

## **GLOBAL PARTNERS FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES: NEPAD IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION**

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### **Abstract**

*The “New partnership for Africa’s development” (NEPAD) document is one of the most tangible outcomes of the African renaissance idea. It is a timely document that responds, among others, to the threat of economic globalisation. This essay relates to the NEPAD initiative to economic globalisation in the context of a post-welfare state era. NEPAD is akin to the new new-regionalism model which proposes to obviate the negative effects of economic globalisation. Examples are given from the NEPAD document. Some challenges facing NEPAD are discussed. The main points of critique expressed against NEPAD – especially from the side of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) – are dealt with.*

**Key Words:** Globalisation, NEPAD, Regionalism

### **Winners and Losers in the Globalisation Race**

Andrew Oswald, of Warwick University in the United Kingdom, carried out an experiment to find out how willing we are to disadvantage others, even at a cost to ourselves. In this experiment participants played an anonymous betting game on computer terminals. The money they were given to play the game – along with any winnings – was theirs to keep. As they played, the screen showed exactly how much money the other players were winning. In the end, players could secretly burn away other players’ money, but only if they burned 25 percent of their own money as well. Of the 116 study participants, all of whom played several games in anonymous groups of four, almost two-thirds chose to burn other players’ winnings. In brief, the losers, who seemed to be motivated by a kind of perverse logic and driven by envy and resentment, punished the winners. Oswald claims that this behaviour is a drive, not a cool-headed, rational choice (2002:17-18).

The September 11, Al-Qaeda suicide bombers probably knew that the Americans would find out who they were, but they were prepared to sacrifice not only the lives of innocent human beings, but also their own lives. Are the twin powers of envy and resentment a natural evolutionary legacy? Survival of the fittest and revenge of the weak? If so, what can be done to prevent a scenario of ‘losers take all’, which means that we all lose? Poverty makes peace impossible. In this regard, September 11 represents a universal symbolic turning point, one which led to a rethinking of economic and power relations (Neuland 2002). A seemingly untouchable technocratic and wealthy nation is now under threat from a handful of people. The motives of the Al-Qaeda bombers would undoubtedly include rage against poverty and global injustice.

Putting Oswald’s findings aside, the fact of the matter is that the vast difference between the rich and the very poor makes the world an unsafe place to live in. It is to the advantage of wealthy individuals and nations to take the plight of the poor seriously. At present the world operates a trade regime in which the poor nations are destined to become poorer. What seems to matter to the affluent nations, according to Mugambi (2002:87), is

that Africa always remains the loser, and then 'donations' are showered on her peoples with much fanfare in the mass media. Africa, and many other Third World countries, are the 'losers' in the globalisation race. NEPAD represents a serious effort to change this state of affairs and to bring about the 'rebirth' of Africa. NEPAD (art 50) states: " The African Renaissance project, which should allow our continent, plundered for centuries, to take its rightful place in the world, depends on the building of a strong and competitive economy as the world moves towards greater liberalisation and competition." NEPAD is sold to the world as a strictly African initiative aimed at taking its destiny into its own hands – an important and noble motivation. But is this a purely African initiative? No, say many critics, who regard the plan as just another trick played on Africa by the world economic powers (which include the US government, the US Federal Reserve, a host of international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation).

The African renaissance programme depends, to a large degree on Africa's economic revival. As for uplifting the global poor, the UN Development Programme's *Human Development Report* (1999) indicated that the gap between the wealthy and the poor within and among countries of the world is getting steadily larger, and it named inequities in the global trade system as being one of the main reasons for this. World trade promises growth but, in many instances, simply increases poverty. Put simply: there is no systematic relationship between increased economic liberalisation and increased equality. Although the prospects of Africa's economic recovery are hampered by structural obstacles inherent in the process of economic globalisation, paradoxically globalisation seems to offer the only way forward.

