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**Contribution to the
Africa-Recruit Employment and Human Resource Sharing/Exchange Seminar –
Engaging with the African Diaspora /
10-11 March 2005, London, United Kingdom**

The Diaspora in the context of the African Union:

The important role that Africans in the Diaspora can play in supporting Africa's quest and efforts for promoting sustainable development has been clearly recognized in the context of the African Union and its Programme, the New Partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD).

Efforts are underway to get a structured dialogue and to promote a regular interaction with organizations representing Africans in the Diaspora.

Various outreach activities and/or specific actions targeting the Africans in the Diaspora have been undertaken by the African Union, including meetings and efforts aiming at involving the Diaspora in the debate on the continent and its future. It is worth mentioning two major elements in this regard, namely the "Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora" / CIAD – 7-9 October 2004, Dakar, Senegal - <http://www.au-ciad.org/> and the establishment and future launching (27-30 march 2005 in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), a consultative body where the Diaspora would be represented <http://www.africa-union.org/organs/ecosocc/home.htm>.

Besides, the African Union is promoting an African intergovernmental consideration of a Draft Strategic Policy Framework on Migration in the context of the African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission. The document is of high interest and direct relevance to the Africans in the Diaspora as the general objective of the Policy Framework is to encourage Member States to implement and integrate migration issues into their national and regional agenda.

It should be recalled that in July 2001, in Lusaka, Zambia, the OAU (Organization of African Unity) Council of Ministers adopted a decision (text enclosed) whereby they :

- noted with concern the "brain drain" issue affecting the continent at a moment where African countries need their qualified and skilled manpower to face the globalization challenges; and
- recommended to Member States to work towards free movement of people ...and to create enabling conditions for the participation of migrants, in particular Africans Diaspora in the development of their home countries;

It should be equally recalled that in July 2002, in Durban, South Africa, the Executive Council of the African Union (i.e. the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs)



mandated the African Union to work with the African Diaspora and support their involvement in the programmes of the Union. The following year, in July 2003, in Maputo, the African Union Summit endorsed this decision and included a new clause in the AU Constitutive Act to “invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora in the building of the African Union”.

The Diaspora in the context of NEPAD:

Under the NEPAD Initiative, the contribution of the African Diaspora has been mainly associated with the ambitious goal of turning the “Brain Drain” phenomena into a “Brain Gain” potential.

The Initiative aims at promoting sustainable development across the continent and as such, provides directly and indirectly for a meaningful contribution to be made by the Africans in the Diaspora. Programmes initiated in the fields of human development (like health and education), infrastructure, agriculture, industry, business and SME’s to mention but few represent areas where the Diaspora could be contributing. Other programmes aiming at improving political, economic and corporate governance as well as integration on the continent have also the potential to pave the way for an increased presence and role of the Diaspora in support of Africa’s development.

This poses a serious challenge in terms of coming up with the right mechanisms and modalities for harnessing and making an optimal use of the huge potential offered by the Diaspora and integrating it adequately and harmoniously into national and regional efforts and processes.

To that end, dialogue with Diaspora organizations and other relevant stakeholders should be regarded as one of the best ways to move steadily from intentions and pledges to concrete actions with a view to promoting a genuine integration of the Diaspora in Africa’s development efforts.

The NEPAD/Africa-Recruit Partnership:

The Seminar organized by “Africa-Recruit” from 10 to 11 March 2005 offers a good avenue for this shared goal to be progressively realized.

In this regard, the partnership between the NEPAD Secretariat and the Commonwealth Business Council for turning the “brain drain” phenomena into a “brain gain” reservoir is entering its third year.

The articulation of the partnership through the “Africa-Recruit” Initiative, jointly launched in March 2003, is making progress and gaining momentum both within the Africans in the Diaspora circles and in some African countries.

However, much more remains to be done and more efforts need to be undertaken to sustain the trend and provide it with a solid basis if Africa is to fully exploit the untapped potential represented by the so many African professionals keen and ready to contribute to the continent’s quest for progress and development.



The seminars and meetings held so far by the promoters of “Africa-Recruit”, both in the UK and across Africa, have incontestably contributed to raising awareness and providing a platform for a dialogue and debate on the urgent necessity for Africa to make use of her daughters and sons living outside the continent. It remains, now, to promote concrete ways and means of facilitating a real flow back of highly skilled Africans.

In this context, the concrete project proposed by the CBC for setting up an “**African Diaspora Skills Database and Information Resource**” is a laudable move for it constitutes a valuable tool serving as a bridge between the African Diaspora and the employers (public and private) on the continent.

It is our hope that the project be rapidly reaching out to relevant stakeholders on the Continent and building on the initial interest generated within the African professionals in the Diaspora. This would be the real test for our common endeavour. A test that would allow for sustaining the positive trends generated by the project and for yielding the expected results.

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