

# The African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Restoring a relationship challenged?

*Chris Landsberg\**

## **Abstract**

Africa faces a dual challenge of governance and development, with institutional and implementation crises looming large. Whereas the continent has gone through an energetic period of diplomacy during the decade 1998–2008, in which institutions and programmes like the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have been established, we have also witnessed serious problems revealing themselves. One such problem has been institutional rivalries which served to undermine the continent's political and development agendas, and one such enmity was the tension and rancour between the AU and NEPAD. The newly elected Chair of the AU Commission in Addis Ababa will have to address such serious institutional tensions and rivalries in the continent.

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\* Professor Chris Landsberg is South African National Chair: African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, the South African National Research Foundation, and Senior Associate in the School of Leadership, University of Johannesburg, with specialist interest in Africa's international diplomacy and leadership and South Africa's foreign policy. He is author of *The diplomacy of transformation: South African foreign policy and statecraft* (Macmillan, 2010).

The relationship between the AU and NEPAD has exposed competition over status, scarce financial and human resources, policy influence and petty squabbles amongst diplomats and officials. The tensions between these poorly anchored and weakly consolidated institutions and initiatives have prompted some to suggest that NEPAD needed to be fully integrated into the AU and to fall under the command and control of the AU as premier body. When the AU finally settled on the idea of 'integration' after years of prevarication and equivocation, new institutional and human resource capacity building challenges began showing themselves. This was not all, however. A political leadership vacuum was added to the series of problems which bedevilled the continent, and African pivotal states like South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria and others, who were all instrumental in crafting the continent's new, post-Cold War order, failed to demonstrate the necessary agency and leadership.

While there is no doubting that NEPAD is a programme of the AU, its role should be, amongst others, to bolster technical and operational expertise, and support the AU and its processes, and become instrumental in facilitating, conceptualising, and even implementing policies. Crucially, NEPAD could and should provide technical backstopping for the AU and its organs, and become directly involved in promoting capacity building for the AU and regional economic communities (RECs). It has a vital role to play in ensuring that new processes of monitoring and evaluation are introduced within the context of African inter-state politics and diplomacy, and also in helping to ensure that programmes of the AU are implemented and African states and international partners meet their obligations towards the AU. NEPAD's niche with regard to resource mobilisation should be bolstered. The AU for its part needs to urgently address its very serious institutional capacity constraints, and to focus squarely on the need to restore Africa's international agency and leadership.

## **Introduction**

Now that the bitter and tense battle between former AU Commission Chair, Dr Jean Ping, and South African Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma is over, the focus may shift to the issue of the continent's institutions that needs to be addressed. It is likely to dawn on the new AU Commission Chair, Dr Dlamini-Zuma, and

her team that the African challenge is essentially a two-pronged challenge of governance and development. Pertaining to the governance *problematique*, Africa has long struggled with the issue of establishing and consolidating strong and effective institutions as states try to bring about a rules-based continental order (Landsberg 2012:180). When borrowing from institutional theory, for example, 'norms, rules and values' are important in regulating behaviour and conduct of political actors, and institutionalism discourse teaches us that the institutional environment of a policy can strongly influence the formal structural performance in an environment (Heywood 2000:93). Organisations can typically gain legitimacy if actors take issues of policy planning, policy design and policy implementation seriously. In short, institutionalism studies macro-organisational phenomena, something that Africa's decision-makers, including those responsible for managing inter-state institutions, need to appreciate more.

The period 1999 to 2003 was of key importance for inter-state African relations, as we witnessed African leaders engaging in painstaking diplomacy to articulate a new continental order that would help the continent adapt to the new and fluid post-Cold War realities. Continental leaders crafted a set of initiatives and programmes, including a development programme in the form of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), established in 2001. Tim Murithi (2005:143) has interpreted NEPAD in institutional terms, arguing that 'NEPAD is an effort to create institutions and mechanisms that will work to achieve Africa's development objectives'.

Just months after NEPAD's establishment, we witnessed an even more momentous occasion when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was replaced in July 2002 by a new continental organisation, the AU, tasked with putting in place a continental structure that through co-operation would address challenges to the peace and security, governance, and development of the continent (Landsberg 2008:208; also see AU, 2004a). NEPAD was a modernisation plan that sought to bring about faster economic development in Africa on the basis of accelerated growth, and an emphasis on developmental features such as education and skills enhancement, infrastructure development, health, aid, trade and market access. It looked to forge a strategic partnership with the outside world, including industrialised and emerging powers (Landsberg 2008:209).

