The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) after 24 years of existence – reality and prospects

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Abstract:

The African continent has gone through a long record of development attempts, which have often had a limited scope and low impact, which has led to its continued marginalization at the international level, despite the multiplicity of its natural resources and the large number of qualified human resources. From this standpoint, a correlation has emerged between the establishment of regional economic blocs within the continent and the realization of a unified economic and political entity that reflects the aspirations of Africa as a whole to promote development.

This development is an urgent necessity imposed by the new millennium, as African countries seek to get rid of the cycle of underdevelopment and poverty through their own efforts. In this context, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) represents a new stage in the African development process, and reflects the continent's ability to adapt and harmonize with global political, economic and social transformations, based on a pure African will aimed at achieving independence and development sustainable development.

Keywords: *NEPAD ; Regional cooperation; African integration; European Union.*

Introduction

More than two decades after the launch of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001, assessing its impact on African development remains a matter of broad concern. NEPAD came as a purely African initiative that aims to promote economic integration and achieve sustainable development through regional cooperation and taking advantage of local potential. This partnership marked a turning point in African development thinking, as it sought to address the major challenges facing the continent, and as a pure response to the economic and social challenges facing the continent. This initiative came in a global context that witnessed profound economic and political transformations, prompting African countries to search for a new model of development that is compatible with the available resources and the needs of their peoples.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is of great strategic importance to the European Union, as it constitutes a vital framework for cooperation between the African and European continents. Since its launch in 2001, NEPAD has been promoted with the support of the Group of Eight (G8). The European Union has been keen to support this initiative as a mechanism to promote stability, development and economic integration in Africa, for several main reasons, including strengthening economic and development partnership, reducing illegal immigration, achieving regional security and stability, and securing energy and natural resources.

The following points were addressed:

- Birth and birth of NEPAD;
- Definition of NEPAD, its mechanisms and objectives;
- Regional integration of a NEPAD initiative.

The problem of research:

What has the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) achieved after 24 years of existence?

Axis I: the origin and birth of NEPAD

The Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) was established under the Addis Ababa Declaration on May 25, 1963, with the main goal of completing liberation from colonial domination, as many countries of the continent were subject to colonialism, especially the Spanish and Portuguese areas of influence, and blacks in South Africa suffered from racial discrimination established by the white regime.

NEPAD is an abbreviation for "New Partnership for Africa's Development", which includes the African Union's vision for the economic and social development of the African continent. Drafted and adopted by the heads of five African countries, Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal, and endorsed by the Summit of the Organization of African Unity (later the African Union) held in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2001.[82]

The liberal obsession dominated the work of the Organization in the first two decades of its life, but the consolidation of emerging nation-States in time began to reveal the limits of the Organization's objectives, political, military and security crises emerged that threatened the existence of some countries than colonialism, such as the civil wars in the Congo, Angola and Chad.

The issue of changing the general orientation of the Organization of African Unity from political liberalization to economic and social development at the continental level has become the main concern of African summits since the end of the seventies of the twentieth century.

[82] *Henning Melber, and author's,* ***The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): African Perspectives, printed by university printers****, uppsala 2002, p.09*

As follows: [83]

- In 1980, a development program known as the "Lagos Plan of Action" was established;
- It was followed in 1986 by the "Emergency Programme for Economic Reform in Africa";
- African frame of reference for structural adjustment programmes in 1989;
- Then the "Arusha Charter for Popular Participation and Development" in 1990.
- But all these schemes failed. The African unity effort has begun to focus on the formulation of a new strategy, aware of Africa's inability to develop effectively and relatively quickly, and proposing a multi-partnership for international support.

1.1.The birth of NEPAD :

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the result of multiple consultations and modifications of development approaches presented by a new generation of African leaders who saw that the liberal political character of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is no longer sufficient in light of the urgency of the development question, the continent's great backwardness and the marginalization of its role at the international level.

