



NEPAD's Contribution to Democracy and Good Governance in Africa

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Abstract

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was launched in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2001 to spearhead an African Renaissance. NEPAD acknowledged democracy and good governance as conditions for sustainable development and made provisions for setting up the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). NEPAD, and particularly the APRM, was embraced by the European Union (EU). Today, almost nine years later, NEPAD has shown few concrete results, and it seems fair to ask if NEPAD has failed and if EU support to NEPAD has been wasted.

This paper argues that NEPAD has helped to place democracy and good governance at the centre of Africa's development agenda and to increase the EU's focus on Africa's development challenges, that EU support to NEPAD has focused too little on sharing the EU's own experiences with regional policy integration, and that the APRM remains an innovative mechanism for building democracy and good governance from which the EU itself could learn.

Summary of Recommendations

The EU should recognize that NEPAD is not a stand-alone programme but part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration in Africa, and consider ways of sharing its own experiences with regional policy integration based on incrementalism and intergovernmentalism, particularly in the sphere of low politics. It should consider following the example of the APRM and establishing a European peer review process as a mechanism for documenting and sharing experiences, encouraging public debate, and upholding norms and standards for democracy and good governance in Europe.

1. Introduction

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was launched with much fanfare in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2001, the result of a mandate given to five African leaders (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa) by the Organization of African

Unity (OAU) to work out a programme to spearhead an African Renaissance¹ (Taylor 2005a; 2005b).

Peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights, and sound economic management as conditions for sustainable development were placed at the centre of NEPAD. Also, provisions were made for reviewing progress and addressing problems and delays, which led to the adoption of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) the following year.

NEPAD, and particularly the APRM, was embraced by the European Union (EU) as an expression of Africa's commitment to democracy and good governance and, since then, has remained high on the EU's external relations agenda.

But today, almost nine years later, NEPAD has shown few results. Virtually no projects have been implemented under NEPAD, and few countries have fully implemented the APRM. In this light, it seems fair to ask if NEPAD has failed and if EU support to NEPAD has been wasted.

This paper evaluates NEPAD not as a stand-alone programme but as part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration in Africa, and makes the following arguments: First, NEPAD should be credited, at least partially, for placing democracy and good governance at the centre of Africa's development agenda and placing Africa's development challenges at the centre of the EU's external relations agenda. Second, EU support for NEPAD and regional policy integration in Africa has focused on strengthening and promoting the supranational institutions, particularly in the sphere of high politics, instead of sharing its own experiences. Finally, NEPAD should be credited for conceiving the APRM, which, despite criticism and implementation challenges, remains an innovative mechanism for building democracy and good governance and provides an instrument from which the EU itself could learn.

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After providing historical context for NEPAD and reviewing responses to it from the EU and from civil society in Africa, the paper discusses NEPAD, EU support for it, and its contribution to democracy and good governance in Africa,

and proposes policy options for strengthening the EU's partnership with Africa in general and its support for NEPAD in particular.

2. Historical Context

NEPAD emerged not in a vacuum but as the result of a series of historical circumstances that included the end of colonialism and the first steps towards regional policy integration in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, and the end of the Cold War and the democratic reforms in the 1990s. It was formulated on the basis of the successes and failures of earlier attempts at promoting

¹ The idea of an African Renaissance was introduced in 1994 after the first democratic elections in South Africa and later popularized by the 1998 African Renaissance Conference, the foundation of the African Renaissance Institute in 1999, and the book *African Renaissance* by William Malagapuru (1999).

regional policy integration in Africa, such as the creation of the OAU, the Monrovia commitments, the Lagos Plan of Action, and the Abuja Treaty. NEPAD cannot be isolated from these historical circumstances. An evaluation of NEPAD's contribution to democracy and good governance in Africa therefore must place NEPAD in its historical context and evaluate also how NEPAD has contributed to the larger process of regional policy integration in Africa and how this process has contributed to democracy and good governance in Africa.