The rationale behind NEPAD was 'to eradicate poverty and to place our countries, individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development' and ensure that Africa would 'participate actively in the world economy and body politic on equal footing' (NEPAD 2002:1). The main focus was thus on 'reversing the relationship that underpins Africa's underdevelopment, particularly with the North and the donor community', whilst philosophically the mandate was for NEPAD to be driven 'by Africans, for Africans', through a 'new partnership' with the outside world rather than continuing the old forms of paternalism under a different guise (NEPAD Secretariat 2002).

NEPAD set out to inculcate 'a new way of doing things, at all levels', as its architects insisted on the 'demonstration of political leadership at the highest level', with an 'acknowledgement that Africans have to take more responsibility for their development than they have done in the past'. It was thus 'more than a collection of projects' and 'meant to rebuild the confidence of Africans, and for them to take charge of their development agenda' (NEPAD Secretariat 2002).

While NEPAD was established some nine months before the AU, in October 2001, the key point is that it was a programme of the AU, not vice versa. The AU owns NEPAD, and as the official development plan of the continent NEPAD had to take its cue from the AU. As former President Thabo Mbeki stated in 2003, while still South African head of state, the 'AU is the mother, NEPAD is her baby' (Mbeki 2003:44). John Akokpari employed the same metaphor when he stated that the AU was 'the womb that bore NEPAD' and that the 'AU has ownership and control over NEPAD' (Akokpari 2004:249).

The relationship between the AU, the continent's premier Pan-African integration institution and project, and NEPAD, the socio-economic programme of the AU, as well as the question of 'integration', are highly sensitive yet strategic issues (see AU 2004b). They reveal serious tensions, even rivalries, between many of the continent's states about competition over scarce resources, financial resources and policy influence, as well as petty jealousies amongst diplomats and officials. In the post-Cold War, post-apartheid era, South Africa emerged as a key player, able to shape continental politics and Africa's relations with outside powers in a decisive manner. South Africa was an influential shaper of both the AU and NEPAD.

However, South Africa argued that NEPAD was not ‘integrated’ into the AU, but rather it was the undisputed development programme of the AU. Others questioned this, suggesting that NEPAD now operates like ‘an AU within the AU’, and even finds itself in open competition with the AU. This controversial and contentious relationship between the AU and NEPAD necessitates a serious consideration of ways to address the problem. The ‘integration’ or ‘relationship-building’ process had to be followed on the basis of the question: what is in the best interest of *Africa* (and not the AU or NEPAD)? It will therefore be important for Dr Dlamini-Zuma, as newly elected AU Commission Chair, not to confuse the ‘narrow’ South African interest with the ‘continental’ interest. She will almost be forced to show distance from Pretoria and show that she can work for all of Africa.

### **Brief background of the issue**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU, held in July 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique, adopted the ‘Declaration on the Implementation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)’ (AU 2003a). Paragraphs 8 to 11 specifically addressed the integration of NEPAD into AU structures and processes. That declaration came out in favour of formalising ‘the working relations’ between the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat, especially for programme co-ordination and harmonisation. NEPAD was urged to ‘align and harmonise the conditions of service, rules of recruitment and accountability with the AU Commission’. The Declaration also called for specific actions with a view to integrating NEPAD into AU structures and processes (AU 2007:143), including:

1. establishing appropriate linkages between the NEPAD Steering Committee and relevant Organs of the AU including the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Executive Council;
2. formalising ‘the working relations between the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat, especially for programme co-ordination and harmonisation’; and
3. developing ‘a sustainable funding mechanism for NEPAD after its complete integration into the AU structures and processes’.

Also in 2003, the Executive Council of the AU took a 'Decision on the Integration of NEPAD into the Structures and Processes of the African Union' (AU 2003b), and reaffirmed that NEPAD was 'an AU programme' and that its integration should be gradual and commence soon after 2003. The assumption which underscored this declaration was that an integration process and harmonisation should have taken place by the end of 2006.

In the end we know a process unfolded, albeit a slow, tardy process, full of stops and starts, and marked by high degrees of ad hocery, and it was only by 2010 that some clarity began to emerge. The question remains: should integration necessarily mean that NEPAD has to physically move to Addis and come under the AU's physical tutelage? Or are there other creative avenues that could be considered as forms of resolving the AU-NEPAD integration issue?