Most notably, the Millennium Partnership for African Reform was launched by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, who unveiled it at the 2001 World Economic Forum in Davos.[84]

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[83] *IBID.*

[84] *Martin O.jei, **Africa's renaissance and the failures of NEPAD, Livre broche for: Identity Meets Nationality Voices from the Humanities**, Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2011, p. 256*

Prior to Mbeki's plan, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade presented to the Francophone Summit in Cameroon in January 2001 the "Omega Plan", which included his vision for an "**African renaissance**" and the two approaches were integrated into a new scheme called the New Initiative for Africa, which eventually resulted in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (**NEPAD**), of which **South Africa, Senegal, Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt** were the main advocates, and who are credited with adopting it by the African Summit in 2001.[85]

Axis II : Definition of NEPAD, its Mechanisms and Objectives

2.1.Definition of NEPAD

NEPAD is an initiative that emerged on the African scene at the meeting of the Organization of African Unity, and it is one of the serious attempts to develop the African continent and eradicate poverty through partnership with the international community and regional partnership at the level of countries and at the level of economic blocs within the African continent.

We review some information about NEPAD : [86]

1- The NEPAD is an acronym for New Partnership for Africa's Development;[87]
2- Drafted and adopted by the heads of 5 African countries, namely Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal;
3- NEPAD is funded through the African Union (AU) budget;
4- Endorsed by the Summit of the Organization of African Unity (later the African Union) held in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2001 ;

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[85] *Norbert Funke,* ***The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Opportunities and Challenges,*** *working paper, FMI, p.04*

[86] *Cheikhou Souaré,* ***Le NEPAD: un projet entre aubaine et alter errance ,*** *Éditions Plume, 2006, p. 34*

5- It is an initiative that incorporates the African Union's vision for the economic and social development of the African continent;

6- The initiative has several objectives, namely (eradicating poverty, achieving sustainable development, remedying the marginalization of the African continent, empowering women, integrating the African economy with the global economy), and the initiative also emphasizes African ownership of continental development, dependence on self-resources, partnership among African peoples, achieving regional and continental integration, developing competitiveness for the countries of the continent, partnership with developed countries in order to reduce the gap between them and Africa;

7- Among the mechanisms of "NEPAD governance", there is a steering committee, which is the political forum authorized by the Assembly of the African Union to follow up the implementation of the objectives of the initiative, and includes the heads of the five countries that sponsor the initiative, as well as the heads of 15 other countries representing a total of five geographical regions of the continent, with four countries for each region, where elections for African countries are held periodically to join the committee for a period of two years based on regional consultations within the Union;

8- The "NBIAD Governance Committee" is responsible for promoting the initiative, gaining international support for it, defining policies and priorities for its work program, following up on its implementation, and submitting periodic reports on its work to the African Union Summit;

9- The Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the heads of State and members of the Steering Committee, prepares detailed plans for the programme of action and action for the implementation of the initiative, as well as its role in managing dialogue with partners, to gain support and support from the

Group of Eight and developed countries for African efforts to achieve development;

10- NEPAD areas of work include agriculture and food security, natural resource management and climate change, regional integration and infrastructure, as well as work programs in the infrastructure development sector, human resource development, economic governance and partnerships.

2.2. NEPAD structure and mechanisms

1- The structure supervising the implementation of the initiative consists of:
Summit of African Presidents: where it is responsible for presenting the general policy framework of the initiative;

2- The Implementation and Follow-up Committee, consisting of 15 chairmen, is responsible for preparing reports on the developments of the initiative and submitting them during the African summits;

3- The steering committee composed of representatives appointed by the heads of the five countries that announced the initiative, works to ensure the implementation of the work program, review the work of the secretariat, adopt preferential conditions and specifications for specific projects and programs, and consult and discuss with African countries and African development partners on projects and programs

4- The Secretariat consists of the staff of an office formed for this purpose and is based in Pretoria, South Africa, and its function is: organization, preparation, and administrative support for the work of the Steering Committee, and Egypt has a representative in it who monitors the agriculture and market access sectors, whose files Egypt coordinates.

