

partners."

These were strong and clear words. We have to be concerned, however, that a gap is growing between rhetoric and practice, deeds and words, in development partnerships. For us, ***a true partnership is a political relationship, not a bureaucratic funding mechanism; it is a relationship based on a shared vision and mutual respect, and must not be a vehicle for maintaining inequality.***

In this critical year for Africa's future, we have to be sure that partnerships do not become just the means to maintain some "Northern" ownership of the development agenda. The ultimate objective has to be to enable Africa's peoples and their institutions to achieve the responsibility they need for meeting their needs and thus contributing to the common goals of peace, prosperity, and human security for all.

We work in partnership with our African counterparts in the task of fashioning common trade union responses to global challenges, including their impact in Africa.

That partnership also extends to policy discussions, and leads us to stress certain fundamentals which, if ignored, will vitiate the chances of 2002 being the year in which the basis for an "African Recovery" is established.

The first is that ***"partnership" in this endeavour cannot be limited to the relationship between African governments and those of the G-8, or between African governments and foreign investors. Vitally important is the need for real partnerships between the African governments and their peoples,*** who have, often in the face of difficult circumstances, built organs of civil society, including trade unions.

The second is the centrality of ***labour standards which must figure in any meaningful discussion of development and the impact of globalization in Africa.*** The standards are not restricted either geographically or sectorally; they do not relate only to "sunset" industries, or to the organized economy. They relate strongly to the principles set out in the NEPAD, not to mention the earlier "plans", and impact directly on a key goal of African Recovery, reducing poverty.

The third is that ***the participation of Women in all aspects of recovery is absolutely essential.***

African leaders know well how transitory "concern" often appears to be in the "West". At the time of the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo, many commentators drew unfavourable comparisons between Western engagement on behalf of ethnic Albanians and Western indifference, when it could have mattered, towards Rwandan Tutsis.

Now the West is pledging major sums for the Recovery of Afghanistan. In his Foreward to the UN's Inter-Agency Appeal for Afghanistan, the UN Secretary General wisely observed that "women, who know the price of conflict so well, are also often better equipped than men to