The Lagos Plan of Action

The process that culminated in the launch of NEPAD started with the creation of the OAU in 1963 and the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 (OAU Secretariat 1980). The Lagos Plan of Action emerged in response to rising levels of poverty and inequality in Africa and African leaders' frustration with externally driven development programmes. At the OAU summit in Monrovia, Liberia in 1979, African leaders advanced the idea that Africa's development could not be dependent on development aid and special relations with Europe, and they committed themselves to promoting development aimed at self-reliance, promoting regional economic integration, and establishing institutions to facilitate the achievement of self-reliance (OAU Secretariat 1979: paragraphs 1–3). The aim was to create a dynamic and interdependent African economy and thereby pave the way for the establishment of an economic community (OAU Secretariat 1979: paragraph 5).

The Lagos Plan of Action was based on classical dependency theory: it focused exclusively on the external causes of the economic and social crisis and neglected internal causes such as lack of political leadership and good governance.

The Lagos Plan of Action was a concretization of the Monrovia commitments and provided an analysis of Africa's development challenges and a programme for addressing them. The analysis was based on classical dependency theory: Africa was seen as a victim of exploitation arising from colonialism and neo-colonialism, and the solution was seen as self-sufficiency, self-sustainment, and self-reliance – that is, promotion of African industries and limitations on imports and on foreign investments (OAU Secretariat 1980: paragraphs 3 and 6). It focused exclusively on the external causes of the economic and social crisis and neglected internal causes such as lack of political leadership and good governance (Owusu 2003: 1657). Its statement that 'despite all efforts made by its leaders, [Africa] remains the least developed continent' (OAU Secretariat 1980: paragraph 7) absolved African leaders of responsibility. The Lagos Plan of Action suggested projects, predominantly in the area of socio-economics, but did not provide guidance on how these projects should be financed or implemented.

The Lagos Plan of Action failed to achieve its objective of creating a dynamic and interdependent African economy, but it placed the goals of regional integration, self-reliance, and good governance on Africa's development agenda. It made no explicit references to democracy, although the 1979 Monrovia commitments, on which it was based, had recognized that 'the political regime which protects human rights and democratic freedoms is essential for mobilizing the creative initiative of our people for rapid economic development' (OAU Secretariat 1979: preamble). It did, however, call for 'participation of all the people', with a chapter specifically on women and development, and thus placed at least some elements of democracy on Africa's development agenda (OAU Secretariat 1980: paragraphs 93, 110, 272, and 295–325).

The Abuja Treaty

The Monrovia commitments and the Lagos Plan of Action were translated into legally binding provisions with the signing of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, also known as the Abuja Treaty, in Abuja, Nigeria in 1991 (OAU Secretariat 1991). This treaty emerged in the aftermath of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s. It essentially resurrected the Monrovia commitments and the analysis and programme of the Lagos Plan of Action (OAU Secretariat 1989: 3).

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The Abuja Treaty established the African Economic Community and provided a road map for its realization, which consisted of six stages including the consolidation

of a common market, the creation of a single currency, and the setting up of a pan-African parliament and executive organs (OAU Secretariat 1991: article 6, paragraph 2). It also included provisions for punishing signatories not adhering to its conventions: ‘Any Member State, which persistently fails to honor its general undertakings under this Treaty or fails to abide by the decisions or regulations of the Community, may be subjected to sanctions’ (OAU Secretariat 1991: article 5, paragraph 3). The Abuja Treaty thus anticipated the provisions of NEPAD that laid the foundation for the adoption of the APRM (NEPAD Secretariat 2001: paragraphs 85 and 201).

Like the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty failed – at least it has so far – to achieve its objective of realizing the African Economic Community, but it strengthened the goals of regional integration, self-reliance and good governance on Africa’s development agenda. The Monrovia commitments, as made concrete in the Lagos Plan of Action, were established as principles by the Abuja Treaty and further defined with references to equality and solidarity, the ‘harmonization of policies and integration of programmes’, the ‘peaceful settlement of disputes’, the ‘recognition, protection, and promotion of human and people’s rights’, and ‘accountability, economic justice, and popular participation in development’ (OAU Secretariat 1991: article 3). Like the earlier documents, it made no explicit references to democracy, but its language – including the phrases cited above as well as a reference to the election of the members of the Pan-African Parliament by ‘continental universal suffrage’ (OAU Secretariat 1991: article 6) – indicates an increased emphasis on democracy.

