

THE NEW AFRICAN INITIATIVE

*At the Steering Committee Meeting of The New African Initiative
Dakar, Senegal, 20 August, 2001*

It gives me great satisfaction to be here today, with my Brother, President Wade, to deliberate with you on the way forward for our New Initiative.

First, we must congratulate ourselves on the progress we have made on this common endeavour. From Lusaka, through Genoa, to Dakar, in the period of five weeks, we have accomplished so much towards our collective desire to revive Africa, and uplift our people from the abyss of despondency.

Five weeks ago in Lusaka, at the OAU Summit, African Leaders unanimously endorsed the New Initiative, which is the merger of the Millennium Partnership for African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the OMEGA Plan, conceived by President Wade.

On behalf of the five collaborating Heads of State of Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, Senegal and Nigeria, President Wade made an eloquent presentation of the New Initiative to the Summit in Lusaka, which was very well received by our colleagues. The Summit endorsed the New Initiative, and we have to ensure the fine-tuning of the document, removing repetitions and rough edges.

One week after the Lusaka Summit, the New Initiative was jointly presented by African Leaders, namely President Wade, President Mbeki, President Bouteflika and myself, to the G8 Leaders, at their Summit in Genoa. The New Initiative received their endorsement. We are challenged to work with G8 under the leadership of Canada as the Chairperson of the next Summit, to ensure detailed Programme of Action of the Initiative for next year's G8 meeting.

Following on the heels of the OAU and G8 endorsements, UN agencies, the international economic and financial institutions, especially the IMF and the World Bank, private sector groups, civil society groups, and the world media, have all been expressing support for the New Initiative. There is no doubt now that the New Initiative is an idea whose time has come, and, as the French philosopher, Jacques Rousseau succinctly put it, "there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come".

Let me seize this opportunity to thank the members of the Steering Committee for their contributions to the

emergence of Initiative. The Steering Committee, from inception, provided the active support for MAP, and when the merger with the OMEGA Plan became necessary, the Steering Committee boldly undertook the assignment. We do not need reminding that the Steering Committee occupies a pivotal position in the process of this Initiative. The members are the eyes and the ears of their Presidents in this enterprise.

The first task of the Steering Committee is to produce a clean document that is devoid of repetitions, roughness, imprecision and vagueness. This document must be issued in all the official OAU languages.

Let me add that, in view of the tasks at hand, the role of the Steering Committee will significantly appreciate in the weeks and months ahead. The Steering Committee will continue to be the focal point in the formulation, preparation and coordination of programmes of the New Initiative. The Steering Committee, working in tandem with the Heads of State Implementation Committee, must leave no stone unturned to achieve consensus for the reform programme required for the launching and the sustenance of the Initiative, and for the unalloyed and sustained support from our development partners.

It is important that we do not lose the momentum gained so far from Lusaka and Genoa. In fine-tuning the document we must not lose sight of suggested amendments and necessary ingredients for enhancement. The final document must be do-able, durable, workable, relevant and supportable.

It is worth reminding the members of the Steering Committee that they are free to work with the ECA and the ADB in fine-tuning the New Initiative and developing further its Programme of Action. The ECA has been useful as an intellectual powerhouse in our region, and it has the capacity to provide appropriate technical and analytical support. The ADB is another regional institution that can be of immense assistance in putting together a coherent Programme of Action for the New Initiative. The ADB has over the years acquired capacity in project identification, design, costing and implementation in Africa. The Steering Committee should dialogue interactively with the officials of the two institutions to work out the scope and modality of cooperation.

It is in the spirit of pursuing this common endeavour, that I wish to propose the need to creatively tie together the three main initiatives and programmes that we Africans have adopted in the last 12 months. These are:

- ▶ the Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA),
- ▶ the recent emergence of the Africa Union *and*
- ▶ the Africa Initiative.

These three initiatives contain the essential ingredients for comprehensive actualisation of Africa's development process. The immediate challenge for us is to harmonise the initiatives so that they mutually reinforce each other for the benefit of our overall political, economic and social agenda of Africa and for Africa.