2.3. Objectives and priorities of NEPAD

The initiative aims to deal with the problems of the different continent and find appropriate solutions to them to eradicate poverty and achieve a better life for the African citizen by affirming African ownership of NEPAD, and the responsibility of African governments and peoples - in the first place - to achieve their goals through serious and effective participation between African countries and each other, and seeking to establish constructive partnership with developed countries and relevant international and regional organizations and institutions. It is based on shared responsibility and mutual accountability.

The work program of the document is considered as the development arm of the African Union, as it combines pure development goals, to bring about economic recovery that can bring about living and social progress for the continent, and to build the appropriate political framework for the implementation of this program, given the impossibility of achieving development in the absence of real democracy and its universal standards that are based on political pluralism, and allow the existence of many parties and an effective civil society, respect for human rights and good governance dedicated to peace and security. [88]

First: Creating an appropriate work environment for sustainable development through: [89]

3. Spreading peace and security;
4. Consolidation of consultation, democracy and good governance at the political, economic and civil society levels;

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[88] *Norbert Funke*, ***Op.cit***, *p.03*

[89] *I.B. Moundolock*, ***L'Union africaine et le N.E.P.A.D des raisons d'espérer : les conséquences de l'installation à Maputo de la commission de l'Union sur les institutions nationales et internationales***, *2009, p.149*

5. Cooperation and integration at the regional level.

Second: Work to encourage agricultural investment and human resource development with a focus on health, education and modern technology through:

6. Strengthen the continent's economy by increasing and diversifying production and exports, especially agro-processing, manufacturing, and converting raw metals into manufactured materials;
7. Promoting the tourism sector in the continent;
8. Boosting intra-African trade and access to world markets for their exports.

Third: Mobilization of financial resources through:

- Increasing savings and investment at the local level;
- Increase Africa's share of world trade and attract more foreign investment;
- Increase capital flows through debt reduction and increased aid.

As for the conditions for sustainable development – which are the basic conditions on which the NEPAD pavilion depends in achieving its goals – the document presented them in the form of a number of initiatives that African leaders, individually and collectively, are committed to working to implement, namely:[90]

- Peace and Security Initiative;
- Democracy and Good Political Governance Initiative;
- Infrastructure, in particular ICT, energy, transport, water and sanitation;
- Human resources development, including poverty alleviation, education, health and the reversal of the African brain drain;

[90] *Godwin Eli Kwadzo Dzah,* ***Sustainable Development, International Law, and a Turn to African Legal Cosmologies****, Cambridge University Press, USA, 2024, p.177*

- Agriculture;
- Environment Initiative;
- Culture;
- Science and technology.

In each of these areas, NEPAD has identified the main objectives to be achieved and a number of actions and policies proposed to be taken to achieve those objectives, to achieve the main results desired by NEPAD, which are:

- promote regional and continental integration for sustained economic growth and development;
- Strengthening the capacity of Member States and regional economic communities to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NEPAD programme;
- Implementation of effective growth strategies and poverty eradication programmes;
- Ensure the participation of civil society and the private sector so that it becomes an integral part of development processes.

2.4. Reasons that hinder the work of NEPAD:

2.4.1.External causes:

It is related to the relationship of African countries with external powers, the most important of which are foreign aid and the debt crisis. African countries have begun to rely on foreign aid and loans since their independence and obtained them from the countries of the eastern and western camps in the context of the conditions of the cold war and the desire of each camp to attract allies on the

continent. After the end of the Cold War, Western aid to African countries became conditional on democratization and respect for human rights.

The issue of foreign aid and loans raises several questions: Is this aid and loans really provided to support development in African countries receiving them, or is it provided to achieve special purposes for donor countries, whether to support some African political systems that achieve their interests or as a means of pushing the receiving countries to develop policies that enhance the economic control of these external parties ?

There is no doubt that dependence on this aid and foreign loans creates a constraint of dependence that may not be abandoned, as the countries of the continent during the Cold War relied on aid, which was a constant principle in their relations with external powers and considered that this principle will remain constant. But that principle has changed to a more realistic one that the United States has begun to focus on in its relations with the continent, namely the principle of trade, not aid, as it is more appropriate to achieve its interests.[91]

On the other hand, it is often argued that poverty and lack of skills make rich countries helping the African continent inevitable in the years to come. Many African countries still consider foreign aid an important item in their budgets. As long as this situation remains in place, development plans will proceed according to what donor countries see, or as former Tanzanian President **Julius Nir Yrei** put it, "independence cannot be true independence if the state relies on grants and loans for development."

