



# The African Union and Nepad

*The National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) has agreed to engage on Nepad and the African Union (AU)*

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the African Union (AU) is to become a standing agenda item at Nedlac. This was agreed at an executive council meeting at Nedlac in July.

The council was addressed by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin. He reported on the recent inaugural assembly of the African Union in Durban, where the assembled heads of state and government met and considered the report of the Nepad Implementation Committee which was established in July 2001.

Erwin said there had been good progress in terms of the AU's adoption of a Peace and Security Council. It was a priority now to get this up and running. There had also been agreement on an African Peer Review Mechanism. This mechanism would promote adherence to a number of commitments that the heads of state made in a declaration on democracy, political, economic and corporate governance, adopted at the Durban meeting.

There were initial action plans on priority areas, which the G8 had broadly agreed to fast-track, these included:

- West African Power Pool (building new power and gas stations)
- Southern African Zambezi Valley Projects (rail, roads etc)
- Nile River Basin Project (rehabilitating wetlands and lakes to promote agriculture).

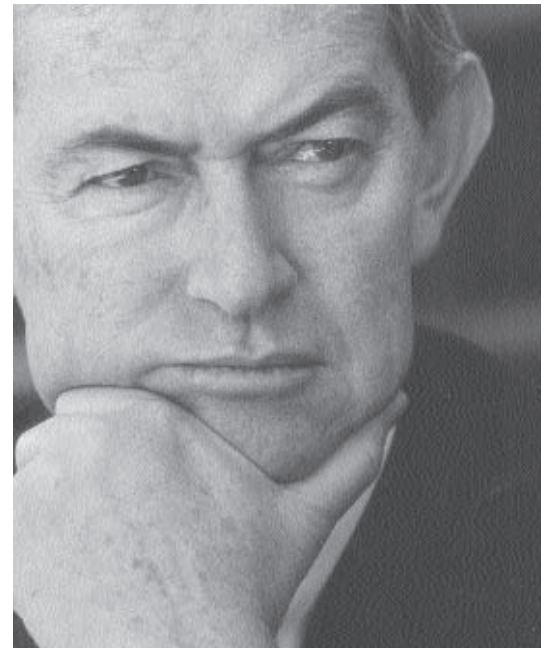
Erwin said that a process was in place with Business to update it on Nepad, but that there needed to be a process in Nedlac that would engage on Nepad issues.

### **Constituency queries**

The business delegation indicated that it was broadly in support of Nepad. It requested clarity on the relationship between Nepad and the AU. It also enquired as to what would happen to countries that do not voluntarily submit to peer review.

Labour agreed that a Nedlac process needed to be formalised, as Nepad was moving very fast, and there was a need for information dissemination. With regards to encouraging dialogue between the social partners, labour asked whether the heads of state were thinking of setting up a mechanism for social dialogue along the lines of Nedlac. Labour was also concerned about how the peer review would

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operate, in particular with regards to leaders such as Muammar Gaddafi, who the media had portrayed as being opposed to Nepad. It also enquired about how individual countries would coordinate in terms of the regional process.

Community wanted to know how civil society was going to be involved in the various AU structures, such as the economic and social council. It also enquired how plans that were already in place, such as the Plan of Action on Disabled People in Africa would be fitted into the AU programme.

### **Government response**

Government explained that Nepad was a process taking place within the AU. It was a project, not an institution. AU



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countries would be called on to implement the Nepad programme. Under the Nepad initiative, the continent had been divided into five regions, although there were some problems with this that needed to be sorted out. With regards to the old and new leadership, government said that although the debate was intensive, the over-riding aim of the AU was to ensure democracy and good governance. He played down the influence that Colonel Gaddafi would have within the AU and Nepad.

Government said it was important that social partners linked up throughout Africa to ensure they have a meaningful involvement in the AU. It said that Nedlac needed to advise other African countries in terms of setting up similar institutions, and that constituencies needed to strengthen their relationships with their counterparts in the rest of Africa. ■

## Issues currently on the

# Nedlac agenda

### Development Chamber

A national summit for civil society participation under the Cotonou Agreement will be held on 12 - 13 August. The aim of the summit is to build capacity amongst civil society in order to facilitate greater involvement in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, which was signed between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in 2000.

*National Plan for Higher Education* - A meeting was held with the Minister of Education on 26 July 2002 to discuss the plan. Constituencies were given the opportunity of raising their concerns directly with the minister.

### Draft White Paper on Water Services

*HIV/AIDS* - The task team has covered the issue of workplace best practice, and is now looking specifically at what programmes are in place for rural and unemployed people.

*WSSD* - The Nedlac constituencies have been very involved in the lead-up to the Summit, and will also be taking part in the Civil Society Conference parallel to the Summit.

### Public Finance and Monetary Policy Chamber

A report on the food price increases is due to be finalised shortly. The constituencies have been engaging on a number of proposals on how to tackle the issue of the rising food prices.

A Financial Sector Summit will take place on 20 August 2002. This will be the culmination of many months of engagement by the constituencies on issues such as third tier banking, cooperatives, credit bureaus and the extension of banking to under-banked sectors of society.

### Trade and Industry Chamber

- *Sector summits* in the metals and engineering and the petrochemicals sectors are currently being planned.
- *Integrated manufacturing strategy* - Nedlac parties are giving input to the governments industrial strategy.
- *Trade agreements* - the Chamber is facilitating input into South Africa's trade negotiations, including setting up parallel processes to the committees under the WTO in order to prepare for the next round of negotiations.

### Labour Market Chamber

*Social Security* - in a joint task team with the Development Chamber, Nedlac is coordinating the response of the constituencies to the Taylor Commission Report on a Comprehensive Social Security system.

Productivity research being undertaken by the Department of Labour and the National Productivity Institute will be fed into the Nedlac process.