

## **Nepad and agricultural development in Africa**

Comments by President Chissano at the 22nd France - Africa summit  
Paris, February 2003

Allow me, first, to express my gratitude for the invitation conveyed to me to take part in this imposing summit which signals a further stage in the relationship between Africa and France. I am convinced that the debates to be held during the two forthcoming days will significantly contribute to the new partnership that we are building to our mutual benefit.

It is in that light that I wish to take the opportunity to acknowledge the unique role assumed by France in promoting and defending African concerns, and express our special tribute to President Jacques Chirac for his personal commitment to stimulate and follow up the whole process which led to the launching of the New Partnership for African Economic Development, NEPAD.

It is a great honour for me to open the debate on such an important topic for the African continent, that of agricultural development, which we view as the response to developmental priorities.

More than 70% of the African population relies on agriculture for its living, and the bulk of its activities are associated with it, with a large portion of it being subsistence agriculture. Production outputs and productivity of the agricultural sector in Africa remain low, failing therefore to meet the food requirements of the continent, leading to chronic starvation. All this is being further aggravated by cyclical weather calamities. This is the reason why it becomes vital to monitor rivers, in order to make for water shortages for agriculture in time of drought, and rein them in in case of floods, without however endangering the environment.

This French-African summit will help find mechanisms and ways of cooperation, collaboration and operations in partnership with a view to develop agriculture in Africa. Within the NEPAD framework, the following problems pertaining to agriculture have been identified:

- ❖ low productivity of primary factors of production, including land and labour
- ❖ HIV incidence on a large part of active rural manpower
- ❖ climatic risks and uncertainties of agricultural yields
- ❖ food insecurity and malnutrition
- ❖ low investment in agriculture
- ❖ lack of linkage between extension services and the food chain, including lack of connections between the various stages of production, processing, commercialisation and storage;
- ❖ weakness of research and extension bodies, as well as the suppliers of technologies adapted to farmers

Regarding agricultural development, NEPAD identified four immediate actions to be achieved in order to raise food production in Africa. They are:

- ❖ enlargement of agricultural areas under irrigation, and the setting up of soil fertilization programs;
- ❖ increasing labour productivity through training and dissemination of technical knowledge in rural communities;
- ❖ improvement of rural infrastructures and access to markets, through betterment of road networks leading to rural areas;
- ❖ multiplication of research and rural extension, in order to increase productivity and sustainability.

We feel in that regard that the French-African partnership could, in the medium to long term, focus on strengthening African capabilities at national and regional levels to transform the continent's agriculture, through the following operations:

- ❖ development of new forms of partnership that ensure the transfer of technologies and know-how, instead of traditional gifts
- ❖ improved research into agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fishing
- ❖ improvement in the quality of African products, particularly end products, to better fit French standards and gain access to this country's market;
- ❖ development of agricultural extension services and rural infrastructures, such as irrigation systems, supply of inputs, and animal health
- ❖ development of agro-industries, including their funding
- ❖ investment in the education of the rural folks about prevention and treatment of HIV

Natural and human resources in Africa are both sufficient and of quality; however, they are not yet mobilised and utilized efficiently. NEPAD is therefore an opportunity to mobilize resources, and the French-African partnership should help enable the trading community in African countries to get significantly involved in sustainable agro-industrial development.

In the past, development programs and politics were elaborated and enunciated from outside Africa, and they enjoyed little participation and support from African governments, which undermined the credibility that conditioned their successful implementation. On the other hand, the lack of expertise and capacities on the side of African countries jeopardized the success of the development programs and politics that had been delineated. Now, NEPAD opens up an opportunity to speed up agricultural development in Africa, because the framework adopted for this initiative departs from the past. The mobilization of local resources and a better coordination between African countries themselves, through regional economic zones, such as SADC and CEDEAO, create a context that did not exist previously.

In this process, the main challenge for Africa is the ability to keep growth at required levels in order to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. This depends on factors such as the existence of infrastructures, the accumulation of financial capital, the training of human resources, a just distribution of income, a structural diversification in production, conditions enabling competition, the health status of the population, and a proper protection of environment.

African leaders have learnt that peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights and a good economic management condition sustainable development. Agriculture is the basis for any improvement in rural people livelihoods, it is the major factor towards food security and any increase in exports, as well as towards the improvement in other economic sectors. There cannot be human rights without

access to land, the major factor of agricultural production, and a prerequisite for access to food.

In closing, I wish to reiterate our gratitude to France for its valuable role in strengthening our relations, and I wish to call on France to continue to support our common interests in various international fora.