The Establishment of NEPAD

A political dimension was added to the Abuja Treaty with the launch of NEPAD in Abuja, Nigeria in 2001 and the transformation of the OAU into the Africa Union (AU) in 2002 (OAU Secretariat 2000). NEPAD emerged in the context of the democratic reforms that took place in the 1990s and increasing optimism about political leadership and social and economic development in Africa. As mentioned earlier, the OAU had tasked five African leaders (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa) to work out a programme to spearhead an African Renaissance. NEPAD was the result partly of their work and partly of a merger of the Omega Plan, an infrastructure development programme initiated by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, and the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan, a social and economic development partnership initiated by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, and

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President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. NEPAD, originally called the New African Initiative, was adopted at the OAU summit in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001 and launched at the first meeting of the implementation committee in Abuja, Nigeria later the same year (NEPAD Secretariat 2001).

Like the Lagos Plan of Action, NEPAD provided an analysis of Africa's development challenges and a programme for addressing them. The analysis was based on an eclectic combination of dependency theory, neoliberal economic theory, and modernization theory: Africa was seen as underdeveloped as a consequence of exploitation by the developed countries, and the solution was seen to be a renewed and equal partnership with the rest of the world, which would set Africa on the path to development (NEPAD Secretariat 2001: paragraphs 1–2; Matthews 2004: 498). NEPAD recognized the responsibility of African leaders even if emphasis was still placed on the legacies of colonialism: 'Post-colonial Africa inherited weak states and dysfunctional economies, which were further aggravated by poor leadership, corruption and bad governance in many countries' (NEPAD Secretariat 2001: paragraph 22).

NEPAD recognized peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights, and sound economic management as conditions for sustainable development (NEPAD Secretariat 2001: paragraph 71). It made provisions for 'reviewing progress in the achievement of mutually agreed targets' and 'taking appropriate steps to address problems and delays' (NEPAD Secretariat 2001: paragraphs 85 and 201). The provisions were expressed in concrete form in the APRM, which was adopted at the OAU Summit in Durban, South Africa in 2002 (OAU Secretariat 2002).

The APRM established a voluntary review mechanism to monitor the implementation of NEPAD and foster 'the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration' (OAU Secretariat 2002: paragraphs 1–2). The review mechanism was to be directed and managed by a panel of seven eminent persons and supported by a secretariat with the technical capacity to undertake the analytical work (OAU Secretariat 2002: paragraphs 5–11).

3. Responses to NEPAD

From the outset, the EU welcomed NEPAD as an expression of African leaders' commitment to building democracy and strengthening good governance. Different EU institutions, including the EU Presidency, the EU Commission, and the European Parliament, issued statements that expressed political support for NEPAD in different multilateral forums, including the G8, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the Africa Partnership Forum, and the UN. At a high-level plenary meeting in 2002 on how the international community could support NEPAD, Denmark, which then held the EU Presidency, stated that 'the EU is a strong supporter of NEPAD and the promise it holds for African development ... The African leaders and people have raised the stakes with the adoption of NEPAD. The international community should be prepared to

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match this' (quoted in Moeller 2002). Similar statements were made by a number of national parliaments in Europe and by the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)–EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

The EU praised the APRM in particular. As one Scandinavian ambassador commented, the APRM 'captured our imagination and made NEPAD that much easier to sell' (Taylor 2005a: 2). At the UN General Assembly in 2004, Netherlands, which then held the EU Presidency, stated that 'the APRM is an extremely powerful and positive tool for improving governance in Africa' and expressed commitment 'to support the APRM in the spirit of partnership and with full respect of the African ownership of the process' (van den Berg 2004).

