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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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(UNESCO)

On the occasion of the XIth session of the Implementation Committee of the New
Partnership for Africa's Development
(NEPAD)

Addis Ababa, 7 July 2004

Mr President of the Implementation Committee of NEPAD,
Mr Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union,
Mr Vice-Chairpersons and members of the Committee,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to sincerely thank President Olusegun Obasanjo for his kind invitation to attend the 11th session of your Committee, which he is chairing with great vision and effectiveness.

I should also like to thank the distinguished members of the Committee for their kind welcome. I am very grateful that I am given the chance to say a few words about UNESCO's cooperation with NEPAD.

Having read the documents prepared for this meeting and having listened to your debate this morning, it is clear that NEPAD is far more than a programme of the African Union: it represents hope and commitment.

Hope, because it has enabled Africa to express its concerns, identify its priorities, chart its path and set out a course of action.

Commitment, because it has explained to the rest of the international community how it intends to assume the responsibility of forging Africa's own destiny, individually and collectively, through new leadership.

You will recall that UNESCO was the first international organization to review its programmes and strategy in order to adapt them to NEPAD from the outset of this initiative; this re-orientation was integrated into our overall Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007.

Furthermore, through extensive consultation with all our partners, we drafted the regional medium-term strategy document which guides and will guide our action in Africa during the 2002-2007 period.

In March 2003, we organized a seminar in Ouagadougou, in the presence of Presidents Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso and John Kufuor of Ghana - also the current President of ECOWAS - on the theme of "UNESCO and NEPAD: from vision to action". Together with the establishment of the UNESCO-NEPAD Committee, which also held its first meeting in Ouagadougou, this seminar enabled us to develop the NEPAD mechanism further by agreeing upon operational modes of action, in particular the identification and framing of projects for which various sources of funding are being sought.

I would like to focus on some of the outstanding results of our action in favour of NEPAD, which justify your trust in our Organization.

In the priority field of education, we have contributed, through the provision of an expert to the NEPAD Secretariat and the organization of ministerial meetings in various subregions (ECOWAS, CEMAC, PALOP), to elaborating the draft NEPAD plan of action for strengthening human resources, placed under the sectoral responsibility of Algeria. Following an intergovernmental consultation process, this plan should be submitted in 2005 for approval by the African Union Summit, which will be devoted to education and culture.

Similarly, in the field of culture, we hope that the document whose preparation we entrusted, at the request of the NEPAD Secretariat, to a group of experts which met in Abidjan in September 2003 to discuss “The contribution of culture to development in the context of NEPAD” will be considered by the African Union and African Ministers of Culture before it is submitted to next year’s Summit.

In the sector of science and technology, UNESCO co-organized, in November 2003 in Johannesburg, a Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology for Development, which enabled the establishment of a NEPAD ministerial committee in this field.

In addition, after participating in the Conference for a Global Partnership on the Environment Initiative of NEPAD, held in Algiers in December 2003, UNESCO organized a ministerial round table on the role of biosphere reserves as sustainable development laboratories for NEPAD. On that same occasion, we invited Senegal, coordinator of the Priority Programme on the Environment Initiative, to present the conclusions of this meeting to the African Ministerial Conference.

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,

The fight against HIV/AIDS is also a main focus of our action within the framework of NEPAD. Following the Summit which you held on HIV/AIDS in Abuja and in which I had the honour of participating, I launched a new UNESCO preventive education strategy for AIDS. The Maputo Declaration reiterated and consolidated the commitments made in Abuja, recognizing the vital importance of preventive education in combating HIV/AIDS. In the countries most affected by the epidemic, AIDS triggers a destructive spiral. By decimating the general population and elites, AIDS is destroying the political, economic and educational structures built up over many years.

To address this situation, I felt it was essential to devise a global strategy for the United Nations system as a whole. This is why, as Chairperson of the UNAIDS Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations, I have launched a new system-wide initiative in support of prevention education against AIDS. We can no longer accept a further annual increase of 5 million more new patients, as there were in 2003. While the progress in terms of treatment is laudable, the true challenge lies in prevention, and we must meet that challenge.

Mr Chairperson,
Honourable Members of the Committee,

We are all aware that without peace and collective security, there cannot be development. It also remains true that development is a factor for peace and security.

We are therefore providing our full support to reconstruction efforts in countries in post-conflict situations. A number of special action plans are under way in several African countries, including Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so as to help them to rebuild their scientific, cultural and educational systems. Similarly, we have strengthened our action in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo.

Mr Chairperson,

The various actions I have just briefly outlined have been carried out by carefully adapting them to the approach adopted by the African Union and NEPAD, namely, regional and subregional integration.

I have invited the Secretaries-General of the regional and subregional economic communities to set up with UNESCO, in the form of a forum, a framework for dialogue and consultation to ensure optimum synergy in our programmes and resources for Africa. The first meeting of this forum to support UNESCO-NEPAD cooperation (FOSRASUN) will take place next September at UNESCO Headquarters.

The work of FOSRASUN will be based on the recommendations of the UNESCO Committee for NEPAD. As a forum for analysis and future-oriented reflection made up of eminent persons from the five subregions of Africa, this Committee is charged with regularly assessing the continent's socio-economic development prospects and submitting to me recommendations on the best way of taking them into account in our programming.

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thus, Africa is a priority for UNESCO. This means that you have in UNESCO a fervent advocate at the international level, and you can count on us and especially on our decentralized offices, whose capabilities I have strengthened so as to continue collaborating with you, in particular regarding the implementation of NEPAD's practical programmes.

UNESCO is convinced that the best way to be of assistance to NEPAD is to give it active solidarity. This is the whole meaning of our action. Rest assured, Mr Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen, that we shall spare no effort to attain this goal successfully.