[91] *Mariam Ladi Yunusa, NEPAD Cities* ***Programme, United Nations Centre for Human Settlement****, UN, HABITAT, 2006, p.119*

The average debt-to-GDP ratio in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 51% to about 100% in 1982 and 1992. It can be seen that there are several African countries whose debt exceeds their GDP and there are only a limited number of countries whose debt is considered to be in control.[92]

The main sources of this aid and loans come from Britain and France - former colonial powers seeking to protect their interests in Africa - and the United States and Japan, which seek to secure access to some raw materials from some African countries, in addition to international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Since the eighties, these institutions began to link their loans and assistance to structural adjustment programs that include the application of privatization policies, the reduction of tariffs on Western imports and the reduction of subsidies on some basic commodities.

For more than 40 years in which African countries have received foreign aid and loans, many questions still arise: what has that aid achieved ? Why did it not improve living standards or provide the conditions for sustainable development?

2.4.2. Internal causes:

African development problems do not result from external sources only, as there are several internal sources and causes of African economic crises, which were summarized in a 1996 World Bank report by saying that most African countries suffer from a crisis in governance and state efficiency. These countries are corrupt in their administrative and political apparatus, with African elites viewing their position as a source of enrichment. Some

[92] *IBID.*

African countries also suffer from social and political instability that affects economic performance. After independence, many African countries entered civil wars, with some countries even growing their annual GDP by only 0.5% between 1965 and 1985. Civil conflicts continue to occur in some States of the continent (South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola).[93]

In addition, there is a lack of adequate man power for development due to the low level of education and health care in many countries of the continent. A number of countries on the continent (including Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique) have increased their military spending on education and health. One of the most serious health problems facing the continent is the spread of AIDS, which the World Trade Organization has declared that about 25 million citizens suffer from, which has led to a reduction in life expectancy in five African countries in late 2000 to less than 40 years (Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Zambia).

On the other hand, most African countries suffer from a deterioration in their infrastructure necessary for development and to support African industrial sectors, which still do not occupy a large proportion of national income due to the lack of skilled labour, limited domestic markets and lack of advanced technology, which does not make the African continent in general a source of foreign investment, which was estimated in 1998 at only about 5% of total foreign investment directed to developing countries.[94]

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[93] *Muna Ndulo, Nicolas Van de Walle , **Problems, Promises, and Paradoxes of Aid- Africa's Experience,** Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p.78*

[94] *IBID.*

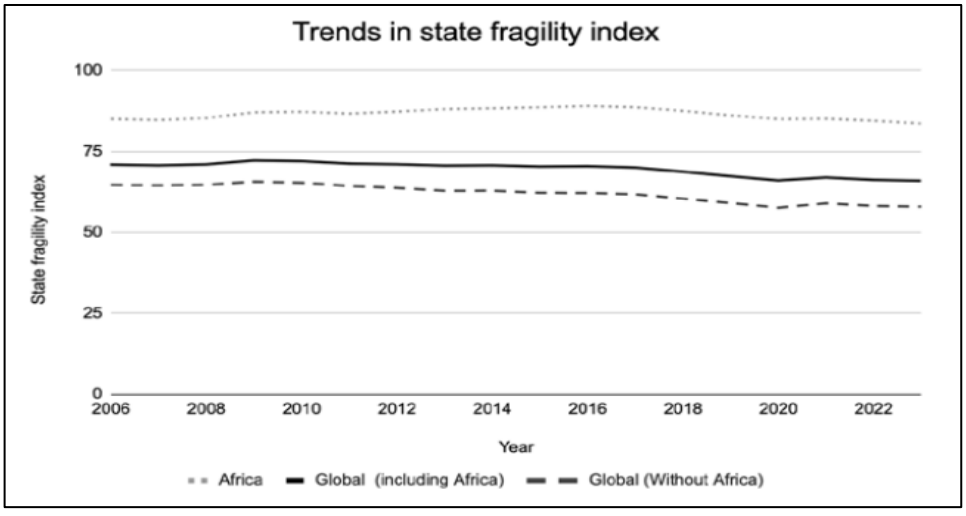
Axis III: Regional integration of a NEPAD initiative

3.1. Global and African sovereign risk landscape

With many fragile states located in Africa, most of which are least developed countries (LDCs), reframing risk mitigation from an externality to a common good illustrates the global challenge of bridging the gap between extreme risks and effective governance.