### **Globalisation**

The process of globalisation represents a phase in the seemingly inevitable evolutionary development of capitalism and modern technology. Although globalisation seems irreversible, its outcome is not predetermined and present-day protests against the harmful side effects of economic globalisation may steer its development in a direction that is more acceptable to poor countries. It is the long- term, harmful side effects of economic globalisation, in particular, which must be controlled if economic sustainability is to be maintained.

Economic globalisation (sometimes referred to as corporate-led globalisation), includes several key ingredients that impact adversely on poor countries:

- corporate deregulation and the unrestricted movement of capital;
- privatisation and commodification of public services and other global and community resources (e.g. bulk water and genetic resources);
- integration and conversion of national economies (including some that were largely self-reliant) to environmentally and socially harmful export-oriented production;
- promotion of hyper-growth and unrestricted exploitation of the planet's resources to fuel this growth;
- dramatically increased corporate concentration;
- undermining of national, social, health and environmental programme;
- erosion of sovereignty of democratic nation-states and local (African) communities by global corporate bureaucracies;
- global cultural homogenisation and the intensive promotion of unbridled consumerism.

## NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development focuses on African ownership and management. African leaders are using this programme to set an agenda directed to renewing the continent of Africa. This agenda is based on national and regional priorities and development plans that must be prepared through participatory processes that involve the people of Africa (NEPAD art 47). NEPAD is one link in the chain of efforts to manage the African continent. It must be considered in conjunction with the African Union (AU),<sup>1</sup> the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The mandate for NEPAD had its genesis in the OAU Extraordinary Summit held in Sirte, Lybia, during September 1999. The OAU summit held in Togo, in July 2000, mandated presidents Bouteflika of Algeria, Mbeki of South Africa and Obasanjo of Nigeria to engage the developed North with a view to developing a constructive partnership for the regeneration of the continent. On 11 July 2001, the OAU Summit of Heads of State and Government adopted NEPAD in Lusaka, as Africa's principal agenda for development (in the form of Declaration 1, XXXVII).

The expected outcomes of NEPAD<sup>2</sup> are:

- economic growth and development, and increased employment;
- reduction in poverty and inequality;
- diversification of productive activities;
- increased African economic integration

NEPAD is accused of being a sell-out of Africa to multi-national corporations, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. I would argue that this is not the case. NEPAD must be seen as a regional effort to enable the African continent to become a worthy role player on the global scene.

NEPAD's stance on the global revolution can be summarised as follows:

- While globalisation has increased the cost of Africa's ability to compete, we hold that the advantages of an effectively managed integration present the best prospects for future economic prosperity and poverty reduction (28).
- The locomotive for these major advances is the highly industrialised nations. Outside this domain, only a few countries in the developing world play a substantial role in the

<sup>1</sup> When the Organisation for African Union (OAU) was established it was more concerned about achieving liberation from colonialism than dealing with internal contradictions. Thus Lybia and many other dictators were happy participants in AOU events. Until South Africa become free. The OAU goals had been achieved and new challenges emerged which will be faced by the AU. The newly established African Union differs from the OAU not only by the absence of anti-colonial rhetoric, but also in its emphasis on Africa being governed democratically, with regular elections that should be free and fair. The Constitutive Act of the AU refers in Articles 17, 18 and 19 to the Pan-African Parliament, the Court of Justice and Financial Institutions respectively – all important symbols of a uniting continent.

While the African Union (AU) deals with political matters, NEPAD deals with collective economic issues affecting the continent (Yoh 2002:139). The AU is supportive of and complementary to NEPAD. The success of NEPAD depends on political stability, peace, democracy and good governance, the respect of human rights. The New AU will foster these values.

At the UN meeting in New York (September 2002) Amara Essy, interim president of the AU, protested that NEPAD seems to be operating parallel to the AU. This is not the case. There is a remarkable accord between all the documents released on African policies. They include NEPAD; the Constitutive Act of the AU; the protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (released 9/2/2002); the consensus statement and the way ahead of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (released 8 March 2002).