## **An outline of issues**

Following the above outline, it is clear that the AU is in need of a process and a clear agenda for both institutional development and integration. The following six areas are suggested for consideration: 1) NEPAD's original mandate; 2) an overview of NEPAD and institutional challenges; 3) the question of 'integration' or 'merger'; 4) the AU's capacity constraints and NEPAD; 5) NEPAD, civil society and international donor partners; and 6) lessons from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

## **Overview of NEPAD and institutional changes**

### **The case for NEPAD**

NEPAD's supporters viewed it as Africa's 'Marshall Plan', and a true development strategy of the AU. Its architects view it as an African Programme tailored by Africans for the development of the continent. For them, its ideological disposition, which made a link between development, peace and security, democracy and governance, and economic growth, constitutes a 'progressive' agenda (Landsberg 2008:207). African leaders made commitments to democracy as well as 'good' political and economic governance, and pledged to work towards

the prevention and resolution of situations of conflict and instability on the continent (Landsberg 2012:186). NEPAD regards 'good' political and corporate governance, peace and security as inherent requirements for lasting growth and development, and the programme impresses upon the world that Africans have taken ownership of their own development (See Moore 2003; see also Landsberg 2003a).

NEPAD places great emphasis on mobilisation of private sector investment, increased domestic savings and investment, as well as improving management of public revenue and expenditure (NEPAD Secretariat 2005). Its leaders advocate the alignment and buy-in of NEPAD goals and strategies at a country level. There was a clear link between NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as both sought to address extreme poverty, as well as securing primary education and basic healthcare, tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and reducing maternal, infant and child mortality in Africa (Landsberg 2003b).

Whilst for NEPAD's proponents, the programme as it was constituted needed to be left as it was, for others it needed to be strengthened. They maintained that NEPAD had to continue to develop programmes and engage the international community for funding of programmes, and negotiate with African states and non-state actors to sign up to such a programme. Revitalising NEPAD as the flagship programme of the AU will take a lot of political will and sacrifice and will tax the office of the AU Commission in major ways.

### **The case against NEPAD as an autonomous entity**

NEPAD's critics questioned the very idea that it constituted a truly developmental plan, preferring to see it as a 'top-down' programme in which leaders drove the process without much civil society involvement (Landsberg 2008:207). They also argued that NEPAD harboured 'neo-liberal' economic tendencies and orthodoxies, and that these were not ideal for promoting poverty eradication and people-centred development (Landsberg 2008:207). For instance, one of the observers, Murithi (2005:145), argued that 'NEPAD, while a welcome initiative, in terms of its Pan-African scope, cannot fulfil its objectives because it is written largely in the language of neo-liberal economics'. Other critics have accused

the AU and NEPAD secretariats of constituting serious waste, and undermining the credibility of both the AU and NEPAD through duplication of programmes.

These critics suggest three ways of addressing the problem. Firstly, NEPAD needs to revert to its original mandate and assume the role of a technical agency for the AU. It has to be cautioned against becoming involved in policy-making matters, as that was not included in the role and mandate envisioned for it by the AU Assembly, the Executive Council and the Commission.

Secondly, efforts have to be made to transform NEPAD into a truly developmental plan. Some have suggested that this transformation could be achieved through a synthesis of old plans drawn up to redress the imbalances of such inherited colonial economic structures as the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of 1980 and the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) of 1989. A Revised NEPAD programme that grows out of this synthesis, they suggest, would give NEPAD much needed credibility and legitimacy in African quarters, and would mean that an integrated NEPAD would have a greater chance of enjoying broad support in Africa.

The third option is that NEPAD should become a forum for heads of state and government that would reflect and spell out avenues for partnership between Africa and the international community, and intra-African partnerships between states, private sectors, civil society, mass people's organisations, and others. However, NEPAD should take its cue directly from the AU structures, and could thus become the truly technical advice agency for the AU, and a real Development and Governance Forum, through which Africa would engage the international community as well as fellow Africans.

Whatever way is followed, the critics agreed that, as matters of urgency, all NEPAD programmes should become AU programmes and the legitimacy of NEPAD as an AU programme should be addressed.