Institutions, whether market or non-market, play a key role in reducing transaction costs from unstructured bargaining. However, while market-based solutions have received considerable attention, public or intergovernmental institutions remain underexplored. This article focuses on the provision of risk mitigation as a public good facilitated by states through intergovernmental institutions. **Figure 01** below shows that African states are the most fragile in the world, hence the perception of high risk.

Figure 01: Fragility of states; Africa has a higher fragility index than the global level, thus creating the "African premium" in risk perception and assessment.

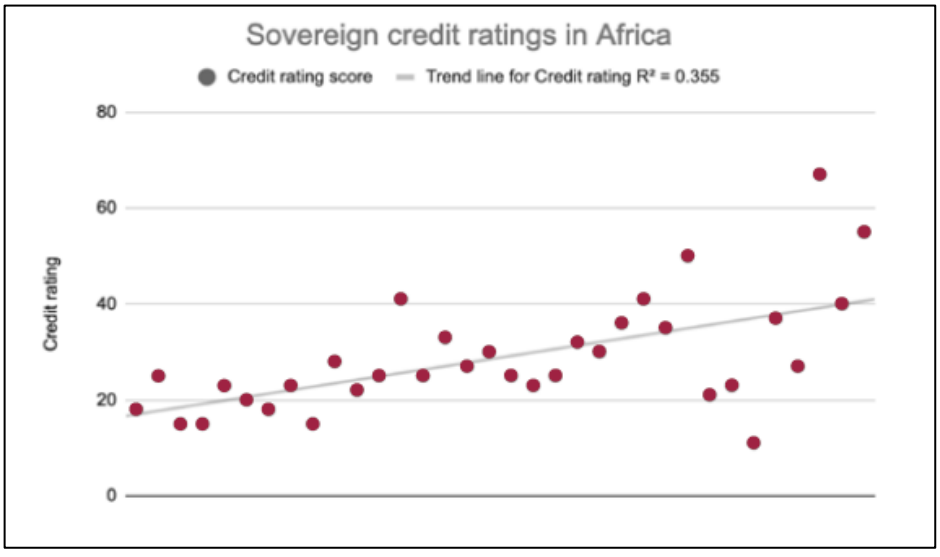


Source: AUDA-NEPAD , Africa Economic Development Journal, Volume01, Issue01,February 2025, p.51

Insights from cooperation theory suggest that states establish international regimes to address cooperation challenges. Thus, conceptualising risk governance through the lens of

