

The Vaal Consensus

Conscious of the pivotal role of the media in the overall development of Africa, and recognizing such ongoing functional contributions of the continent's media to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as the Africa Union's flagship program for socio-economic transformation, a Regional Media Dialogue was held in The Vaal, Gauteng, South Africa (19-20 February 2009) to deliberate on how this role can be strengthened.

At the end of the dialogue, Participants agreed on this Statement:

We, men and women of the media and participating institutions, meeting in The Vaal, South Africa, renew our commitment towards African development. We acknowledge NEPAD as the development framework of Africa and commit to contribute to its successful implementation.

We strongly believe that the African media should be better informed of the progress in implementation of NEPAD projects and of other initiatives, which contribute towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We engaged specifically on the role of the African media in development, popularizing the continent's priority programmes and strategies for improving the communications and outreach activities of the African Union Commission (AUC) and its NEPAD programme.

As we reflect, we see a positive push for an African renaissance, particularly in promoting genuine participatory democracy, sustainable development and economic growth. However, Africa faces a lot of challenges in its development endeavours.

We acknowledge that the African media possess the talent and capacity to positively impact on the lives of Africans; and therefore renew our commitment to disseminate information on Africa in a way that reflects the true realities of the continent.

We pledge to continue to act as watchdogs on behalf of the governed and to hold our leaders accountable to the development commitments they make at national and continental levels.

We shall aim to tell the African development story from an African perspective, but without compromising objectivity.

We urge the African Union Commission, the NEPAD and APRM Secretariats, UN Agencies and other development partners to open active channels of communication and to facilitate the corroboration of information received by the media on the AUC and its NEPAD Programme or on any aspect of its implementation.

We also urge these agencies to take an active role in the development of the African media capacity to work towards the strengthening of the African media for genuine citizen journalism.

Finally, we welcome the opportunity to partner with the AUC, NEPAD Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities, Civil Society Organizations, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to work towards African development in general.

Adopted at The Vaal, South Africa, on 20 February 2009