<sup>2</sup> See Background to NEPAD, [[www.au2002.gov.za/docs/background/nepad.htm](http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/background/nepad.htm)].

global economy. Many developing countries, especially in Africa, contribute passively, and mainly on the basis of their environmental and resource endowments (31).

- In part, Africa's inability to harness the process of globalisation is a result of structural impediments to growth and development in the form of resource outflows and unfavourable terms of trade. At the same time, we recognise that failures of political and economic leadership in many African countries impede the effective mobilisation and utilisation of scarce resources into productive areas of activity in order to attract and facilitate domestic and foreign investment (34).

In order to attain its goals, NEPAD places a high priority on true democracy (79), the development of capacity-building initiatives (83), and the improvement of public financial management (91). NEPAD is aware of the legacy of colonialism and its dire consequences and says as much. However, it wants to move beyond the era of colonialism and establish Africa as a self-respecting continent. To understand the NEPAD document in a post-colonial and globalised world, we have to revisit the fate of the welfare state in the West and how this impacts on Africa. One of the main consequences of globalisation is the transformation of the national industrial and welfare state into a competition state.

### *The End of the Cold War and the Demise of the Welfare State*

Liberal democracies in highly industrialised countries are themselves undergoing a process of transformation. A rather undemocratic state is emerging, a state that is the enforcer of decisions and outcomes which emerge from world markets. The industrial welfare states are experiencing a crisis, because these states have only a limited capacity to insulate their national economies from the global economy. The shift away from the general maximisation of welfare within a nation (employment, social service provision) to the promotion of enterprise, innovation and profitability in private and public sectors is likely to have devastating effects in poorer countries. The nation-state is not dead, but its role has changed. Increasingly, citizens will have to live without the kind of public services and redistributive arrangements typical of the industrial welfare state. Privatisation and the commodification of public services are part of the end of welfare as we know it (see Cerny 2000:122-123, 133). The US's African foreign policy has changed to reflect the changed role of the welfare state in the West.

### *NEPAD as Response to US African Policy*

The change in the US's African foreign policy coincides as we have just said, with the diminishing role of the welfare state. The four decades between 1950 and 1990 were a period of the 'welfare state' in the North Atlantic countries. The state was assumed to be responsible for its citizens access to basic social services such as health, housing, sanitation, water supply, public education and affordable public transport. The 'welfare' state did not evolve from altruism. Instead, it was a response to socialism. This is why the end of the cold war coincided with the end of the welfare state (Mugambi 2002:86). State welfare as the social dimension of capitalist states became less of an issue, given the proven failure of socialism in the Soviet Union. Donor aid to Africa (which can also be seen as a dimension of the welfare state) was consequently replaced by free market principles. The US's new African foreign policy, which was formulated in the Clinton era, consequently switched from donor policy to investment policy. Foreign aid will no longer come to Africa in the form of donations, but through investments by private companies.

The decision of any company to invest in Africa will be determined on economic (i.e.

profit) grounds and not on ethical ideals to eliminate poverty. Good profits are directly linked to the absence of war, political stability, the free movement of money in and out of the country invested in, the price of labour, the existence and condition of infrastructure, and the degree to which labour unions might threaten the investment company. Most of these prerequisites for direct foreign investment are directly or indirectly addressed in the NEPAD policy document. Although it would be wrong to say that NEPAD was triggered by the new US foreign policy, its formulation accommodates this new foreign policy.

