

# African Caucus Press Release

Press release by the African Caucus\* at the UN International Conference on Financing for Development,  
18-22 March 2002 at Monterrey, N.L. MEXICO

## An Imposed Consensus

The African Caucus welcomes the initiative by the UN to reassert its role in social and economic development. It is about time that the "great pretenders" of the Bretton Woods Institutions are reminded that they are not accountable to themselves nor the G-7 countries, but to the global community, including the poor.

Sadly the path the Monterrey Consensus pursues is a continuation of the old discredited neo-liberal model that has failed our people. This Consensus does not include us nor the poor of our continent. The core flaw of this path is its fundamental presumption that what development needs is more finance, and that the market can be relied upon to equitably distribute wealth and resources in a sustainable manner.

## 'Staying Engaged'

We take note of the lack of effective measures for civil society's active involvement in the 'Staying Engaged' section of the Monterrey Consensus. That process appears to be confined only to consultations between the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions with the WTO. We protest the exclusion of civil society in the planning and implementation of the follow-up process, and demand to be fully included in any discussions on how the Monterrey process is move forward.

## New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

The African civil society endorses the overall aim of the New African Initiative which is a commitment by African leaders to place the continent on an accelerated path of social, technological and economic development. The Initiative is unique, in that it is an African driven, African owned and African led renewal and development programme. As members of civil society, we commend our leaders for their courage and foresight. However, in its present form as the New Partnership, we need to caution the inherent dangers and strongly protest the manner in which the programme is being pursued.

Our first protest is against the marginalization of civil society from the process. We are convinced that without popular participation, NEPAD will suffer the same fate as other past initiatives. The development of Africa lies in the hands of its people, both its poor and rich, as well as its state leaders and civil society. Secondly we are concern that our leaders are placing Africa's development in the hands of speculators, the gamblers of the global casino and the Bretton Woods institutions. The success of NEPAD is being made contingent on the generosity and charity of wealthy nations. This is dangerous and should be reversed - **it is never too late.**

Furthermore, we wish to warn our leaders that NEPAD's strategy of seeking foreign private capital to develop the service and infrastructure of Africa will subvert the Human Rights of our people; it would place basic social services and infrastructure in the hands of the private sector, which is dominated by foreign capital. We cannot allow the practice of putting profits before Human Rights form the basis of Africa's development.

To this end, we are pleased that at our invitation, President Wade of Senegal spent some of his valuable time to engage with the caucus on the issues of NEPAD. He recognized that the lack of in-depth consultation with civil society was a mistake, but encouraged civil society to give their support to NEPAD. It is crucial that the NEPAD Implementation Secretariat formally extends an invitation to civil society to join the consultation process already taking place. This would enormously facilitate the active participation of civil society.

## Debt and ODA

On Debt, we think it is immoral and scandalous that the debt burden prevails. We reiterate our demand for immediate and unconditional debt cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries. We reject any debt workout mechanism that is accompanied by external conditionalities. We have lost confidence in Official Development Assistance (ODA) as a source of development for Africa. ODA's are not charitable handouts but the obligation of the rich countries, and they have failed miserably to keep their promise; hence any effort to increase ODA's with conditionalities is disingenuous.

## Bribery and Corruption

It takes two to tango; the efforts to fight corruption should address both sides of the deed. We call for the speedy adoption of the proposed UN Convention on Corruption and a framework to help developing countries recover their stolen assets stashed in foreign banks.

*\* The African Caucus is made up of NGO representatives participating in the FfD process since the first PrepCom. Attached is the list of those who have attended the meetings of the caucus so far and were given the chance to provide feedback to the draft press release. Time constrains and the lack of a French translation at the ICFfD, prevented the full discussion of the Press Release and the caucus statement which is yet to be circulated.*

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