In the first and most profound sense, the hope for the success of the New Initiative is predicated on Security, Peace and Stability being pre-conditions as well as enhancing factors of development. In the second instance, all the joint responsibilities subscribed to under the Initiative are also detailed as part of the Plan of Action in various calabashes of the CSSDCA. Of the three initiatives, the CSSDCA is the only initiative that has a well-defined reporting and evaluation mechanism, which will eventually assist the Assembly of the African Union in fulfilling its function on compliance, as clearly stated in the Constitutive Act of the Union. Thus, CSSDCA and the Africa Initiative must be seen as integral units, within the political framework of the African Union.

Let us design a new operational arrangement, whereby the New Africa Initiative will be used to guide and provide policy and programme direction for the organs of the Union, especially the Executive Council and the Specialised Committees of the Union. The CSSDCA also hosts development partners, physically and intellectually. The CSSDCA will provide, through its conferences, monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms on the various policies, programmes and projects executed by the organs of the Union.

In effect, the CSSDCA could be an anchor point for both the African Union and the Africa Initiative, such that the three initiatives together would form a tripod support for Security, Stability and Development in Africa.

For this tripod to stand and endure, the new operational arrangement hereby proposed should be used to weld the three initiatives together. With the cooperation of all, we will have devised a viable modality for re-engineering our response mechanism to the challenges confronting us in the years ahead. Such an exercise will afford us the opportunity to produce a consensus document.

However, let me remind the members of Steering Committee that much as we need a consensus document to work with, and present to the world, you should not foreclose the possibility of future refinement and modification, as the need may arise. Therefore, the final document must remain dynamic, capable of being amended to fit our future experience and changing parameters or situation.

Having listened to the presentations and contributions of the various Heads of State in Lusaka, and keeping

in mind the Declaration of the OAU Summit on the Africa Initiative, as well as the high expectations of the G8 countries, and the international community, it behooves the Steering Committee now to work out an appropriate structure and its own *modus operandi*. You should deliberate and agree on the functions, the structure and the financing of a Secretariat.

There are two critical factors for effective implementation:

- ▶ ***one, carrying all member-nations along***, that is, speaking with one voice on African issues; *and*
- ▶ ***two, carrying our development partners along***, that is, consulting with them in shaping our Programme of Action. The modest success with the Global HIV/AIDS Fund confirms the advantages of this approach.

It is important that we do bear in mind that the Initiative is a vision shared by African leaders, and endorsed by the OAU, **but** it is yet to be understood and accepted by the generality of our peoples and other stakeholders, without whom we are not likely to achieve any success worth mentioning. In order for the stakeholders to accept and be involved in the Initiative, they must be educated and become convinced about the relevance of the concept to their lives.

The Steering Committee must keep in focus the next encounter between the G8 and African leaders, scheduled for the 2002, G8 Summit in Canada. Our objective is to obtain concrete commitments from the G8 countries on the areas of priority to Africa based on specific and workable programmes. We had already initiated dialogue with the G8 leaders on all the main areas of concern to us and we are expected to work out together a well-articulated and coherent Programmes of Action for their next Summit. For this reason, one of your tasks at the meeting is to produce a timetable of work for yourselves and for the Heads of State Implementation Committee in collaboration with Canada, culminating in the Programme of Action that can be presented to the next Summit of OAU prior to G8 meeting.

Let me assure members of the Steering Committee of the full support of the Heads of State Implementation Committee. We appreciate your efforts in the development of the New Initiative, and we are looking forward to the outcome of your deliberations on the way forward. Your deliberations and recommendations will be taken seriously, and we will give them prompt and due considerations.

My Brother, President Wade, Honorable Ministers, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, judging from the enthusiasm of fellow African leaders, I am convinced that success will crown our determination to positively change the fortunes of our continent in the 21st Century. Our region is poised on the threshold of a new

relationship with the industrialised world. The Initiative cannot be successful without mobilisation and transfer of resources. The resources are there. And there must be political will on both sides, Africa and our development partners. Lusaka and Genoa that the political will can be made available. Africa will be a better globalised region of the world with the successful implementation of the Initiative. And we must not relent in our efforts for its successful implementation.

I thank you all.