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Top UN officials praise gains of African development partnership



General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

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The President of the General Assembly today praised the African initiative created to enhance the continent's economic growth, development and participation in the global economy, saying it has contributed significantly towards the socio-economic progress achieved over the past decade.

“Africa has been the home of six out of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world,” said Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the President of the 66th session of the General Assembly, which

hosted a high-level event to mark the 10th anniversary of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

“Africa is a growth pole and is increasingly attracting foreign direct investment. Social indicators, such as those for education and health, have significantly improved,” Mr. Al-Nasser told the event, entitled *NEPAD and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Progress, Challenges and the Way Forward*.

“NEPAD's priorities – poverty eradication, sustainable growth, the empowerment of women – echo those of the United Nations Millennium Declaration,” he added.

The NEPAD initiative of the African Union (AU) was adopted in 2001, with the continent's leaders pledging to pursue new priorities and approaches for the political and socio-economic transformation of Africa. The programme is intended to accelerate Africans' efforts to extricate the continent from underdevelopment and exclusion from the global economy.

Mr. Al-Nasser said NEPAD's African peer review mechanism had helped improve good governance and rule of law, thus creating an atmosphere conducive to sustainable and broad-based economic growth.

“While strengthening partnership with NEPAD, it is also important to look beyond aid. We must emphasize the need for a productive global partnership which includes mutually beneficial trade and investment relationships, as well as the protection of the global climate.

“The 10th anniversary of NEPAD is an opportunity to renew the genuine partnership between African Member States and development partners. This partnership should capitalize and build upon achievements to date,” he said.

Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro pointed out that NEPAD “broke new ground” as a concept, stressing that “Africa should own the African development process.”

“Thanks to the efforts of hard-working Africans and the support of development partners, these past 10 years have seen remarkable economic progress,” she [said](#), noting that continent's average economic growth from 2002 until last year was an impressive 5.5 per cent.

“All of these positive signs are translating into gains for the Millennium Development Goals and the African people. Governments scaled up investments in education, health, agriculture, and food security.”

Ms. Migiro, however, stressed that what has been achieved has not been sufficient to lift large numbers of Africans out of poverty.

“The African child who gets an education still may not find a decent job. The African woman who enjoys greater gender equality still may die in childbirth. The African patient receiving anti-retroviral drugs still may fall victim to bacteria from poor sanitation.”

She said the much more remains to be done and that the UN MDG Acceleration Framework would help governments overcome the main obstacles to progress.

“We are working especially closely with the African Union to strengthen the continent’s capacity to reach its development goals.

“We will continue to help build skills and technological capabilities. We will press on in helping mobilize domestic resources and foreign direct investment. And we will support Africa’s industries so that they can become more competitive.”

Cheikh Sidi Diarra, the UN Special Adviser on Africa and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States told a news conference on the margins of the high-level event that he was “very optimistic for the future of the continent,” noting that Africa’s governance was improving.

He pointed out that decentralization of local development at national levels, regional integration and international treaties were gradually reducing governments’ stranglehold on power, leading to greater transparency and accountability in many African States.

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