## **The integration issue**

The above outline raises the question: what exactly do we mean by NEPAD integration? Is it proper to talk of NEPAD/AU integration? It is important to



talk of AU-NEPAD relationship building, and at all times to consider what is in Africa's interest, and what would advance the idea of African renewal and Renaissance, as opposed to what is good for the AU per se and NEPAD per se? What about relationship building between the AU and NEPAD secretariats? It seems proper that these two entities, especially their respective heads, should take the lead in relationship building, so is it not proper that all NEPAD programmes be harmonised with, and subsumed into, AU programmes? What about NEPAD financial and human resources: should these not go directly towards bolstering the AU?

So, while the question of 'integration' needs to be handled with care and due sensitivity, there are clear options that could be pursued that might break the deadlock and move the process forward.

### **Back to basics: The original mandate of NEPAD**

Has NEPAD overstepped its mandate, and is this what has given rise to the confusion and suspicions which currently prevail? In setting up NEPAD, the Lusaka Summit established the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC), consisting of fifteen heads of state and government who were entrusted with the responsibility to:

1. identify strategic issues to be addressed, planned and be guided through at the continental level;
2. set up mechanisms for review of progress in the achievement of mutually agreed targets and compliance with mutually agreed standards; and
3. review progress on the implementation of past decisions and take appropriate steps to address problems and delays.

In order to carry out these functions, and in particular to develop a strategic plan for marketing NEPAD at national, regional and continental levels, the HSGIC established a Steering Committee, composed of Personal Representatives of its members, and the NEPAD Secretariat, with the aim of mobilising domestic support and facilitating private-public sector partnerships in Africa, as well as enhancing international partnership.

The development and implementation of NEPAD's Strategic Plan were guided by the principles of

1. adding new value to existing continental and regional programme activities;
2. building on prior progress and achievements and maximising collective learning from past efforts and initiatives;
3. sharing progress, outputs and impacts among all participating member states;
4. building partnerships and co-operation based on shared goals and needs and mobilising the different levels and ranges of capabilities for collective actions.

This outline clearly shows that the original mandate of NEPAD was intended as a socio-economic programme for the AU, to fulfil the role of technical agency of the Union and AU Commission. NEPAD was supposed to show leadership in technical and operational matters, and to play a role in helping the AU with policy facilitation, design and conceptualisation. However, it is the AU that can and should take policy decisions, not NEPAD. Maybe this is where NEPAD has overstepped the line: it started to get directly involved in policy-making matters, at times at the expense of the AU.

### **South Africa: NEPAD's temporary base?**

When it was decided in 2003 that the NEPAD Secretariat would be based in Midrand, South Africa, this was regarded as a victory for Pretoria-Tshwane, and a demonstration of its influence on the African political stage. With NEPAD being headquartered in South Africa, it would assert the Republic's status as an African pivotal state. But not all were content, neither with NEPAD's presence in South Africa nor with South Africa's growing influence in continental affairs. Since its establishment in 2002, the AU has been clear that Midrand would be a temporary home for the NEPAD Secretariat. This was a puzzling position, because it was not clear why the OAU, predecessor to the AU, had agreed to a proposal that South Africa would play host to the NEPAD secretariat. During the 2003 AU Summit, it was resolved that NEPAD would be given a three-year window before it was integrated into the AU. It was made clear, however, that integration did not necessarily mean a physical relocation of NEPAD's Secretariat from Midrand,

South Africa to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AU rather had in mind seizing back from South Africa the command and control over NEPAD. It would be a good seven years before the integration process started in earnest, and only by 2010 did the mother body, the AU, and its kith and kin programme, NEPAD, start to agree on integration modalities.

### **Command and control: The real issue**

NEPAD has a very clear decision-making and command and control structure. The highest authority of NEPAD implementation is the Heads of State and Government Summit of the AU, which takes its cue from the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, and the steering committee made up of personal envoys and chirpers of the leaders. The Implementation Committee reports to the AU Summit on an annual basis. The question is not whether NEPAD should have its own structures but what these structures should do and how they should relate to the AU and its structures. The lack of proper consultation has caused much damage to the AU-NEPAD relationship, and at times the two actors have made strange bed-fellows.

Maybe it would only be a proper move, and one enabling progress to be made, if, at a minimum, the question of appropriate consultation between NEPAD structures and the AU could be sorted out, and secondly, if the AU were to be properly represented in all NEPAD structures. Thus, the chair president of the AU should be involved in the NEPAD HSGIC structures; whilst the AU Commission should be represented in the Steering Committee and the Secretariat of NEPAD. This would help greatly to clear the air.