Since then, NEPAD has remained high on the EU's external relations agenda. Current EU policies towards Africa are guided by the Africa–EU Strategic Partnership, adopted at the EU–Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2007, and its First Action Plan (AU Commission and EU Commission 2007, 2008). The Africa–EU Strategic Partnership points to the APRM as a promising case of 'Africa-owned governance reform programmes and democracy-building efforts', and the First Action Plan (2008–2010) lists support to the APRM as one of three priority actions (AU Commission and EU Commission 2007: paragraph 33; AU Commission and EU Commission 2008: 13). Several EU member states have provided financial support both to the APRM's governing bodies and to its implementation in participating countries.

Responses to NEPAD by African civil society have been much more divided. Some civil society groups embraced opportunities to engage with NEPAD, while others were more cautious and some chose to remain outside of NEPAD altogether. Comments ranged from uncritical support to absolute rejection (Matthews 2004).

Responses to NEPAD by academics have been similarly divided. Few endorsed NEPAD fully. Some supported its general stance but had reservations about certain aspects or the process through which it emerged; others saw little good in it (Akokpari 2004; Chabal 2002; Kanbur 2002; Nabudere 2002).

African civil society was officially invited to take part in the NEPAD process only in 2002, the year after it was launched. Civil society forums were held in Dakar, Senegal; Elmina, Ghana; Libreville, Gabon; Accra, Ghana; and Maputo, Mozambique. These forums were heavily criticized for being limited to dispensing information rather than providing opportunities for civil society to give input to the NEPAD process (Matthews 2004: 507).

African civil society's criticism of NEPAD has usually been ill received by African leaders. Former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, for example, criticized civil society for being ill-informed about NEPAD and said that they should 'come forward and ask what they can do rather than criticizing' (Stoppard 2002: 1). Statements like this indicate that civil society was assigned a role in the implementation of NEPAD but largely excluded from its creation and, until now, has not really been afforded the opportunity to suggest improvements or alternatives (Matthews 2004: 508).

4. NEPAD: The First Nine Years

NEPAD thus far has shown few concrete results. Africa's development challenges remain the same and remain unaddressed, virtually no concrete programmes or projects have been implemented under NEPAD, few countries have fully implemented the APRM, and none have fully implemented their programme of action. Two of NEPAD's founding fathers, former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, have left office, which has led some to question South Africa's and Nigeria's continued support to NEPAD. Another, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, has denounced NEPAD in its entirety, saying, 'Expenses adding up to hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on trips, on hotels. But not a single classroom has been built, not a single health centre completed. NEPAD has not done what it was set up for' (quoted in Ba 2007).

Has NEPAD failed, and has EU support to it been wasted? If we evaluate NEPAD as a stand-alone programme, the simple answer is yes.

Has NEPAD failed, and has EU support to it been wasted? If we evaluate NEPAD as a stand-alone programme, the simple answer is yes. However, if we evaluate NEPAD as part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration in Africa – a process that started with the creation of the OAU in 1963 and has included the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, the signing of the Abuja Treaty in 1991, the launch of NEPAD in 2001 and the transformation of the OAU into the AU in 2002 – the answer is less straightforward.

Africa's Development Challenges and the EU's External Relations Agenda

If NEPAD is seen as part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration, it can be credited with placing democracy and good governance at the centre of Africa's development agenda as conditions for sustainable development. The Monrovia commitments and the Lagos Plan of Action introduced the ideas of regional integration, self-reliance, and institution building. The Abuja Treaty consolidated these ideas. Finally, NEPAD placed democracy and good governance at the centre of Africa's development agenda as conditions for sustainable development, epitomized by the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance in 2007. Such a move would not be questioned today, but this was not the case 30 years ago when the Monrovia commitments were made and the Lagos Plan of Action was adopted.

If NEPAD is seen as part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration, it can be credited with placing democracy and good governance at the centre of Africa's development agenda as conditions for sustainable development.

