

Mutual Accountability and the role of the Africa Partnership Forum

Discussion paper for the Abuja meeting of 9 and 10 April 2005

1. The concept of mutual accountability

The concept of mutual accountability has gained an ever increasing position as one of the pillars of international cooperation for development in the past four years, starting with the Millennium Summit Declaration, followed by the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg, Rome and Paris Declarations. It stems from the recognition that the world shares a common objective as far as development and well-being for all is concerned and that the policies of both the developed countries and the developing countries are crucial for realising that objective. Holding each other accountable will help to ensure that we all live up to our commitments and to strengthen public support for that effort. Accountability at the international level should build on accountability mechanisms at the country level for which (in the domain of aid effectiveness) a target was formulated in the recent Paris Declaration.

This spirit of shared responsibility for development effectiveness is furthermore firmly embedded in the NEPAD vision, creating an environment for mutual accountability that can enhance the credibility of commitments undertaken by both Africa and its partners

Agreement on the importance of the concept of mutual accountability has been reached. Mechanisms will now have to be developed to operationalise and implement this concept, in particular in the case of Africa. So far the emerging structure lacks co-ordination and there is a danger of high transaction costs. Monitoring still tends to concentrate on compliance by recipient countries. Most existing reviews of donor performance lack close African involvement. Many lack real teeth to implement their findings and to enforce delivery. In its recent report the Commission for Africa has encouraged Africa to establish their own mechanism for monitoring of donor commitments. Moreover, the Commission has recommended that an independent mechanism should be established to monitor progress on the basis of a short annual report drawing on information of existing mutual reviews.

The Africa Partnership Forum will have to mark out its own position within this emerging structure of mutual accountability.

2. Mutual accountability and the Africa Partnership Forum (APF)

The Africa Partnership Forum (APF) that emanated from the G-8 response to NEPAD, the Africa Action Plan, now joins G-8 and other OECD donor partners with representatives from Africa, i.e. the NEPAD secretariat and the NEPAD Implementation Committee members, in a shared Forum and is eminently placed to assist in implementing mutual accountability. Since its inception the Forum has been looking for ways to maximise the effectiveness of its partnership dialogue. Within the partnership there is a widely shared sense that the Forum should devise a more structured approach to the monitoring of efforts of partners to support development in Africa. If the Forum succeeds in this challenge, APF could serve as a strong mechanism for mutual accountability. At the same time these efforts should fit in the broader international monitoring structure that is now gradually taking shape. The APF should make

use of and further build upon existing activities in other fora. These activities include the Mutual Review initiative of ECA-OECD/DAC, the UN Advisory Panel reports, the UN MDG summit and monitoring, the Paris HLF, the IMF/Worldbank Global Monitoring Report, the SPA tracking exercise and the recently formulated NEPAD EPRM discussion document.

If there is agreement about an active role of the APF within the international monitoring structure the following issues should be further discussed:

- What is the added value of a monitoring effort by the APF?
- How broad and comprehensive should this monitoring be?
- What (existing) material can be used for such a monitoring effort?

In order to address these issues it is useful to look at some of the existing review processes related to the support for NEPAD.

3. ECA-OECD/DAC Mutual Review of development effectiveness

A new instrument for monitoring the progress of Africa and its development partners in support of the NEPAD objectives is the Mutual Review Report to be issued by the secretariats of ECA and OECD-DAC. The publication of the first of these reports is foreseen for mid-2005, but preparations are well underway and a complete draft will be presented at the APF meeting in Abuja. The Report will contain, for each of its seven chapters, an assessment of performance and three common sections: main messages, action frontiers and scorecards. The Report will be discussed in various fora both at the expert level and at the political level. What the Mutual Review aims to provide is a living reference point for both African countries and OECD countries, based on existing commitments and agreed action frontiers, which can be monitored on an ongoing basis, with benchmarks for the next review in 2007.

The Mutual Review Report could help to focus the stocktaking and monitoring function of the APF. This suggestion however raises several issues and questions:

- Could the two-yearly Mutual Review provide sufficient input for an in-depth monitoring of G-8 and NEPAD relations or is a more specific and regular G-8 monitoring necessary?
- What elements or chapters of the Mutual Review Report are particularly suited for discussion in the APF?
- How do the discussion in APF and its conclusions relate to the discussions in other fora?