So, if we are all serious, there should be no controversy around amalgamating NEPAD and AU programmes, and NEPAD should continue to play the role of powerful African development and governance forum, focusing on dialogue and negotiations between Africans and the outside world, not only amongst Africans. NEPAD will return to its former mandate, and its programmes will be properly integrated into AU Commissions. The question of how the AU Commission manages and undertakes NEPAD functions and programmes is a valid one, and it should make a strong case for taking over NEPAD programmes, which could ask those of its programme staff working on the various programmes to become

AU Commission staff, and to be subsumed by the various Commissions, whether based in Midrand or Addis Ababa. Such a move would give the AU a boost for desperately needed human resources capacity, and thus the real issue is the end of duplication and waste, and the proper integration of NEPAD programmes into AU programmes. NEPAD has over the past four years negotiated very important flagship programmes such as infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, environment, science and technology, whilst the AU has eight fully-fledged commissions responsible for such programmes. Given the financial and human resource constraints, even crises, in the AU, we can ill afford this duplication and waste.

### **NEPAD and RECs and SECs**

According to its mandate, NEPAD is supposed to be, just like the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Sub-Regional Economic Communities (SECs) of the AU, an implementing agent and building block of the AU. The AU's Constitutive Act is clear that Africa's RECs are the essential building blocks for integration and economic development in Africa (AU Commission 2005). NEPAD itself emphasises the importance of the rationalisation of regional organisations and of capacity building to enhance the effectiveness of existing regional structures. RECs and SECs form the regional bases for planning, co-ordination, and monitoring of integration processes. It has long been the policy that the NEPAD Secretariat would not be directly involved in policy matters, but would rather serve as a catalyst, facilitator and negotiator of development programmes, with implementation left to RECs and SECs, whose roles and positions would be given clarity by a resolution of the AU-NEPAD relationship (AU Commission 2005).

The controversy about NEPAD's relations with, and integration into the AU, will thus be addressed if the AU and NEPAD could resolve their relationship. A focus on the AU-NEPAD relationship could therefore help to address the vexed questions of, on the one hand, the NEPAD-RECs relationship, and, on the other, the AU-RECs relationship. This raises an opportunity to look comparatively at how different RECs have approached – or failed to approach – NEPAD, which, in turn, brings up other issues: the rationalisation of the RECs, the proliferation

and overlaps of which complicate the entire AU-NEPAD integration, and the idea of RECs as the implementing agents of the AU and NEPAD.

### **The AU's capacity constraints and NEPAD**

Supporters of the status quo, that NEPAD should remain a programme of the AU but with a high degree of autonomy, pointed to NEPAD's weaknesses and capacity constraints in order to justify non-integration. The AU on the other hand tended to be defensive about such constraints. The AU currently experiences major capacity constraints, and has done so since its inception. The 2007 AU High-level panel report argued that the AU Commission had operated with only 60% of its capacity, and maintained that the Commission was 'heavily understaffed' and so followed 'an inefficient recruitment process', reminiscent of an organisation with 'lengthy decision-making processes', and low staff morale (See AU 2007:8). These are some of the palpable challenges that the new AU Commission Chair will have to confront.

These constraints should be taken into account when considering the question of integration, and we should not be surprised if there is serious non-action when it comes to the issue of integrating NEPAD into the AU structures. We should thus openly confront other questions: How should the capacity deficit be addressed? How should NEPAD's different elements be integrated into the different AU Commissions? Or should it remain a development programme in its own right? Should it become a programme under the aegis of the office of the AU Commission President? Should it retain operational autonomy? How should a division of labour be sorted out between the Commission and the AU? What will NEPAD's responsibilities be in future, and what will be the responsibilities of the AU Commission?

Could it be that the strength of NEPAD lies in it being a negotiator of development with the international community, or a promoter of African development in Africa and for Africa abroad? What about the scenario of NEPAD becoming, in real terms, the development programme, or plan of the AU – a catalyst, facilitator and negotiator? It would promote the development ideology and strategy of Africa, both to African states and external partners. It would see to it

that African states pursue and implement the development trajectory captured in NEPAD, and it would be the continent's interlocutor with international agencies, extracting assistance and other types of commitments from overseas partners, in support of the continent's development and renaissance.