NEPAD has also inspired an unprecedented public debate within civil society in Africa on development challenges and solutions and has thus helped to strengthen democratic culture and debate on the continent. Public debate is now common in Africa, but this was not the case ten years ago when NEPAD was launched. Debate on NEPAD has contributed to the emergence of an increasingly vibrant civil society. Civil society groups have united in their opposition to NEPAD or to certain aspects of it, and it is reasonable to expect that this kind of collaboration will result in alternative development programmes being brought to the fore (Matthews 2004: 508).

Also in the context of ongoing regional policy integration, NEPAD should be credited, at least partially, with placing Africa's development challenges at the centre of the EU's

external relations agenda. Africa has been a focus of European foreign policy aspirations for hundreds of years, but it is only within the last ten years that it has gained prominence on that agenda. The reasons for this arguably include the risks and consequences of state failure, increased economic interests in Africa, and transnational challenges such as migration and climate change (Bradley 2009: 52). However, the importance of the launch of NEPAD should not be underestimated. According to the *World Investment Report 2008*, foreign direct investments to Africa tripled between 2003 and 2008 despite the global financial crisis, partly due to an increasingly investment-friendly environment (UNCTAD 2008: 38). Together with the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000 and the G8 summits in Kananaskis, Canada in 2002 and Gleneagles, Scotland in 2005, NEPAD has arguably contributed to this – and to the growing recognition that Africa’s problems must be addressed and that the international community, including the EU, has an important role to play in addressing them (Loxley 2003).

European Experiences with Regional Policy Integration and EU Support for NEPAD

It is widely argued that the EU itself integrated through a series of incremental steps rather than through institutional revolutions, that the important steps were taken by the member states rather than by the supranational bodies, and that most of the steps were taken in the sphere of low politics rather than in the sphere of high politics (Haas 1958; Moravcsik 1998). By low politics the paper refers to matters that do not have direct implications for the sovereignty of states, such as economic and cultural affairs. By high politics the paper refers to matters that have or might have direct implications for the sovereignty of states, such as foreign and security affairs. The reason for European integration was to prevent war, a matter of high politics. But European states spent 30 years or more discussing low politics, and gradually building mutual trust, before high politics became part of the integration process with the signing of the Single European Act in 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

But in its support for NEPAD and African regional integration, the EU appears to have focused on strengthening and promoting revolutionary changes of the supranational institutions, such as the AU Commission and the Pan-African Parliament, particularly in the sphere of high politics. For example, the APRM, which ensured EU support for NEPAD, is overseen by a supranational, or at least quasi-supranational, body, the APRM Panel and Secretariat; it intervenes, even if indirectly, in the oversight and policy making processes and thus the sovereignty of a participating country; and it exposes weaknesses and shortages and thus could damage public support to the ruling party in a participating country. Another example is the African Peace Facility, an instrument for EU support for the African Peace and Security Architecture under the European Development Fund, which has amounted to about 740 million Euros since 2004, with a similar amount budgeted for the coming years. This is by far the biggest of any EU programme supporting regional integration in Africa and focuses almost exclusively on high politics (European Commission 2009a). In comparison, the EU has supported the EU–Africa Infrastructure Partnership with about 10 million Euros and the EU–Africa Infrastructure Fund with about 60 million Euros, together less than one tenth of the support provided to the African Peace Facility (European Commission 2009b). Finally, as an example of the focus on strengthening and reforming the supranational institutions, the EU has supported the AU Commission institution- and capacity-building programme with 55 million Euros between 2000 and 2007 (European

Commission 2007). These examples and others suggest that the EU has promoted regional policy integration in Africa based on revolutionism and supranationalism in the sphere of high politics, instead of sharing its own experiences with regional integration based on incrementalism and intergovernmentalism in the sphere of low politics, as summarized in the following table.

The EU has promoted regional policy integration in Africa based on revolutionism and supranationalism in the sphere of high politics, instead of sharing its own experiences with regional integration based on incrementalism and intergovernmentalism in the sphere of low politics.

