

SEA ISLAND SUMMIT 2004
G8

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JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE
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Briefing Room East
Sea Island, Georgia

2:30 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: Gentlemen of the press, my colleagues, let me thank you all for this wonderful opportunity to reflect together on the opportunity we have had to continue the dialogue we started about four years ago with our development partners of the G8.

Over the past four years, we have met with the G8 at every meeting they have had. In fact, as a result of our first meeting in Tokyo, we established what is today called NEPAT. And the highlight of our meeting came up in Kananaskis two years ago in Canada, when the G8 collectively reacted to NEPAT through what is now called Africa Action Plan, which is to take the issues that we had put in NEPAT and they giving how they will react, how they will support our efforts, how they will work together with us.

And the issue is not the issue of handout. The issue is not the issue of one group begging the other. The issue is not the issue of one condescending to the other. The issue is the issue of mutual interest, mutual security, common prosperity. Because we have come to agree and to realize that if there is no peace in any part of the world, then to that extent the world has no peace. If there is grinding poverty in any part of the world, to that extent the world becomes a little bit insecure.

So it is for the enlightened self-interest of all of us, rich and poor, north and south, east or west, that we

should have a world that is equitable, a world that makes effort to eradicate poverty, knowing fully well that there are enough resources in the world to be able to deal with the issue of eradication of poverty, and giving decent living standards to all the inhabitants of the world.

We appreciate as African leaders and as Africans, that in the past there are areas where we have failed. The area of peace and security, the area of good governance, which are basic for us to be able to have the foundation for security and prosperity.

We embrace democracy as the best form of government for all of us in Africa. And even before NEPAT, in the year 1999, OAU then took a decision that any African leader who did not come to power through democratic means or process would not be admitted into that distinguished club. And we have made that to be a point from which we have not deviated. When Cote d'Ivoire defaulted on this, we did not allow Cote d'Ivoire the following year to be admitted to OAU meeting then before OAU metamorphosed into AU.

You would then say, what did we achieve at this meeting? Did we just come for lunch all the way from Africa and nothing else? Of course not. We reiterated the point that we have said together. And, as I said, the point that comes to be accepted by us on one hand collectively and by the G8 on the other -- the issue of peace and security.

And we said to the G8 here that we are taking peace and security so seriously that at the AU we have now formed a Peace and Security Council, which met on the 25th of May, just last month, under my chairmanship for that month. And we took some far-reaching decisions from countries that are in conflict, countries like Cote d'Ivoire, places like Dafor in western Sudan, Somalia and so on.

And we say to our G8 partners, yes we have the will, we have the means, we have the will, we have the troops. But we will need certain amount of capacity building if we will have to send troops out, what we call Standby Force For Africa, which we are establishing. We need to adequately equip them, we need to be able to airlift them, we need to adequately train them. And these are the areas where we need assistance from our development partners.

We also take the area of agriculture. Agriculture is particularly important to us, since most of our people depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and agricultural production. And because we believe that any nation that cannot feed itself will be enslaved. In fact, I believe that the first thing you should be able to do as a nation is to be able to feed yourself to be able to call yourself a nation.

And we have had, with the help of FAO, an African agricultural development program, which has been adopted by NEPAT and by the African Union, and which require a certain amount of resources for us to be able to move forward. And we also made the point or we reported the success that we achieved in the area of cassava, in the area of rice, a new type of rice called NERICA rice, and what we need so that we can be not only self-sufficient, we can be surplus producer of food in Africa, so that we can take care of periods of drought, periods of famine. Within Africa we want to be self-sufficient, and it will be a question of movement of food from one area to the other if we have famine in an area.

We also talked about the health -- health and human capacity building, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis. And we appreciate every effort, the bilateral effort and the global effort, especially through the global trust fund. But we do say that, since we all have national programs to deal with these issues, let the bilateral program or the bilateral support or the multilateral support be supplementary or if you like complementary to our programs, so we are not caught in the cross purpose, we are not pretending that we are trying to re-invent the wheel.