## **NEPAD, civil society and international donor partners**

Supporters of NEPAD and the former status quo – of NEPAD staying outside the AU structures and command – are pleased that one of the programme's real achievements is that it has articulated a continental platform for Africa's engagement and partnership with the broader international community, especially the industrialised North. During its early years, the donor community was generally fascinated by NEPAD as they saw it as a plan for self-monitoring by Africans. For example, in 2002 and 2003, the UN General Assembly endorsed NEPAD 'as the policy framework around which the international community, including the United Nations system, should concentrate its efforts for Africa's development', and set out modalities for UN support to NEPAD (UN 2002a).

The idea of adopting NEPAD as policy framework, and requiring the AU to steer this programme, therefore created expectations which encouraged NEPAD to go beyond its mandate. New forms of partnership were negotiated by NEPAD, and the continent started to benefit from attracting foreign direct investment, increasing capital flows through further debt reduction and increased official development assistance (ODI) flows, market access, and resources to bolster Africa's peace support operations capacities (Centre for Conflict Resolution 2005). However, for critics of NEPAD and the status quo, the role by foreign agencies was part of the problem: foreign governments and donors have had far too much influence and control over NEPAD, and this has contributed significantly to NEPAD's legitimacy problems in Africa. For the critics, NEPAD has brought about a major dichotomy: abroad it is generally celebrated and respected; in Africa it has brought about divisions and suspicion. Civil society organisations (CSOs) attribute NEPAD's slow progress to the processes being elite and government driven, and as such little came of the ideas. For critics, integration would bring about much needed unity in and amongst Africans,

but CSOs would have to be involved if urgent action is to be effected (Centre for Conflict Resolution 2005).

Important questions arise here: what will happen to this relationship between NEPAD and the international donor community? And what should the future relationship be between the AU and international actors on the one hand, and NEPAD and international actors on the other? Will it be one set of relations, or something else? What future role should there be for civil society engagement with NEPAD?

Continental civil society actors have long lamented their having limited say and room to help shape NEPAD trajectories and programmes. For them, NEPAD remains a top-down programme, through which the NEPAD Secretariat and governmental actors foist ideas upon civil society, expecting them to implement these.

### **Lessons from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**

What lessons could NEPAD learn from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)? In 2003 and 2004, African leaders agreed on a framework for a peer review mechanism designed to tackle obstacles to growth and development on the continent (Landsberg 2003c). The framework aimed at encouraging and building responsible leadership within the continent, and was to involve voluntary self-assessment, constructive peer dialogue and the sharing of common experiences. African states were encouraged to accede to the peer review process as a demonstration of their commitment to put in place best practices in political, economic and corporate governance in Africa (Landsberg 2003c). The idea was to expose under-achievers and identify problems, as well as provide corrective measures and support. Murithi (2005:143) depicted the APRM as ‘... a positive element of NEPAD’ and described the APRM as ‘a commitment to self-monitoring and accountability for promoting inclusive governance and constitutional government by relying upon peer pressure in which governments monitor each other’.

By early 2005, 29 African states had signed up to the APRM, which set up its own secretariat, and managed, by 2008, to demonstrate its independence from

African governments as well as international governments and donors. It also promoted strong collaborative relations with civil society actors. The APRM experience holds potentially powerful lessons for NEPAD.

The APRM as a programme enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and credibility before it too suffered at the hands of poor leadership and agency, which began round about the end of 2008. Prior to that, the APRM benefited from strong, strategic leadership, afforded to it by a highly respected group of African elders, who constituted its steering committee, determined to prove their autonomy from both African governments and international donors. While the APRM steering committee impressed upon African leaders the importance of funding their own inter-state institutions and programmes, such as the AU, NEPAD and the APRM, this committee was appealing for financial and technical assistance from donors, but in a way that required external partners and funders to deposit funds directly into an APRM Trust Fund (AU 2007a). On this score, the APRM's managers were particularly wary of being perceived as susceptible to undue donor influence.

Another manner in which the APRM's managers attempted to safeguard their autonomy was to adopt an even-handed approach vis-à-vis African governments, civil society actors and external funders. The APRM managers, as they embarked on reviews of the political, economic, corporate and socio-economic policy regimes, went out of their way to be balanced in their criticism of African governments, civil society and external donors alike. The 2007 AU High-level Panel Audit Report concluded that, 'with respect to the APRM, the Panel recommends that countries that have not yet should join and support the process and that the process should be accelerated to cover all countries' (AU 2007:144). The AU High-level Panel squarely placed the emphasis on states and their governments and leaders to show leadership and muster the will to rescue programmes like the APRM.