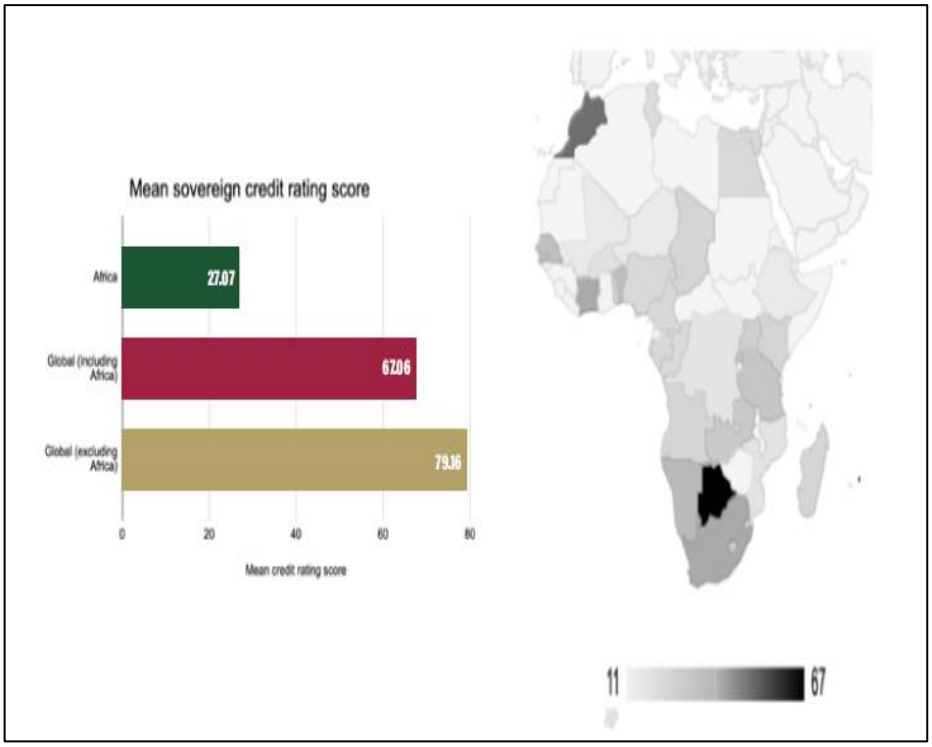
Transnational governance studies, by emphasising the roles of both governmental and non-governmental actors in managing extreme risks, is consistent with Agenda 2063's vision for a harmonised and integrated continent. These regimes are typically designed to facilitate the provision of common goods, often in the form of public commons. **Figures 02** and **03** below illustrate that African countries are usually designated by CRAs as the most risky, hence their low sovereign risk scores.

Figures 02: Sovereign credit rating scores for African countries. Most of the countries have low ratings which reflect a perception of high risk.



Source: AUDA-NEPAD, **Africa Economic Development Journal**, Volume01, Issue01,February 2025, p.52

Figure 03: African countries are rated low on the sovereign credit ratings, especially when compared with other countries. An "African premium" could be inferred where the risk perception is three times the global average.



Source: AUDA-NEPAD, **Africa Economic Development Journal**, Volume01, Issue01,February 2025, p.52

From the foregoing analysis, we can hypothesise that states establish international institutions to provide common goods, such as risk mitigation and governance, due to their nature as "Bounded States".

The case study methodology involves a comprehensive analysis of ACRA's establishment, operational mechanisms, and impact on risk premiums, demonstrating how it supports Agenda 2063's goal of establishing continental financial and monetary institutions. Institutions

like ACRA can deliver the "public" component of the joint goods of risk mitigation, complementing and supporting the "private goods" role of market institutions, such as credit rating agencies.

In the context of international cooperation for risk mitigation as a common good, the literature on transnational governance provides valuable insights. Transnational governance, simply defined, involves state and non-state actors collaborating to address cross-border challenges.

Traditionally, this literature emphasises the role of non-state actors in complementing intergovernmental efforts, highlighting the limitations of public authority in tackling transnational issues.13 However, it has largely overlooked how states can step in to complement non-state efforts.[95]

3.1.2The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA)

PIDA is one of NEPAD's flagship initiatives, designed to address infrastructure gaps and enhance continental connectivity. Since its launch, the program has made significant progress:[96]

- **Phase 1 (2012-2020):** Included **51 programs** divided into **433 projects** in **transport, energy, water, and ICT sectors**. By October **2019**, **175 projects** had reached the implementation or operational stage.
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[95] *AUDA-NEPAD, **Africa Economic Development Journal**, Volume01, Issue01,February 2025, p.52*

[96] *https://pp2.au-pida.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Arabic-Analytical-Report-Integrated-Corridor-Approach-and-Selection-Criteria.pdf , 10/01/2025*

- **Phase 2 (2021-2030):** Focuses on the **Integrated Corridor Approach**, ensuring the development of multi-sector infrastructure projects with an emphasis on environmental and social sustainability.