4. Monitoring by NEPAD

African leaders have by signing the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance committed to implementing sound economic policies, tackling corruption, improving political governance, investing in their people, adopting the MDGs as the common reference point for development planning and establishing an investment climate to attract private capital. Mutual Accountability within NEPAD takes the form of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM is a product of African ownership and care should be taken not to undermine this initiative by outside interference. Nevertheless, the key indicators that form the basis of the peer reviews under this mechanism could in principle and after they have become public also inform the mutual review between Africa and its development partners.

In this regard the NEPAD secretariat has developed an interesting discussion document that highlights the African viewpoint on how the continent could further proceed with an External

Partners Peer Review Mechanism (EPPRM), as a complement to the internal review which is the APRM. The concept has not yet been formalised, but warrants to be taken into account in the final determination of the role of the APF.

5. Monitoring progress on NEPAD in the UN

The Secretary-General of the UN regularly reports on progress in the implementation of NEPAD and international support for NEPAD. In addition in 2004 the Secretary-General established an Advisory Panel on International Support for NEPAD. This Panel will focus on assessing and mobilising support of the international community, including the UN system, for NEPAD. The Panel, composed of eminent personalities from Africa and the international community, will also advise the Secretary-General on appropriate measures to enhance international support for NEPAD, reporting once a year. It seems that monitoring within the UN has a sufficiently distinct character to complement the activities of the APF.

6. Role and functioning of the APF

The APF has an unique position as the only international forum where representatives of the NEPAD vision and its development partners meet regularly at a high political level to discuss progress or lack of it in specific matters relevant to international development. It is a truly equal partnership with direct lines to the leadership of both NEPAD and the G-8. It could and should build on this strength to produce an added value complementary to other fora contributing to the further operationalisation of the concept of mutual accountability. More than other fora the APF is in the position to discuss implementation of commitments resulting from the G-8 Africa Action Plan. To be effective the APF will have to better focus its mode of operation on this monitoring process.

The role and functioning of the APF were subject of discussion during earlier meetings, in particular during the meeting in Maputo in 2004. It was concluded then that the APF is an agenda setting entity in assessing the implementation of NEPAD, especially identifying gaps and constraints; sharing of information; review and assess commitments and pledges made by partners and reporting back to decision makers for remedial actions at a political strategic level. This conclusion underlines the need for regular stocktaking of progress in both NEPAD programmes and G8 action plans as well as for concrete and monitorable outcomes of APF reviews to follow up on his stocktaking.

Monitoring by the APF could take the form of a regular broad review of the various key issues that influence the effectiveness of development efforts related to the G-8 – NEPAD partnership by bringing out the main bottlenecks for progress. This process would bring together the results of the monitoring exercises in other fora with emphasis on coherence and working across the system. A limited number of issues could be selected for a more in-depth analysis if needed. The APF dialogue should keep its political character and should avoid (as much as possible) overlap with contents of debate between experts in other fora. (or pledging demands for individual programmes). The bottlenecks that would thus be identified should be brought to the attention of the highest political level, in particular the G8 summit participants, and the responsible specialised (multilateral) institutions.

7. Procedures

In order to bring more focus in the monitoring role of the APF the procedures of its meeting have to be adapted.. One of the lessons of earlier meetings is that the agenda of the APF should be focussed on a few well-prepared issues and interventions should be kept limited and to the point. Consensus should be reached on bottlenecks and agreement on how to move an issue forward within the various political settings. The effectiveness of APF meetings could be further enhanced along the lines of suggestions made during earlier meetings. These suggestions include:

- Formalising the rules of procedure;
- Establishing special taskforces between meetings;
- Spelling out the tasks of the co-chairs;
- Earlier and more broad-based preparation of papers;
- Formulating action-oriented conclusions and outcomes of meetings;
- Intensifying cooperation between the secretariats of NEPAD and OECD.

On the basis of these suggestions the following adapted mode of operation of the APF could be discussed:

- Interaction between donor and African parties should not be limited around the preparation of formal APF-meetings but should be a continuous process depending on actuality.
 - (Reduce the number of co-chairs to two).
 - Positionpapers are prepared well in advance of meetings and should be based on consensus between the secretariats of NEPAD and the OECD/DAC.
 - Co-chairs should after each meeting identify a limited number of bottlenecks and how to proceed with these issues.
 - Specific issues are delegated to small working parties comprising of at least one African and one OECD country for formulating action proposals.
 - Partners give progress accounts during subsequent meetings.
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