## **From New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordinating Agency (NPCA)**

The High-level Panel appointed by the Heads of State and Government (HSG) during the AU Summit in Accra in December 2007 to undertake an audit of the AU and all its organs and programmes, recognised '... the role played by NEPAD in engaging the RECs in the implementation of its Strategic Action Plan and its various sectoral programmes'. The High-level Panel asserted that this role '... would be essential when NEPAD would be fully integrated in the programmes and processes of the African Union'. NEPAD Heads of State and Government have themselves 'emphasised that NEPAD is a mandated initiative of the AU', and argued that '[t]herefore there should be greater co-operation and co-ordination between the AU and NEPAD Secretariats, as well as with the NEPAD Steering Committee'. They further reiterated that 'one of the goals of NEPAD is the promotion of regional integration' (AU 2007:142).

The 2003 decision by the Maputo Summit to accelerate the integration of NEPAD into the AU proceeded at snail's pace and there was need for urgency. In order to speed it up the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat prepared, in 2007, a joint proposal (submitted to the HSGIC in Algiers in March 2007) with the thrust that:

1. NEPAD should remain a programme of the AU;
2. a Planning and Co-ordination Mechanism should be created;
3. the HSGIC should be strengthened and retain its present role;
4. the operations of the NEPAD Co-ordination mechanism should continue in South Africa (so as) to provide continuity and an excellent atmosphere to carry out its new roles;
5. a transitional period of one year would be needed for a streamlining of NEPAD activities and processes with those of the AU Commission; and
6. a Co-ordinating Unit should be created with the AU Commission to elaborate a detailed roadmap on integration of the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordinating Authority (AU 2007:143).

It took a full seven years after the proposition of 2003 in Maputo for the AU to integrate NEPAD fully into its structures. In November 2007, during a meeting in Dakar, Senegal, a decision was taken for NEPAD to be transformed into the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordinating Agency (NPCA), and only by 2010 did the actual integration materialise (AU 2007:144). The AU decided that NEPAD would become an agency, and the NPCA came to regard itself as 'the leading African development organisation, able to mobilise private sector, heads of state and African people as a force for positive change, building continental prosperity and regional integration' (AU 2007:144). It adopted a set of programmes under a 'thematic umbrella' (Kanyegirire 2010), which included regional integration and infrastructure; food security and agriculture; economic and corporate governance; climate change and natural resources management; human development; and cross-cutting issues, including strategic planning and knowledge management, capacity development, private sector development, and gender (Kanyegirire 2010).

Under the first theme, integration and infrastructure, the focus would be on regional integration, and the use of infrastructural development programmes in areas such as energy, transportation, water and information and communications technology (ICT) (Kanyegirire 2010). The food security and agriculture cluster would develop a growth-oriented agriculture agenda. The economic and corporate governance cluster would promote sound macro-economic and public financial management and accountability among African governments, while protecting the integrity of their monetary and financial systems (Kanyegirire 2010). A new cluster of the NEPAD Agency is climate change and resource management. The new Agency is of the view that addressing environmental issues is a prerequisite for the other goals of sustainable growth and development. Human development is an important challenge in Africa. For the NPCA, economic growth and poverty eradication on the continent could only be achieved by linking priorities such as education, science and technology, and healthcare. Some of the cross-cutting issues that would ostensibly affect the Agency's ability to deliver include: strategic planning; knowledge management; capacity development; private sector development; and gender (Kanyegirire 2010).

In spite of the NEPAD Secretariat being re-baptised as a technical body of the AU in the form of the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordinating Agency, little could conceal the fact that the new Agency, like its predecessor body, was beset with serious human resources and financial constraints. The NPCA appears to be weaker than it was before NEPAD's incorporation into the AU and its becoming a technical agency. The technical, human resource and financial constraints faced by NEPAD are palpable. In 2001/2, the NEPAD Agency's staffing contained a team of only eight members, and by 2003 the core team had dwindled to only three. In 2011 it saw a modest increase in the core team to six, with half of these being junior members (Kanyegirire 2010). These are grim numbers and highlight very serious implementation challenges for NEPAD.

