The Guest’s Comment

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NEPAD and the peer review

Within the framework of the G8 states, Germany supports NEPAD through the G8-Africa-Action Plan as a crucial political reform project. The G8-Africa-Action Plan was adopted at the G8 summit of 2002 in Kananakis. At the summit in Evian in June 2003, the G8 states presented the first progress report on the implementation of the said action plan. It further had been resolved to continue the G8’s high-level dialogue with NEPAD.

In addition, an important signal of a long-term partnership with Africa is the jointly-drafted peace initiative between NEPAD, the AU, the UN and G8, of which Germany had been a substantial proponent, and which had also been adopted in Evian. According to the plan, by 2010, through strengthening of regional organisations, including the AU, Africa is to be in a position to carry out peace-keeping operations independently.

Basic to the NEPAD initiative is the extensive process of mutual evaluation and support of African states - the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). At the sixth meeting of the NEPAD implementation committee on 9 March, 2003, the implementation modalities of this evaluation process were decided upon and are now carried out independently by the NEPAD secretariat.

So far, 16 African states have pledged their commitment to participate in the process (1). The originally envisaged launch of 1 April 2003 could not take place. Until the end of July 2003, seven members of the panel of eminent persons were nominated which are to supervise the mutual evaluation (2). The first peer reviews are expected to start 2003 in Uganda, Ghana or South Africa.

The aim of the NEPAD skeleton agreement is that participating states jointly strive for improved standards with regard to government activities, and that in addition they mutually evaluate and support each other within the frame of the peer review. This constant and transparent process is to be open to all member states of the AU. For the first time, contents of “Good Governance” thus become the topic of a
formal dialogue between African states. The process of mutual evaluation practically would underpin the emergence of a new comprehension of the African state system - viz. the departure from the earlier sacrosanct principle of non-intervention -, even if the peer review as a new process will only be able to produce first detectable effects on political behaviour of African states on a long-term basis.

Though Namibia has accepted NEPAD, it hitherto has restricted itself to the role of spectator, which, in view of the contribution Namibia could make with regard to the inter-African exchange on issues of governance, is regrettable. Countries not participating in the peer review surely will experience medium-term disadvantages with regard to their position in foreign private investments.

During talks in Namibia I frequently realised that information on the peer review varied to a great extent. The peer review is an African idea embedded in the NEPAD document. Neither the G8, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund have ever demanded such a mutual evaluation. The results of such processes are not to be presented to donors as proof of positive results, but rather to give impetus to a process of mutual learning and improvement.

Countries participating in the peer review have not only committed themselves to a closer inspection of own structures and processes, but to familiarise themselves with those of others. Namibia could make a substantial contribution to peer learning, seeing that the country has an exemplary constitution and a government legitimised democratically that in future could assume an important role within the NEPAD process.


(2) Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, Dr. Grace Machel, Ms Dorothy Njeuma, Ms Marie-Angelique Savane, Mr Chris Stals.