### *The Demise of the Nation-State and the Advance of Regionalism*

Globalisation brings about a new understanding of space and territory as procured space.<sup>3</sup> The post-feudal and absolute state settled its territorial boundaries through dynasties and war. The nation-states of the 19<sup>th</sup> century settled their territory on the principle of 'national self-determination' and present-day 'competition' states expand the idea of territory to include 'economic and market space' (see Palan 2000:141). The concept of the nation-state was not foreign to the Middle Ages but received its structured form in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The nation-state emphasised the relationship between political authority and territoriality. Previously, 'spontaneous' self-contained (feudal) communities gradually developed into homogenised groups. The breakdown of spontaneous communities, combined with the rise of the bourgeoisie, or post-Renaissance concept of the 'individual' produced, according to Palan (2000:153), a new perception of social space as consisting of an aggregation of individuals. The isolation of a person as part of a group gave the state a privileged position as organiser of the 'people'. The nation, however, is not simply an aggregation of people who happen to reside within territorial confines - instead, it is a 'spiritual unity' (*gemeinsame Geist*), that is comprised of a common language, history; inherited tradition, shared destiny, and mutual responsibility, that links persons in pre-political ways. The nation is conceptually differentiated from the state and is based, not on domination and hierarchy, but on emotion and a sense of history (Palan 2000:154). National self-determination, however, proved non-operational until it was reinterpreted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century away from the ethnic principle to the idea that self-determination is the democratic wish of persons inhabiting a certain territory. From the 1920s onwards, the principle of 'national self-determination' came to stand for the delineation of the political process within territorial boundaries. The state progressively shed the metaphysical values associated with its territorial boundaries and became institutionally a 'political process' defining the boundaries of the mechanisms of representation. The thesis of the demise of the state narrates not the end of the state, but the demise of these sets of connections between the concepts of politics, the nation and society, all of which are central to the nation-state (Palan 2000:156-157). Governance has become linked to competitive advantage, and the link between nationalism and the 'spiritual unity' of the nation has been severed.

The significance of globalisation lies in how it undermines the nation-state theory of government and replaces it with a new concept of governance. International competitiveness has become the guide to policy. Competitive advantage must be distinguished from comparative advantage. Comparative advantage suggests that states are

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<sup>3</sup> It is not only territorial space that is affected by globalisation. Sum (2000:231-235) mentions the importance of electronic space (information superhighway) in influencing contemporary global, regional, national, through to local networks of industrial, financial, commercial and cultural interconnections.

endowed with certain natural and commercial resources and characteristics and that international trade is advantageous because it creates links between countries which possess different resource endowments (products). Comparative advantage assumes diversity. Competitive advantage implies the notion of sameness which increases the competition between states offering the same products. In principle, however, all states and territories are considered to be the equal competitors on a commercial level. Once this principle is accepted, then nationalist theories of government cannot be grounded on the notion of a spiritual unity of the people. In 'competitive' advantage talk, all countries are equal, geographical location is immaterial and the global is seen as a common, undifferentiated and shared space, *artificially* divided into national spaces. Since all countries are equal, individuals and companies simply choose their territorium of residence and business. And, conversely, states search aggressively for those corporate personalities of advantage to them. States compete with each other for corporate citizens by offering a more advantageous business environment. The state is no longer seen as the political voice of the people, but as provider of wealth (Palan 2000:158). The entire social realm is mobilised as a competitive unit. Markets determine the division of labour. The division between private and public becomes blurred in the new territorial space, a space where the principles of the internal market are decisive.

#### *Open Regionalism vs. New Regionalism:*

##### *New Regionalism as an Alternative to Globalisation*

According to De Gruchy (2002:3), the dominant development paradigm of globalisation suggests that building up the economy will lead to the development of nations, societies and people. The focus is therefore on economic growth, and the way in which globalisation can aid growth. In the process a host of other factors to do with the impact of a different economic environment on people, community life, culture, and the earth (ecological concerns) has been completely ignored and disregarded. However, economic growth and cultural and political factors need not be separated as is evident from the new regionalisation model.

The neo-classical model of globalisation represents open regionalism. Open regionalism can be regarded as polarising globalisation. Gibney defines open regionalism (quoted by Odén 1999:177) as a policy directed to the removal of trade, investment and technology barriers (with an eye on GATT disciplines), expanding subregional trading agreements, and working towards mutual, non-discriminatory access to economies elsewhere.

