

Development partners have a heavy responsibility towards all those in our one world who are burdened by poverty, deprivation, and conflict. So burdened that they cannot enjoy their full measure of Human Security, cannot engage in Full and Freely chosen Employment, and cannot make full use of the possibilities to which they are entitled. This is undoubtedly true of Africa, where years of structural adjustment and worsening terms of trade have combined to strip away many formal-sector jobs.

The African leaders, in elaborating visions through the NEPAD documentation, are right to remind us all of the cultural treasure house that is Africa, and to stress the importance of its flora and fauna, its centrality as a cradle of mankind. But Africa is not a theme park; it is where millions of human beings live and aspire to do so in peace, stability, and dignity. For this they need many things, but foremost among them remains freely chosen employment, jobs, not charity.

The NEPAD base document, which is extracted as an annex below, asserts that "Private enterprise must be supported, both micro-enterprises in the informal sector and small and medium enterprises in the manufacturing sector, which are principal engines of growth and development". This is an area too long overlooked in the deliberations of Western aid policy towards Africa, and ***we urge that job creation, in sustainable conditions, respecting internationally recognised fundamental workers' rights and the environment, be made a priority of the G-8 response to Africa today.***

Without jobs, where will there be a tax-base for Africans to finance the realization of their development goals, and not be dependent on merely implementing the prescriptions of others? Where can there be real partnership if resourcing always remains one-sided? Both the G-8 and the African leaders have a responsibility to free Africa's people from dependency as quickly as possible.

We in the Canadian Labour Congress understand the weight of our responsibilities, and we know that by helping Africa's peoples achieve their development goals, we will go some distance to meeting those responsibilities, in the common interest. We commit to working as fully as possible with partners in Africa to this end, this new beginning.

One element of that beginning is the "African Union". In January 2002, the head of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Amara Essy, held meetings with representatives of the G-8 to brief them on progress being made towards transforming the OAU into the African Union.

The African Union, like the merger of the Omega Plan and the MAP, emerged from the OAU Extraordinary Summit in March 2001, and is aimed at achieving the greater unity and solidarity between African countries which might prove essential to the realization of the goals of NEPAD. Among key aspects of the new union are to be a pan-African parliament, a court of justice and a central bank.