3.1.3.Closing Africa's Infrastructure Financing Gap

Despite progress, Africa still faces an **annual infrastructure financing gap** estimated between **$60 billion and $90 billion**. To address this, the **African Union (AU)** has called for the establishment of the **Continental Africa Infrastructure Fund**, aimed at mobilizing local resources and attracting private sector investments.[97]

3.2. The Importance of NEPAD for the European Union

The **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)** holds significant strategic importance for the **European Union (EU)** as it serves as a key framework for cooperation between Africa and Europe. Since its launch in **2001**, the EU has actively supported NEPAD as a mechanism to promote stability, development, and economic integration in Africa. The importance of NEPAD to the EU can be outlined as follows:[98]

3.2.1. Strengthening Economic and Developmental Partnership

- The EU is one of Africa's largest trading partners and development financiers. Supporting NEPAD enhances economic growth and sustainable development in Africa, creating new opportunities for investment and trade between the two regions.

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[97] *Africa's Infrastructure Ministers Validate Africa's Infrastructure Priorities for 2021-2030, at : https://au.int/fr/node/39850?utm*

[98] *Jan TAYLOR, **Governance and relations between the European Union and Africa: the case of NEPAD**, Editor :Taylor & Francis, 2013, p.52*

- The EU funds **infrastructure projects, agriculture, and renewable energy** under NEPAD to improve business environments and boost economic opportunities.

3.2.2. Reducing Irregular Migration

- The EU seeks to address the root causes of **irregular migration** from Africa to Europe, which are often linked to poverty, unemployment, and political instability.
- By supporting NEPAD, the EU aims to improve economic and social conditions in Africa, thereby reducing migration flows.

.3.2.3. Ensuring Regional Security and Stability

- Security and stability in Africa are strategic interests for Europe, as conflicts and instability can lead to the spread of terrorism, human trafficking, and organized crime, which directly affect European security.
- NEPAD supports **peacebuilding initiatives and good governance**, contributing to regional stability and reducing transnational security threats.

3.2.4. Securing Energy and Natural Resources

- Many European countries rely on African **natural resources**, including minerals and energy. Investing in sustainable development through NEPAD ensures **resource sustainability and enhances energy cooperation** between the two continents.

3.2.5. Enhancing African Integration and EU-Africa Cooperation

- The EU supports **African regional integration**, aligning with NEPAD's objectives of **boosting intra-African trade,**

improving infrastructure, and fostering industrial development.

- Supporting NEPAD is a means of **strengthening the strategic Africa-EU partnership**, particularly within the frameworks of the **Cotonou Agreement** and the **EU-African Union Partnership**

Conclusion

After more than two decades since the launch of the **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**, it has become evident that this initiative has laid the foundation for **enhancing regional integration** and achieving sustainable development that reflects the aspirations of the African continent. Through its various programs, NEPAD has contributed to **improving infrastructure, facilitating intra-African trade, strengthening governance, and promoting food security and energy development**, positioning Africa as a key player in the global economy.

On a **regional level**, NEPAD has played a pivotal role in supporting **African economic blocs** such as the **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, and the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**. By fostering economic collaboration and reducing trade barriers, NEPAD has significantly advanced regional economic integration, laying the groundwork for the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, which aims to create the world's largest single market.

From an **integrative perspective**, NEPAD has worked to **harmonize policies and economic strategies among African nations**, ensuring

that development efforts align with the broader goals of the **African Union's Agenda 2063**. By promoting cross-border infrastructure projects and regional cooperation in sectors such as energy, agriculture, and digital transformation, NEPAD has strengthened Africa's collective ability to address common challenges, from poverty and unemployment to climate change and geopolitical instability.

Despite these achievements, **challenges remain**, including securing sustainable financing, ensuring effective policy implementation, and bridging disparities between African nations in terms of development levels. However, with the increasing commitment of African leaders, international partners, and the private sector, NEPAD continues to be a **cornerstone for Africa's regional integration and economic transformation**. Looking ahead, the initiative is expected to **further accelerate intra-African collaboration, attract greater investments, and enhance Africa's role on the global stage**, ensuring that the continent moves towards a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous future.

However, all that has been achieved does not reflect the aspirations of peoples who continue to suffer from marginalization, poverty and wars compared to the available natural and human resources.

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