Here should be added that there appears to be a serious lack of leadership on the part of both the secretariat and the AU to infuse into NEPAD the necessary urgency and gravitas which would befit a continental development programme. This has allowed even donors to turn a blind eye to NEPAD and renege on all their commitments made in its context. Dr Dlamini-Zuma and her new team of Commissioners will have to pay attention to this issue and consider taking up the recommendation as spelled out by the High-level panel.

Both the AU and the NEPAD Agency are in need of a serious capacity expansion plan that would see the focus being placed on more staff with the right professional skills. There is need for staff in both organisations, and those who currently fill the posts are in need of retraining and identifying new roles in line with new continental and global realities. Given that the unit of analysis of this article is the African institution, there is need to back up the input side of the process – vision, mission and strategy – with the output side of the process – management, execution and implementation.

### **Conclusion**

By the turn of the millennium, a group of African leaders articulated a bold new vision for Africa's political, economic, social, developmental and cultural revival. Many of them backed up these plans for continental renewal by putting in place a set of institutions and programmes that would translate vision and plans into

concrete outcomes and deliverables. They realised that Africa's new integration processes needed to be anchored in strong institutions and strong planning and implementation processes. By the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, it became clear that the enthusiasm which had greeted the continent at the end of the 1990s had dissipated.

In a short time, Africa's institutions have become poorly anchored and weakly consolidated. Many continue to be bedevilled by internecine institutional rivalries and personality clashes. The continent's premier integration body, the AU, and its chief developmental plan, NEPAD, were embroiled in serious tensions and rivalries, triggering the call for NEPAD to be integrated into the AU. The answer, it was suggested, was to integrate NEPAD fully into the AU and bring it under the command and control of the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. The question of AU-NEPAD 'integration' is a sensitive issue and had to be handled with both delicacy and maturity. In the end we had both prevarication and unnecessary rush. Those who spearheaded the process appeared to be driven by agendas other than the crucial question of what is in Africa's interest and what it would take to advance the development of the continent. Notions of competition between NEPAD and the AU are issues that needed to be addressed from the onset.

Even now that the die has been cast and the AU has settled on transforming NEPAD into an agency and bringing it under the control of a very weak AU Commission, it is crucial to address the issue of institutional and human resource capacity building. A matter of urgency is the political leadership vacuum which appears rife in Africa and most of its institutions. Pivotal states like South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria should all, in partnership with other African states, shoulder the burden of restoring continental agency and leadership if the continent is to start realising some of its development goals. Many of them could start by stabilising their polities at home and leading by example from the home front.

The leadership tensions which occurred when South Africa opted to field a candidate in the form of Home Affairs minister (and former Foreign Minister) Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, against AU Commission Chair incumbent, Jean

Ping, only served to weaken an already limp AU Commission. This move by Pretoria-Tshwane also served to divide the continent and to drive a wedge between key states like South Africa and Nigeria, and between regions like Southern Africa and West Africa. It is vital that African states realise that the AU, and all the organs and programmes they have created, are the custodians of African interests, and the greatest repository of African inter-state relations, African multilateralism and Pan-Africanism.

NEPAD is supposed to be a programme of the AU, its role being to bolster technical and operational expertise. It should support the AU and union processes, not compete with them. NEPAD has a key role in facilitating, conceptualising, and even implementing policies, but it was not mandated to make policy. It could certainly do so, but only under strict mandate and guidance of the AU. It could play an advocacy role, but only with regard to accepted and mandated AU policies. It could establish platforms; disseminate information and promote programmes, but in all cases it should be AU information and programmes, not NEPAD exclusivist programmes. Importantly, NEPAD could and should provide technical backstopping for the AU and its organs, and become directly involved in promoting capacity building for the AU and RECs. It has an indispensable role to play in terms of monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that programmes of the AU are implemented and African states and international partners meet their obligations towards the AU. Vitality, it has developed a niche with regard to resource mobilisation, and it should be encouraged to continue to do so, with one important caveat: NEPAD should not mobilise resources for NEPAD, but should do so for the AU.

The AU in turn needs to urgently address its very serious institutional capacity issues. This is a challenge that the newly elected AU Commission chair, Dr Dlamini-Zuma, will find difficult to ignore. The sooner African states and heads of institutions realise that the problems of the AU and other continental bodies do not just lie at the national, regional and international levels, but also at the level of institutions, the sooner Africa can start to reclaim some of its desperately needed international agency.

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