	EU experience with European regional policy integration	EU support to regional policy integration in Africa
Pace	Incremental steps	Revolutionary changes
Actors	Member states in inter-governmental forums	Supranational institutions
Sphere	Low politics	High politics

The Africa–EU Strategic Partnership, launched at the Africa–EU Summit in Lisbon, Portugal in 2007, suggests a possible shift away from this tendency. In addition to a subsidiary partnership in the area of peace and security, the Partnership includes subsidiary partnerships in democratic governance and human rights, trade, energy, climate change, migration, and science – all of which are traditionally considered low politics. The focus on strengthening supranational institutions, however, seems persistent in that the AU Commission, rather than the AU member states, is seen as the principal implementing partner on the African side (Sherrif 2009: 1).

A European Peer Review Mechanism

Regardless of whether NEPAD is seen as a stand-alone programme or as part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration, it should be credited with conceiving the APRM, which, despite criticism and implementation challenges, remains an innovative mechanism for building democracy and good governance. The APRM provides a framework and set of processes through which civil society of a country can criticize their government’s performance and participate in actual policy making. At the same time, it links the policy making processes of a participating country directly with internationally agreed norms and standards. On a continent where leaders too often have fiercely protected their power and sovereignty, and where politics too often has been characterized by blame and denial, this is unprecedented (Herbert and Gruzd 2008: 5–6).

As a mechanism for building democracy and good governance, the APRM provides an instrument that the EU could learn from.

As a mechanism for building democracy and good governance, the APRM provides an instrument that the EU could learn from. If Africa, with its diversity and its development challenges, has succeeded in establishing and

at least partially implementing a peer review mechanism, why cannot Europe? The EU has already agreed on a wide range of norms, standards, and policies that could provide the foundation for such a process. It has also established several institutions that could oversee and manage it – the Council of Ministers and the Council Secretariat, the European Commission, and the European Parliament. Establishing a European peer review mechanism thus would not require much additional work, whether in terms of intergovernmental negotiation or in terms of institutional arrangements and setups – at least not compared with what was required in Africa. A European peer review mechanism could contribute to building democracy and strengthening good governance in Europe by providing a mechanism for documenting and sharing experiences, encouraging public debate, and upholding norms and standards.

The Future of NEPAD and Regional Policy Integration in Africa

On 1 February 2010, the AU summit approved the full integration of NEPAD into the structures and processes of the AU (NEPAD Secretariat 2010). The NEPAD Secretariat will be replaced by a Planning and Coordinating Agency, which, under the supervision of the AU chairperson, will ‘facilitate and coordinate the implementation of continental and regional priority programmes’ (NEPAD Secretariat 2010).

How this integration will take place and what its implications will be remain to be seen. For example, it remains unclear if the NEPAD programme will be narrowed to focus on areas not dealt with by other AU bodies—such as agriculture, infrastructure, and information—while other areas, such as democracy, good governance, and conflict prevention are moved from NEPAD to the APRM Secretariat and the AU Commission respectively. However, integration and its expected results in terms of improved coordination and communication between different institutions, and in terms of increased international support for regional integration in Africa, suggest that NEPAD is gaining strength and momentum (Grimm and Katito 2010).

Large-scale initiatives of regional policy integration in Africa, such as NEPAD, seem to have a ten-year life cycle. The Lagos Plan of Action was adopted in 1980, the Abuja Treaty was signed in 1991, and NEPAD was launched in 2001. Following that pattern, one could expect NEPAD to be scrapped and replaced before long. However, the integration of NEPAD into the AU could extend its life cycle beyond ten years and make it the first large-scale initiative of regional policy integration in Africa to actually bring about change.

5. Policy Options for the EU

The following policy options could help the EU strengthen its partnership with Africa in general and its support to NEPAD in particular:

1. Recognize that NEPAD is not a stand-alone programme but part of an ongoing process of regional policy integration in Africa.
2. Consider ways of sharing its own experiences with regional policy integration based on incrementalism and intergovernmentalism, particularly in the sphere of low politics.
3. Consider establishing a European peer review process based on the example of the APRM.

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