An alternative view of globalisation, aimed at eliminating the negative aspects of open regionalism is new regionalism. New regionalism is proposed by the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) of the United Nations University, Helsinki, Finland. WIDER accepts that regionalisation projects will take place within the framework of globalisation, but claims that such projects constitute a permanent part of the global system, rather than a temporary sequence in the globalisation process, as traditionally claimed by supporters of open regionalism (Odén 1999:162). New regionalism views globalisation as a package rather than a single policy. In this sense, new regionalism accommodates the comparative advantage model since each county makes a unique cultural contribution that cannot be 'marketed' like economic commodities. New regionalism goes beyond the free market idea, and includes the economic, the political, and the cultural. It values the ambition of creating territorial identity and regional coherence. Given its polarising effects (at both the global and national level), new regionalism sceptically views economic globalisation as an ideology. New regionalism claims that there is room for

weaker regional blocks at the periphery, and that these blocks should be regarded as permanent parts in interregional discussions and negotiations (Odén 1999:165). According to Hettne (quoted by Odén 1999:166), new regionalism is emerging in the grey area between the free trade area model (trading blocks as a 'decentralised' GATT system), on the one hand, and the fortress isolationist model, on the other. New regionalism may, in fact, provide solutions to many of Southern countries' problems. For example:

- Self-reliance has not been viable at the national level, but may be a feasible strategy at the regional level (collective self-reliance);
- Collective bargaining at a regional level may improve the economic position of Third World countries in the world economic system;
- Collective strength might make it easier to resist pressures from Northern countries;
- Certain conflicts between and within states may be more easily resolved within a regional framework.

On a more critical note, at present, new regionalism is very much in a conceptual phase and must still prove itself. It is a long-term vision and it may take quite some time for Africa, for example, to become one region that is in a position to take advantage of the benefits listed. The fact remains, however, that the various economic 'tectonic plates' are moving into regions and the challenge facing Africa is to speed up its own process of regionalisation.

#### *NEPAD and African Regionalism: More than just Economic Values*

Regionalism (large political /economic formations), as a preferred defensive competitive strategy, is the outcome of the new phase of territorial rationalisation (Palan 2000:158-159). Examples of these regional giants are NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Community), the EU (European Union), CARICOM (the Caribbean Common Market), and MERCOSUR (the Mercado Commun del Sur). It is questionable whether India, China and Africa will succeed, in future, in forming similar alliances. The most powerful trading blocks are Europe (centred around the EU); America (centred around NAFTA); and the Pacific Rim (centred around Japan). New regionalism should not, however, be confused with "continentalisation". New regionalism is more about cooperation between different regions in different states than close cooperation between traditional state-connected actors at a continental level. The situation is different in Africa, since different African states all share a similar traumatic history and a common destiny, both of which find expression in NEPAD.

Previous efforts at regional integration in Africa have been hampered by many factors, including economic failure, failure to abide by treaty obligations, conflict, and the failure to resolve political differences. There has been some progress on the road to regionalisation: Africa's commitment to a common market and dismantling of internal barriers to trade are now reflected in a number of regional and subregional agreements and institutions, including the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty, and the establishment of the Regional Economic Communities (REC's). NEPAD (art 94) recognises the need for African countries to pool their resources<sup>4</sup> in order to improve regional development and

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<sup>4</sup> Africa has identified six regional communities (RECs): The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); the Economic Union of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD); the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

effect economic integration on the continent, both of which will definitely improve Africa's international competitiveness.

The underlying tenet of the NEPAD document is the realisation of the ideal of African economic unity and regionalism. Specifically, the following articles can be mentioned:

