

**WELCOMING ADDRESS BY MR A.S. MINTY,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL (MULTILATERAL)
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AT THE OECD-SOUTHERN AFRICA SYMPOSIUM
SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE
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Madam Chairperson,
Minister Manuel, Ministers & Premier
Mr Kondo,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs, it is an honour for me to welcome you all to this High-level Symposium of the OECD-Southern African dialogue. It is a particular privilege for me to welcome Mr Kondo, the Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD, as well as the distinguished speakers from OECD member countries. You are most welcome to South Africa where we look forward to sharing your insights into the important issues relating to good governance that we will be examining.

The Department of Foreign Affairs is pleased to be associated with this symposium, and we are actively encouraging a closer association between the OECD and Southern Africa. In this area we have much to learn and we can derive considerable benefit from working more closely with the OECD and its various bodies and structures.

It is in fact an appropriate time to be raising the profile of the OECD-Southern African dialogue through this symposium, because a number of factors indicate that a much closer co-operation between a country like South Africa and the OECD is in fact

desirable. In this era of rapid globalisation, we have been told many times that it offers both opportunities and challenges. What is undoubtedly true is that no one can safely opt out. We have to face up to the realities of globalisation and try to take advantage of them. Nevertheless I think everyone acknowledges that it is the developed countries, the OECD member countries in fact, who are better placed to benefit from the opportunities offered by globalisation. Of course there are many developing countries, South Africa included, that are also taking advantage of these opportunities, and are benefiting, albeit to a lesser degree. It is, however, also true that many poor countries, most of them in Africa, are not yet in a position to participate meaningfully in the global economy and continue to be marginalised.

In fact, Madam Chairperson, the Director-General of Foreign Affairs, Mr Siphos Pityana, (who is abroad at the moment) participated in the OECD dialogue with non-member countries two years ago in Paris, and used the opportunity to urge OECD members to pay more attention to Africa and examine in what way they could contribute to Africa's development. Africa, he pointed out, was largely being ignored by the OECD. In fact, he drew attention to the fact that in the OECD annual report for that year, Africa was not mentioned at all, so marginalised had it become. The theme of that particular dialogue with non-member States was the WTO, and I think it is significant that at the recent 4th WTO Ministerial meeting in Doha, the African countries were able to contribute meaningfully to the outcome of the conference. We were pleased to note that the conference was able to agree on the launch of a new Round of global trade negotiations.

It is our belief that all parties can draw satisfaction from the outcome of this conference, and it was clearly a win-win situation.

Of course what was agreed was merely the start of a process, and much hard work lies ahead. African and other developing countries will have to negotiate hard to ensure that they build on the gains that they made in Doha. Fortunately there are signs that a genuine dialogue is beginning to take place between developed and developing countries, and this important symposium is in fact further evidence of that dialogue.

This is also an appropriate time for this symposium to be taking place, because of the new situation that Africa finds itself in. We are all familiar with the various plans that have been developed in past decades for solving Africa's problems. Obviously none of them was entirely successful, and some can in fact be regarded as failures for a number of reasons. Now, however, following on from the emergence of South Africa as a new democracy in Africa, and the return of democracy to Nigeria and several other factors we have seen a resurgence in enthusiasm for tackling Africa's problems head-on, this time emerging from the African continent itself. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, or NEPAD, has emerged from the MAP and the OMEGA Plans, and was now been adopted by the OAU Summit in Lusaka in July. What is different about this Plan, as compared to the other initiatives, is the degree of ownership by the Africans themselves, and the commitments to certain core values, not as conditions for receiving assistance, but for the intrinsic value of the commitments themselves. These commitments can be summarised very briefly: We Africans ourselves are determined to

themselves will solve the problems of conflict on the continent: clearly without peace no progress or economic development is possible. But we have also committed ourselves to democracy and good governance. Not as a condition for receiving anything in return, but because there is now a profound acceptance of the virtues of democracy and good governance as desirable in themselves.

By committing ourselves unconditionally to democracy and good governance, we believe that a new partnership can develop between ourselves and the developed countries, and social and economic development can take place with the active encouragement of the international community. With renewed confidence in the future of Africa, we feel that there will undoubtedly be increased interest in the opportunities offered by Africa, a continent with great human and natural resources, and tremendous potential. Our aim is to create and maintain a climate conducive to investment and doing business, and we are proposing an equal partnership with the developed countries, which will be mutually beneficial. Many of you will be aware of the commitment of the G8 countries to developing a plan of action for Africa in consultation with the NEPAD parties and we are confident that the plan will be based closely on the objectives and targets of the NEPAD.

All of this is of course very relevant to the theme of our symposium today, which is “Social equity, economic growth and good governance”. This theme is in fact central to the NEPAD, and it would be particularly valuable for us to share the insights of the distinguished speakers from the OECD itself and from OECD member countries that have been invited to join us at this symposium. It will be valuable to hear how the issues

and challenges surrounding good governance have been central to the economic successes of the OECD countries, and we believe that South Africa itself is a valuable example of an African country that has set itself the task of promoting good governance in a democratic framework to the benefit of all our people.

Madam Chairperson, we have high expectations of this symposium and I hope that it will lead on the entranced dialogue between the OECD and Southern Africa.

Thank You