Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Resolution 1656 (2009)**[1]

# Mobilising parliaments for Africa's development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In 2001, the heads of state of the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This "strategic framework for Africa's renewal" has four primary objectives: *a*. the eradication of poverty; *b*. placing African countries on a path of sustainable growth and development; *c*. the integration of Africa into the global economy and the end to its marginalisation in the globalisation process; and *d*. the acceleration of women's empowerment. The main significance of NEPAD lies in the fact that it is an African-led strategy for development and that it entails strong political commitments by the participating heads of state. It therefore represents a benchmark against which leaders can be held accountable and a framework into which the international community's efforts can be placed.

2. NEPAD is a political initiative designed to promote peace, security, democracy and good governance, and at the same time the socio-economic programme of the African Union which is meant to implement the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations (UN) in 2000. Under these goals the world community committed itself to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and empower women; to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; to combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop global partnership for development.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly has repeatedly underlined the importance of the Millennium Development Goals, for instance in its Resolutions 1449 (2005) on the environment and the Millennium Development Goals and 1450 (2005) on the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals.

4. Unfortunately, despite progress, it is widely expected that sub-Saharan Africa will fall short of the target of reducing poverty by half by 2015. Moreover, the continent is also lagging behind in most other indicators, although evaluating progress in many countries is difficult due to a lack of statistics.

5. NEPAD's founders acknowledged that good and responsible governance is key to overcoming the hurdles to Africa's development. Unaccountable governments, wasted resources and corruption have for a long time hampered sustainable economic growth and equitable social development. In the NEPAD framework document, political leaders jointly undertake to promote and protect democracy and human rights in their respective countries by developing clear standards of accountability, transparency and participatory governance at national and regional levels.

6. Among members of parliament, both in Africa and in Europe, there is widespread consensus that the successful implementation of NEPAD and the objectives of good governance in general cannot be achieved without the parliamentary system and the role of parliament itself being strengthened and supported. Furthermore, Europe cannot review its development co-operation policies without consultation with Africa and without paying due attention to African parliaments.

7. However, it is also widely acknowledged that parliaments, both in Africa and Europe, are not sufficiently involved in the NEPAD process and are often not sufficiently informed about it, and that parliamentarians are therefore unable to engage in dialogue with their constituents on the important aspects of NEPAD, which

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee,* acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 13 March 2009 (see Doc. 11636, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr Bjørnstad).

means that the NEPAD process is still lacking its grassroots base. Parliaments in Europe are not fully committed to taking the NEPAD process into account in their decision making on issues of importance to the development of Africa.

8. The Assembly believes that parliaments in Council of Europe member states should involve themselves more closely in development issues. National parliaments might consider the possibility of establishing development co-operation committees where they do not yet exist. The Assembly underlines the importance of parliamentary involvement in and scrutiny of official development assistance. There should be more effective monitoring of commitments both in quantity and quality. There should be greater policy coherence, notably between donor countries. Parliamentarians must be duly mobilised and informed with a view to taking African and other development issues into account and explaining the importance of these issues to their constituents.

9. The Assembly welcomes the work of interparliamentary institutions and networks in mobilising parliaments in Europe and Africa, in strengthening their capacity and involvement in development issues and in promoting NEPAD. These include the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the European Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament, the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), the Parliamentarians' Forum for NEPAD, the NEPAD Contact Group of African Parliamentarians, the African Parliamentarians' Network Against Corruption (APNAC) and, in the context of the preservation of Africa's environment and its capacity to produce its own food, the Parliamentary Network of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (PNoUNCCD).

10. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians should play their full constitutional role, exercising legislative, elective and budgetary power, holding the executive to account and influencing international affairs. In Africa, there is a need for a greater role and involvement of parliaments in the systematic scrutiny of how development assistance is used, in policy making and monitoring of progress (Millenium Development Goals, Africa Partnership Forum, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), NEPAD, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers).