- Article 45 claims that, across the continent, democracy is spreading, and that this trend has the backing of the African Union (AU), which has shown a new resolve in dealing with conflict and which is now prepared to censure deviation from the norm. In addition, African governments are much more resolute about regional and continental goals of economic cooperation and integration. This resolve has helped to consolidate the gains of economic turnaround and reinforces the advantages of mutual interdependence.
- Article 69 singles out increased African integration (on various levels) as one of the significant outcomes of NEPAD.
- As far as democracy and political governance are concerned, article 84 says that countries participating in the political governance initiative will dedicate their efforts towards creating and strengthening national, sub-regional and continental structures that support good governance (presently a rarity in Africa).
- According to article 95, NEPAD focuses on the provision of essential regional public goods (e.g. transport, energy, water, ICT, disease eradication, environmental preservation, and provision of regional research capacity), and the promotion of intra-African trade and investment. The focus will be on rationalising the institutional framework for economic integration by identifying common projects that are compatible with integrated country and regional development programmes, and on harmonising economic and investment policies and practices.
- Article 96 deals with NEPAD priorities of capacity building as the way to improve the effectiveness of existing regional structures and as the means of rationalising existing regional organisations. It envisages the African Development Bank playing a leading role in financing regional studies, programmes, and projects.
- As far as upgrading and developing the African infrastructure is concerned, article 99 says that the plan will focus only on sub-regional or continental infrastructures.
- Article 106 deals with the facilitation of cross-border interaction and market enlargement.
- Article 108 envisages the use of information and communication technologies as a way of facilitating the integration of Africa into the new information society, using the continent's cultural diversity as leverage.
- Article 116 deals with the management of water resources as the basis for national and regional cooperation and development.

Hettne (1999:17) identifies five world order values linked to the regional phenomenon: peace and security; development; human rights; ecological balance; and democracy. All these values feature significantly in the NEPAD policy document. NEPAD can therefore be said to be more than an economic strategy. It concerns the African spirit, the plight of Africa, African identity, and African culture.<sup>5</sup> At the core of the NEPAD process is its

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<sup>5</sup> Concerning African culture, one should note NEPAD, Article 143 which reads: *Culture is an integral part of development efforts on the continent. Consequently, it is essential to protect and effectively utilise indigenous knowledge that represents a major dimension of the continent's culture, and to share this knowledge for the benefit of humankind. The New Partnership for Africa's Development will give special attention to the protection and nurturing of indigenous knowledge, which includes tradition-based literacy, artistic and scientific works, inventions, scientific discoveries, designs, marks, names and symbols, undisclosed information and all other*



African ownership, which must be retained and strongly promoted. In order to meet the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples (see background on NEPAD). And NEPAD is more than simply an economic upliftment strategy. It concerns African identity, self-respect and accountability. Economic strategies in First World countries, and the initiatives of multinational corporations, are not linked to issues such as identity, human rights and human values, democracy, honesty and the like. The African initiative is unique in this regard and differs radically from exclusivist concerns of profit and economic greed. Instead NEPAD reflects the African approach of holism which integrates all aspects of human life.

### **Challenges Facing NEPAD**

The NEPAD plan has attracted a certain amount of criticism, for the following alleged reasons:

- The plan was conceptualised by a few individuals, without consulting the African people. NEPAD must still be sold to Africans.
- The question of leadership: Is NEPAD Mbeki's brainchild and will his leadership go unchallenged?
- Is the plan viable in the light of Africa's ethnic and linguistic diversity, lack of democracy and good governance, limited communication infrastructure and low education level?
- NEPAD is a sell-out to multinational corporations.
- Africa will not succeed in securing and maintaining the human rights and democratic ideals it envisages.

### *A Top-down, and not Bottom-up Process*

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing NEPAD is selling it to the African people, predominantly pre-occupied with basic survival efforts. The NEPAD leaders have been accused from different sides of ignoring the voice of the African people. In the context of Africa, development must not be seen as an exclusively top-down, technocratic process. It involves all possible ways and means, and these include local initiatives, and the implementation of supportive indigenous systems. Linked to the above is a conflict of leadership. South Africa and Nigeria have already been accused of dominating the process (*Sunday Times* 22 September 2002:16). Muammar Gaddafi of Lybia regards himself as one of the important leaders of NEPAD and, indeed of the African continent. NEPAD has come under attack from the major labour unions in South Africa and in Nigeria, particularly for its support of privatisation. The strongest labour movement in South Africa, under the leadership of Willie Madisha, organised a massive strike on 1 and 2 October 2003 to protest against the government's privatisation programme which its supporters say, will worsen the existing 42 percent unemployment figure.

