

REPORT ON THE “UNLOCKING NEPAD” CONFERENCE HELD AT SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE: 21-23 APRIL 2002.

This conference arose in response to the NEPAD initiative set up in July 2001. As the theme implies, the conference was about looking at ways in which NEPAD could be unlocked by means of addressing issues involved. The conference was focussed on the corporate and private sectors and aimed to get their support for NEPAD and set the foundations for the establishment of partnerships between the State and the private sector.

The conference was organised jointly by the University of Pretoria, the SABC and Mafube Publishing. The major sponsors were the IDC, MTN, SABC, Murray and Roberts, and Metropolitan Life. Approximately 300 delegates attended it from various private sector companies.

The conference Chairperson was Prof. Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo, Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria. The speakers included Dr J Ohiorhenuan of the United Nations, Prof Wiseman Nkuhlu of the NEPAD Secretariat, Mr Moss Mashishi, CEO of the Johannesburg World Summit Company, Dr Vincent Maphai of the NEPAD Secretariat, Mr Mpho Makwana, CEO of Saatchi and Saatchi, Mr G Giorgis, Director of the African Development Bank, Dr Andile Ngcaba, the Director-General of the Department of Communications, Prof. Calie Pistorius, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, Ms Bongwiwe Njobe, Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, Dr Khaya Ngqulu, CEO of the IDC, and Mr Sunday Dogonyaro of the NEPAD Secretariat.

The conference covered various aspects, while the essence of the discussions revolved around identifying the needs of the country, challenges facing the country, and suggestions for dealing with these problems. These were seen as forming the basis for the promotion of growth and sustainable development.

The primary needs identified were: employment, sufficient and affordable food, education, health, water, the environment, and the promotion of the creativity of individuals. The need for a long-term view for sustained investment and the promotion of growth as a means of dealing with the problem of poverty were emphasised. So too were the need to diversify the economy, to generate foreign exchange and to create jobs.

Some of the challenges facing the continent were highlighted, viz. the resolution of conflicts, the treatment of communicable diseases, the protection of the environment, the eradication of poverty, the negotiation of partnerships with developed countries. There is a need for commitment on the part of leaders to democracy, respect for human rights, and the promotion of good political and economic governance. The leaders need to be accountable in order to ensure global prosperity.

The key strategic thrusts identified, stressed African ownership and leadership, an intensification of efforts to end conflicts, and increased capacity building in the public sector. It was stressed that the NEPAD initiative would provide opportunities that had to be used by the private sector.

At the end of the conference, a declaration was drawn up, providing issues that should be referred to the NEPAD Secretariat to be followed-up.

Detailed Conference Proceedings are accessible on the website of the University of Pretoria at: www.up.ac.za/academic/economic/ and then choosing the NEPAD option.