11. Enhancing the role of parliaments in Africa requires capacity building and institutional strengthening. Accordingly, the Assembly firmly supports the principle whereby all official development assistance contributions and agreements should earmark specific amounts for strengthening the capacity of Africa's national parliaments and parliamentary bodies. Such agreements should stipulate that parliaments must be involved in overseeing their implementation in accordance with the principles of good governance.

12. The APRM is an important African Union initiative that aims to improve governance in participating countries, on the assumption that good governance is key to creating a positive investment climate as a prerequisite for sustained economic growth. The Assembly believes that African leadership of the APRM should be maintained but that Council of Europe member states and their parliaments should follow developments critically and sustain their support for this process and for the implementation of the resulting action plans.

13. The Assembly underlines the need to step up bilateral parliament-to-parliament dialogue and co-operation, at both national and continental levels, with a view to greater mutual understanding with regard to official development assistance and good governance. In this context, it recalls its agreement concluded in 2005 with the Pan-African Parliament and considers that steps should be taken to implement it more actively. Moreover, based on the Assembly's experience as a forum for reviewing such international financial and economic institutions as the EBRD and the OECD, the Pan-African Parliament might consider acting as a parliamentary forum for such institutions as the African Development Bank.

14. The Assembly welcomes the Resolution on the state of play of European Union-Africa relations (INI/2007/2002) adopted by the European Parliament on 25 October 2007 and the joint statement adopted by the European and Pan-African Parliaments in advance of the Lisbon European Union-Africa Summit held in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007. Implementation of the joint strategy and action plan resulting from that summit should be closely monitored by parliaments in the European Union and Africa.

15. Experience of international co-operation has shown that sharing of experience and good practice improves the quality of policies. Among other institutions, the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity of the Council of Europe (the North-South Centre) has a wide range of experience on which to base new work focusing on global development education and on good governance founded on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It is vital that the centre regain the full confidence of the Council of Europe member states by pursuing programmes that correspond more closely to the needs and interests of its present and potential stakeholders, with the full support of the Parliamentary Assembly.

16. Therefore, the Assembly:

16.1. gives its full support to the efforts made both in Africa and in Europe to enhance the role of parliaments in promoting and exercising supervision of NEPAD and the processes of its implementation, and in winning the support and participation of the people;

16.2. calls on the governments and parliaments of the Council of Europe member states to:

16.2.1. increase support and assistance for NEPAD by all appropriate means in order to help it achieve the success the peoples of Africa deserve;

16.2.2. ensure that, in all official development assistance contributions and agreements, specific amounts are earmarked for strengthening the capacity of Africa's national parliaments and parliamentary bodies, and that such agreements stipulate that parliaments must be involved in overseeing their implementation in accordance with the principles of good governance;

16.2.3. follow critically and sustain their support for the APRM and the plans of action resulting from the process, over which the African countries should remain in control;

16.3. calls on the parliaments of the Council of Europe member states to involve themselves more closely in development issues, possibly by establishing development co-operation committees where they do not yet exist;

16.4. calls on the parliaments of Europe and Africa to:

16.4.1. intensify their scrutiny of development policies, processes and mechanisms with a view to ensuring coherence and good governance and, in particular, to step up their supervision of overseas development assistance so as to ensure that it is properly spent in accordance with government policy;

16.4.2. step up intercontinental parliament-to-parliament dialogue and co-operation between the two continents with regard to development assistance and good governance;

16.5. calls on the governments of the member states to:

16.5.1. keep to their commitments regarding official development assistance in general and for the African continent in particular;

16.5.2. step up their support for the North-South Centre and, as the case may be, join the centre or resume their membership of it;

16.6. invites the Bureau of the Assembly to:

16.6.1. take steps to implement more actively the Assembly's co-operation agreement with the Pan-African Parliament;

16.6.2. make fuller use of the Assembly's co-operation agreement with the North-South Centre.