

Behold I create a new Africa

Statement from a Pan-African Ecumenical Consultation on NEPAD

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. [Isaiah 43:19]

We, the participants of the Pan-African Ecumenical Consultation on the New Plan for Africa's Development (NEPAD), have gathered at the Eskom Conference Centre in Johannesburg from 23rd to 26th of March 2003 under the theme "Behold I Create a New Africa" to consider how we are called to renew our beloved continent, transform our social and political institutions, reassert African values and ensure that all of Africa's people enjoy abundant life. In particular, we have come together to recognise NEPAD as a vision embodying Africa's yearning toward total emancipation and to develop ways of increasing public awareness of NEPAD, enhancing popular involvement in its implementation, and enriching the spiritual and cultural dimensions of its vision.

We recognise that

NEPAD is a framework and vision as well as a programme of action drawn up by African heads of states. It is one of the major visions that African countries have been looking forward to. The church welcomes such an initiative. However, the church needs to consider this initiative in a constructive and critical manner in light of the gospel. NEPAD seeks to enhance sustainable development by eradicating poverty and promoting democracy and good governance. It also encourages mobilisation of resources from both home and external sources to support integrated projects and programmes.

We take into consideration the problems that the African continent faces:

- Despite immense natural and human resources, African people still live with abject poverty, war, conflict, HIV/AIDS and their attendant consequences.
- There is a lack of effective accountable leadership, democracy and respect of human dignity and rights.
- There is poor communication between leaders and the people they should be accountable to.
- Most of the institutional structures of governance available hinder involvement of ordinary citizens in decision-making.
- There have been limited efforts made by African states to create infrastructure that can enable easy movement of goods as well as people.
- This has hindered information exchange and promotion of trade that would have contributed to the eradication of poverty.
- New knowledge and creativity for transformation of resources have been hindered for too long.

In this global situation, where Africa is affected by crisis, the Church has not done enough to engage African people and States to affirm their dignity and promote their skills, sense of responsibility and creativity to overcome poverty.

In terms of the ecumenical commitment, we recognise that there are four levels of interaction: continental, sub-regional, national and local levels. At each of these levels, there should be permanent/regular dialogue and interaction between and among churches/ecumenical bodies with states, and other civil society organizations about NEPAD.

Now, therefore,

1. The AACC in conjunction with other ecumenical bodies should formulate the African Ecumenical Charter, which shall be the framework of our vision, actualization and realization of our commitment.
2. The AACC should establish a desk working on NEPAD issues. This should work hand in hand with other bodies that promote ecumenical action and understanding.
3. Churches, theological institutions and ecumenical bodies should work together to continue to:
 - a. promote a theology and a spirituality that enhances a holistic development of human being created in the image of God; and
 - b. explore and highlight the rich and positive dimensions of African culture, which are necessary for development
4. The NEPAD vision challenges churches to promote incarnated and contextualised theology for a new society in Africa.

We call on the NEPAD Secretariat to:

1. Work with the AACC and other ecumenical bodies at different levels, to establish a working relationship that enhances implementation of NEPAD in ways that promote faith, order, dignity, peace, gender equality and justice.
2. Develop and/or facilitate strategies that enable Africa to avoid negative consequences of investment, privatization, commodification of public goods (such as water, electricity, telephone). Investment should encourage and take into account empowerment of African businesspersons.
3. Facilitate formulation of strategies that ensure justice, fairness and equity in Africa's dealings with international trade.
4. Work with ecumenical bodies to mobilise resources within and outside the African continent, including Africans in the Diaspora.

We, the participants, commit ourselves to:

1. Take further action on consultation, and implementation of the NEPAD through the attached plan of action.
2. Disseminate the results of this consultation to our respective churches, ecumenical bodies and networks.
3. Dialogue with people of goodwill of other faiths in furthering this vision and commitment.

We acknowledge with appreciation the support and prayers of those who made this timely consultation possible. Nothing can happen if there is no dream. And when we dream together our dreams become reality.

Johannesburg
26 March 2003