### *The Quest for African identity and Africa's Ethnic Diversity may Impede Global Economic Efficacy*

Ethnicity is both the cultural strength and (seemingly) the economic weakness of Africa. While ethnicity is the backbone of African diversity, it is also responsible for ethnic clashes and wars. African regionalism – if successful – may help to overcome the damaging effects of ethnic diversity, by exposing different groups more effectively to each other, uniting

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*tradition-based innovations and creations resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields. The term also includes genetic resources and associated knowledge.*

them through common concerns. African ethnicity comes to the fore in ethno-science as indigenous knowledge systems, in ethno-philosophy and sage wisdom, in ethno-hermeneutics in religion, and in traditional customs. Although economic globalisation transcends nationalism, and regionalism has replaced localism, ethnicity does not stop being a very important factor in determining human identity. Ethnicity determines people's attitudes, practices and beliefs. But it may also thwart the cooperation and transethnic guardianship required by NEPAD.

*How Effective will NEPAD's Peer Review Mechanism be?*

*Example: Human Rights in Nigeria and Zimbabwe*

A Nigerian woman, Amina Lawal, was found guilty of adultery in a sharia court and now awaits execution. Her accusers plan to bury her alive until only her head remains above the ground and then stone her to death. She is the mother of Wasila and, when she was involved with Wasila's father believed that he would marry her. When confronted with Lawal's plight in parliament, president Mbeki responded that "we are obviously opposed to the stoning of people, but Lawal's sentence must be dealt with in the context of Nigeria as a deeply divided society". This incidence must be related to the Christian-Muslim divide in Nigeria. There are, however, many other practices related to African indigenous customs and beliefs that violate human rights: the burning of witches, and the raping of young girls in the conviction that it will cure Aids, are both examples.

African leaders have been tardy in their rebuke of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, despite his violent political oppression and disregard of human rights. United States legislators grilled South African Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Aziz Pahad, several times about this at their meeting in Washington (18 September 2002). When, a week later in Nigeria, Australian minister John Howard urged Mbeki and Obasanjo to expel Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth, they refused. Mugabe was cheered after his speech in August at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and received more coverage in New York in September 2002 than Mbeki did. Mugabe, during one of his many addresses invited African-Americans to "come home and get a piece of land" (*Sunday Times* 22 September 2002:16). What makes it difficult to openly criticise Mugabe for his disastrous initiatives is that the land invasion incidences, for example, represent a symbolic act of restitution: Africa must endeavour to reclaim what is its own in a post-colonial era. But those discriminated against are also Africans, although they are not black Africans. While Africans often focus on historical examples of colonialism, it should be pointed out that economic globalisation represents present-day colonialism, and is something far more threatening to Africa than white commercial farmers ever were. The general 'spirit' of capitalism can be said to be founded on the Adam Smith principle of greed; in contrast the African economic plan is imbued with profound human values. This fact can be regarded as evidence of its economic fragility and its human strength. In the Western context, "business ethics" has turned out to be little more than an oxymoron. Africa refuses to divert money from ethics. NEPAD links its economic plan to human and African values, both of which are expressed in the following: alleviation of poverty; human rights; women's rights; democracy; the integrity of the environment; African identity.

**The Role of the Church in the NEPAD Endeavour**

After September 11, 2001, no-one can deny the important link between religion and globalisation. On the African continent, and specifically in Sudan and Nigeria, religious

fundamentalism and religious differences debilitate growth and constantly thwart peace efforts. The role of churches in addressing Africa's problems of poverty, health and education has been limited to local denominational efforts which seldom alleviated African quails on a structural scale. NEPAD offers churches an ecumenical opportunity to participate in bringing about structural changes to address Africa's problems. The challenge is to motivate churches to coordinate their efforts with other stakeholders in a NEPAD spirit of cooperation. Cooperation, however, implies that politicians who took the NEPAD initiative should recognise the role churches can play and invite them to participate as partners. Churches can help to bridge the gap between NEPAD ideals and grass-root realities. Many church leaders have already expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the churches' role in the NEPAD process has been ignored. Since NEPAD includes issues such as human rights, corruption, and African identity, the churches as vehicle of values and ethics, should be recognised. Churches, however, do not have a united body that can speak and act on their behalf on the African continent and the role they can play may once again be restricted to local peace and development initiatives. Also, it should be pointed out that in South Africa churches failed to contribute meaningfully to the truth and reconciliation process and it is uncertain whether they will make a difference to economic policies.

