interest that Picasso would look towards African artifacts as inspiration for some of his work."

Whether Picasso's interest in the indigenous African art displayed at the Museum of Mankind was "natural" or not we do not know. What we know is that after his exposure to this cultural treasure, Picasso spoke unashamedly of how this African art had turned him into the unique artist he became.

Among other things he said: "I have felt my strongest artistic emotions when suddenly confronted with the sublime beauty of sculptures executed by the anonymous artists of Africa...These works of a religious, passionate, and rigorously logical art are the most powerful and most beautiful things the human imagination has ever produced..."

Component IV of the founding NEPAD document refers to "the richness of Africa's culture and its contribution to the variety of the cultures of the global community".

Painters seminal to the evolution of the graphic arts, such as Picasso and Matisse, drew on this culture to achieve what Leopold Senghor described as "analogical images, form-symbols, both to express (their) inner vision and make it known."

The challenge of leadership

As happened in Europe from the 18th century onwards, with regard to the relationship between the Egyptian and Greek civilisations, in time, Picasso's originality became disconnected from its African inspiration, enabling Picasso's European creativity to claim complete European inspirational domicile by denying its organic connection to the myriad of things that expressed indigenous African creativity as art.

In the "Appeal to the Peoples of Africa", the founding NEPAD document said: "The leaders of the continent are aware of the fact that the true genius of a people is measured by its capacity for bold and imaginative thinking, and its determination in support of its own development."

The presence of our eminent representatives at Heiligendamm must communicate the message, once again, that Africa's leaders are determined to use their bold and imaginative thinking to take the historic actions that will shape the future of our Continent in favour of the millions of African men and women who are proud to say - I am an African!

Thabo Mbeki