

Conclusions of the OATUU – ICFTU/AFRO meeting held on the 30th of June to the 2nd of July 11, 2002

Umhlanga, Durban

Introduction

We the leaders drawn from the Executive Boards of our two continental trade union federations - Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and the African Regional Organisation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (AFRO-ICFTU) are emerging from a successful two days workshop on NEPAD.

The workshop was convened to take forward the Dakar Declaration adopted in the joint ICFTU-AFRO and OATUU meeting in Dakar, Senegal on February 2002. It was also convened on the eve of the historic launch of the African Union. The African Union opens a new chapter in Africa's political and economic relations.

We affirm our commitment to the Declaration and believe it provides the framework for a detailed Position Paper on NEPAD. A committee of experts will be convened to develop a far more detailed position paper on NEPAD using the declaration as a basis. The Committee will also take into account the work of experts who worked on the Declaration in Dakar and the input made in the Durban meeting. The Committee will undertake its work under the supervision of the General Secretaries of OATUU & ICFTU.

We reiterate our support for the objectives and principles informing the NEPAD. We make ourselves available to form a partnership with our democratically elected governments, the new structures of the AU, the rest of the progressive civil society movements including community based organisations and the rest of our people so that we can work in concert in pursuance of the dream to make this century a truly African one. We welcome the undertaking by President Mbeki to open the doors for trade unions to participate in the NEPAD process. President Mbeki made an undertaking to table a proposal in the AU that there should be tripartite consultations and deepen social dialogue at national, sub regional and continental level including creation of institutional mechanism to achieve this objective. However, we remain critical of the manner in which NEPAD was developed with the exclusion of civil society and trade unions and as such are encouraged by the undertaking made by the President.

For far too long, Africa and her people, have been trapped in a vicious circle of underdevelopment with devastating impact on the ordinary citizens of most of our continent's people. We yearn for an Africa which is free from underdevelopment, poverty, diseases, ignorance, undemocratic practices including military coups, lack of respect for human and trade union rights, etc.

As a direct victim of all these social ills, we the trade unions have to do every thing to ensure that we wipe these from the face of the African continent.

We are concerned that the NEPAD does not analyse the failure of previous programmes. This robbed us of an very rich experience to learn from our previous mistakes and positive lessons.

We remain concerned that the NEPAD's paradigm and model does not depart fundamentally from previous programmes designed by the World Bank and the IMF. We believe that there should be a critical analysis of structural adjustment programmes and how the global economy reinforces Africa's marginalisation.

The structural factors include continued dependence on imports of manufacturing in return for exports of raw materials. The current global reality continues to reinforce Africa's role as a provider of raw materials in the global division of labour. Secondly, massive inequalities in the control of productive assets as well as education is a structural impediment to sustainable development. Many of the African countries are facing a crippling external debt whose repayment is diverting resources for economic and social development. As trade unions, we believe a far more strong case for debt cancellation should be made as African countries have paid three times more than the principal of the debt.

Generally, our concerns include:

NEPAD is vague and ambiguous as to how its goals would be achieved. This is manifest vividly in economic and governance proposals.

NEPAD sets a limited vision for the role of the state in the economy. The state is seen as creating an enabling environment for capital, especially foreign capital, by protecting property rights and providing social and economic infrastructure. This limited vision contradicts NEPAD own admission that the state is central as a driver of development.

While we welcome proposals on democratisation and governance, mechanisms for popular participation are not clearly elaborated. For us democratisation is an important goal since trade unions are routinely persecuted by undemocratic regimes. For this reason we want to see tangible programmes to deal with states that do not meet the standards set in the NEPAD. The African Charter for Popular Participation must inform NEPAD's approach to governance and popular participation.

NEPAD seems to be biased towards fiscal restraint. This would deny the state the requisite resources to lead development and address poverty, lack of infrastructure and social and economic development.

This is not an exhaustive list but raises some of our key concerns. We need the space to present our detailed and elaborate proposals on how NEPAD

could be improved. To this extent we shall use the detailed Dakar Declaration, discussion and inputs to the two days workshop to develop a detailed submission in order to propose alternative proposals to those NEPAD proposals that we do not agree with and to beef up those we agree with.

It is important that a clear mechanism for continuous engagement is developed and agreed upon to grant us a platform to raise these questions. Our discussion with President Mbeki, the coming chairperson of AU was meant to explore this further. We shall interact with the Steering Committee and other organs of the AU to take this forward.