The South African Council of Churches released *Unblurring the vision*,<sup>6</sup> a document that commended and criticised NEPAD. The document states that the church is committed to engaging with Africa's legitimate political leaders in the interests of the common good of Africa's development. The church is seen as continuing the mission of Christ at the service of humanity and the earth when it engages with NEPAD. The document expresses the conviction that NEPAD puts Africa's development firmly on the global agenda and generates a new confidence in Africa that corrects perceptions of Africa as a doomed continent. But the document also criticises NEPAD and claims that by fixing its sights on increased global integration and rapid private sector growth as the answer to overcoming poverty, NEPAD's vision is blurred. The document also points to NEPAD's failure to engage with Africa's people in transforming the continent. The document is highly critical of privatisation and NEPAD's long term strategies, since Africa needs immediate poverty eradication interventions. Meaningful debt cancellation is seen as a prerequisite for sustainable development in Africa. NEPAD is also regarded as seriously misguided in aiming for greater global integration as a means of saving Africa. The document claims that NEPAD's vision can be restored if Africa's leaders enter into a new partnership with their people.

Article 55 of NEPAD reads:

*This is why the political leaders of the continent appeal to all the peoples of Africa, in all their diversity, to become aware of the seriousness of the situation and the need to mobilise themselves in order to put an end to further marginalisation of the continent and ensure its development by bridging the gap with the developed countries.*

The South African Council of Churches' critique seems harsh when one considers the relative short period of time during which the NEPAD process was developed. The present impact of economic globalisation on Africa is perhaps overestimated. Globalisation and the trend in the international division of labour are at odds with Africa's resource-based economies. This is expressed in NEPAD, article 93:

*Most African countries are small, both in terms of population and per capita incomes. As a consequence of limited markets, they do not offer attractive returns to potential*

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<sup>6</sup> *Unblurring the vision* is available at [[tchepape@sacbc.org.za](mailto:tchepape@sacbc.org.za)].

*investors, while progress in diversifying production and exports is retarded. This limits investment in essential infrastructure that depends on economies of scale for viability.*

For this reason, not to mention a number of internal constraints, the potential for substantial, new direct investment in Africa is limited. As we have indicated, the development of African regionalism is a NEPAD priority, and one which promises more tangible hope for Africa's immediate economic future.

### Conclusion

Although economic globalisation benefits the rich and does not significantly benefit the poor, the extent of Africa's poverty and need is such that the shortest and most effective way must be found to alleviate the situation. Existing foreign investment in Africa cannot be terminated. The global economic ship will have to be reconstructed, so to speak while still at sea. Hopefully, growing worldwide protest against one-sided economic globalisation, also, increased regional protest, to which Africa can contribute, can speedup the reform process. In order to give Africa a good chance of succeeding with NEPAD, the debt relief/abolishment request from African countries must receive serious attention. At the meeting of the United Nations in New York, 16 September 2002, Mbeki and Obasanjo received support for NEPAD. Colin Powell pledged US\$5 billion to developing countries that were committed to good governance and Jean Chretien of Canada committed US\$6 billion. For many this represents too little too late, but considering given the alternatives – Africa should keep the good fighting.

It is improbable that the authors of the NEPAD document had the new regional model in mind when they were drafting it. NEPAD testifies to a genuine concern for the plight of Africa. To address this, the authors came up with a model to unify Africa as an economic and cultural region. In our opinion this is presently the best solution open to Africa, given the constraints of economic globalisation and Africa's desperate need for immediate assistance.

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