

Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane's speaking notes - UN General Assembly Side Event

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UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SIDE EVENT
New York, USA; 24th September, 2015, @ 10:00

Event Title:

How NEPAD Programmes can deliver On the SDGs in Africa:
Regional integration in catalysing national implementation to realise the SDGs - Experiences and insights

Panel 1 Theme:

Business unusual in development efforts, development financing, and publicprivate engagement to attain success on Agenda 2063 and SDG's in Africa

Excellency's, Honourable Guests and Friends.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today, at this great moment in history where global leaders are afforded a once in a life-time opportunity to commit to change the world as we know it.

I must begin by commending the process that has been undertaken in the last three years to consult extensively on the development of the Sustainable Development Goals. The strong unity shown by our African governments in particular, and various organs of the African Union is inspired by our common identity, and our commitment to the common good. We must carry this zeal through to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the next 15 years.

When the organisers of this event bring us together to explore how we can deliver on the SDG's in Africa – they raise an important question. This is a question we should ask of the NEPAD Agency together with all other African institutions that have a mandate to deliver development to the African people.

I must therefore sincerely thank the NEPAD Agency and the Government of Zambia for putting together this important engagement; and commend them especially for opening up the space to partner with us as civil society through African Monitor and the Africa CSO Working Group on post-2015.

Let me highlight just four things that I believe are going to be necessary if we are to deliver on the commitments in the SDG agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063

1. The first point I want to make answers the question: "How can we inject a 'Business Unusual' approach to development implementation?"

Some of the key norms and practices at the centre of the 'business as usual' approach include a top down approach to development with tokenistic involvement of citizens; marginalization of grassroots communities and citizens in their own development; accountability to donors and the political class as opposed to accountability to people; and the notion that Africa's poor and grassroots communities need to be developed with nothing much to contribute to development.

If we wish to realize the SDGs and Agenda 2063, we will have to change our mindset from these dated ineffective approaches to development, and transform the culture of our development institutions as well. The SDG's promote a people-centred agenda to development, which means that citizens have a role as beneficiaries of development outcomes; but also have a role as legitimate participants in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development delivery.

Through African Monitor and the Africa CSO Working Group, we are cultivating and raising the agency of citizens and grassroots communities in development by increasing the capacity to meaningfully participate in development processes.

Can we say that African development institutions have made the transition towards a holistic people-centred approach? What does this mean for development institutions like the NEPAD Agency; and what does it mean for African governments?

It means that institutions must adopt a citizen-centric approach to development. The citizen-centric development model is informed by the belief that government exists not as a power over citizens, but exists to serve citizens; and that citizen satisfaction therefore becomes the best measure of government success. Citizen-centric governments have institutions that are agile and respond effectively to the needs of citizens and the private sector. Increasing citizen centrality in governance of institutions is a lever to effective delivery.

2. Promoting domestication and ownership at the national level

At the national level most countries in Africa have National Development Plans; at the regional level we have Agenda 2063; and at the global level we have the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All of these seek to achieve the same thing, i.e., Securing lives of dignity for all in a sustainable world. Even though commitments can be made at different levels, implementation generally happens at the national level. African institutions must be cognisant to strengthen ownership at the national level by increasing dialogue, trust and cooperation with national level implementing agencies in the government, non-government and business sectors. The domestication of both these agenda's also means conscious efforts to integrate the key targets into national development plans and policies. Lastly, it is important to consider capacity needs at the national level, especially when it comes to the capacity of local governments to implement effectively.

3. We must also ask, "How can we inject Business Unusual in Development Financing?"

Seeing that colleagues on this panel are drawn from the private sector and multilateral institutions, they are going to talk about the scary figures and funding gaps. Let me rather focus on what I know through our work in development financing.

African Monitor's work on monitoring development commitments (by both African and donor governments) has shown that the most effective delivery method is to channel resources to the sectors with the greatest potential to transform citizens' lives, especially the lives of youth and women. This will make a difference in realizing SDGs and Agenda 2063. The finance for development conference rightly emphasized the importance of domestic resource mobilization in financing development. As Africa, we have tremendous opportunity to increase our capacities in this area by curbing illicit financial flows, capital flight, and brain drain. However, the greatest transformative shift will be when we take back ownership of our natural resources and begin to intelligently manage and use them for the development of Africa.

Having said this, let me quote from a speech made by President Kagame at the Ministers of Finance Meeting in March 2015 in Addis Ababa. President Kagame rightly cautioned that "It's not everything that needs money. There are some things we can do that do not require extensive resources to make a difference". Issues such as tapping into community capital as well as re-aligning expenditures with the expectations and demands of communities are crucial to crowd in private and public capital. Let me also say, we need to get serious about the recovery of our indigenous knowledge and African traditions of how to survive as communities and how to prosper as innovators and traders.

Business unusual in development financing also means we must re-imagine development cooperation. The SDG agenda calls for a new partnership deal in development cooperation, based on country ownership and cooperation. When we think about development cooperation, we must also think about effective ways to monitor (a) whether global commitments are met, (b) whether disbursement strategies are effective, and (c) whether these investments actually lead to change in the lives of beneficiaries. Thus we call for results-focussed development financing. If development financing is to be results focussed, by implications this means that citizens will have to play a critical role to provide beneficiary feedback; and to strengthen multi-stakeholder systems of mutual learning.

4. Lastly, what is business unusual in Public-Private engagement

I will not dwell much on the advantage and importance of facilitating private sector involvement as this will be addressed by my fellow panellists. Suffice to say that it is clear public resources will not be a sufficient source of financing for this new development agenda. Therefore, the potential role of business investment is significant. However, I am also apprehensive of public-private partnerships which mushroomed in the last decade or so. I am of the view that they need to be redefined to fit this era of sustainable development. I see the potential of the private sector in coming up with technology and innovation which could provide solutions to public challenges. In a number of cases this has resulted in life changing innovations. But in some cases, the neglect of

the principle of mutual benefit has resulted in less optimal development outcomes, leading to costly and inaccessible services. Public private partnerships still have the responsibility to adopt a citizen-centric approach in doing business. Public-private engagements and contracts should also be open and flexible to public scrutiny and review over time, to ensure governments don't lock themselves in unsustainable partnerships. What this means is that the private sector should be willing to equitably share the burden of implementing the SDG's at the national, regional and global levels.

African Monitor remains committed to work with all stakeholders, including African governments, the NEPAD Agency and other African development institutions to accelerate the implementation of the SDG's.

To end let me say this, the true measure of effectiveness for development programmes driven by the NEPAD Agency and other African development institutions will be the extent to which they create opportunities for Africa's youth population to achieve their true potential as productive members of society. The successful implementation of the SDG's and Agenda 2063 will certainly lead to a flourishing Africa. So many people have dreamt of this ideal of a prosperous Africa; and have lived and died for it! We owe to them, to ourselves, and to children to achieve it in this generation. African youth wait with anticipation to a rising Africa. Let us not dare fail them.

I thank you