

management of conflicts. A third focus was on social development including improving public health and education, and the alleviation of poverty and hunger.

African leaders said that the plan recognizes that top-down initiatives from outside Africa would not work. Yet, critics say the plan was developed by an African political elite and has been discussed and endorsed by the western political elite. The plan is capitalism-friendly and does not oppose structural adjustment, but seeks to modify it. Yash Tandon, the Director of the Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiation Initiative said NEPAD is worse than structural adjustment. Critics see it as embracing neo-liberal globalization and as based on a questionable assumption that greater integration into a global economy will be a good thing. Critics also suggest the leaders are soft on neo-colonialism. Patrick Bond of South Africa said NEPAD represents a "neoliberal recolonization" of the African political economy. Some see NEPAD as a betrayal of the hopes and dreams of the African people by the African leaders. Some women's groups also suggest the plan inadequately addresses the needs of women and girls.

Not all criticisms of NEPAD were outright rejections. Some criticisms were offered as a way of improving the agreement. Some critics call for more involvement of civil society and the general population, and for rethinking the document through a gender-lens. The enthusiasm for the plan must be anchored in firm, practical plans.

NEPAD is a dynamic instrument; it should not be discouraged by the challenges posed by critics. These challenges include:

- Poverty reduction – this must include defining what poverty is, and must be linked to other social development indicators such as education, healthcare, and unemployment.
- Environmental issues – while these issues are salient to Africa they must also be addressed within the context of global instruments.
- Peace and security – always fragile. Often initiatives for conflict resolution do not address the global issue of arms sales from western countries.
- Democratization – rule of law, greater participation of civil society, increased freedoms, human rights. The process for developing and enhancing these are not easy and clear plans for ensuring the rule of law and political legitimation are essential.

Critiques suggest the onus is on African leaders to demonstrate that this plan is truly something different. Democratization is an important indicator; it must be demonstrated in practice. At the moment, NEPAD is ambiguous on what the "new" African democracy will look like beyond a vague notion of "peer review." Civil society and NGOs will have to be vigilant to ensure that NEPAD will make a difference to ordinary Africans.