Finally, we raised the issue of infrastructure, which is basic. Whatever else we want to do, infrastructure is very important. And in NEPAT and through the help of Africa Development Bank, we have identified a number of bridges which need public and private support for execution, and we made this point clear. We, of course, talk about issues such as agri-market access, value addition, WTO, and so on.

At the end of the day, we agree that we already find that together we are achieving progress. But there's need for redoubling our efforts on both sides so that by the time next year when we will review the first five years of

G8 Africa, we will have significant record to show on our scorecard.

I will stop here and if any of my colleagues want to make a point, then they will make. Otherwise, we will leave the floor for anybody who wants to ask a question or make a comment.

Q I have two questions. One to you, President Obasanjo. Two years ago, you were one of the two presidents who met the G8 leaders to discuss the issue of NEPAT. At that meeting, you talked about the AAPA being developed, and the G8 leaders promising to support NEPAT initiative and other developmental programs in Africa. What has been done so far, I want to find out.

And then, President Kufour, as Chairman of ECOWAS, you are surrounded by a lot of trouble spots. G8 is talking about the promotion of good governance and security. What are you doing about that as well? Thank you.

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: If I understand what you're talking about is African -- the G8 African Action Plan. That's what I was actually referring to. In the area, for instance, of peace and security, the European Union had a program of peace and security facility -- peace and security facility. And that program had been utilized to help us in Liberia and in Cote d'Ivoire. And that program is also being utilized to help us to develop for them what I say we need, capacity building, which is training of our people.

It's not enough to say we have troops that can move to a place. They must be adequately trained for such operation. And also equipping us with equipment. If you are going to go to U.N. or if you are going to make contribution to U.N. forces, the U.N. has certain standards of equipment that you must have, in terms of weapons, in terms of other equipment. And we are saying and we have assurance that where there is need, the G8 will make -- will help us in this area.

We're also talking about early warning. That is part of the responsibility that the peace and security council are giving to itself. And here, too, the G8 has promised and they are making effort to help.

For instance, when we were ready -- for instance, when we were ready to send troops to Liberia, we had to depend on members of G8 to provide airlifting capacity for us to be able to move the troops from Nigeria into Liberia. And you may or may not know that in Sierra Leone, in Liberia, in Cote d'Ivoire, we have had assistance from Japan, from France, from EU, from Canada.

We are talking about ability to design a project, to write it out and present it. Canada had just given us \$10 million to help in that area. Because it is not enough to say, yes, you want infrastructure. You must be able to take it from conception to when you can call for tender and process your tender. That requires some form of help. And not only we got that money from Canada, we also get assurance that we will get more.

Now what I will say is that we are making progress. We need to accelerate the speed of our progress, and that is well understood by us on both sides.

PRESIDENT KUFOUR: Yes, I believe my answer dovetails into the answer given by President Obasanjo. You are talking of good governance, demanded by G8. I would say Africa is also demanding good governance of itself.

The constituted act of the African Union makes good governance a -- for all members. And you see that the days of warlords and coup-makers are passing, even in troubled West Africa. What we have there, to me, is just the lingering relics of those times when constitutional democracy was thrown overboard.

So I am hopeful that when you look at West Africa, now Liberia has a transitional government, which is succeeding and has maintained the course. Then next year, I believe by next year, there should be a democratic election for the people to decide by the ballot box their government, according to a constitution that is also democratic.

Cote d'Ivoire also has a government that has accepted to work in the light of the Marcoussis accord that was agreed in Paris. Yes, I will admit currently there are problems. But in our councils, in ECOWAS, and I believe in the councils of the African Union, pressure is being developed to ensure that the government as well as the other parties within the country work strictly to fulfill

the transition that is implied in the accord. And that we expect that by the end of next year, Cote d'Ivoire will be given the opportunity of a democratic election, by which, again, the people will decide who should govern.

And when we achieve these targets in these neighboring countries, I would say West Africa will have perhaps come 'round to live by good governance -- because without that, they could not be serious members of NEPAT and of the African Union. So we are working at it. We are at the beginnings of the new order. It's a matter of patience and persistence.

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: Yes, Savannah?

Q Question for the President of Algeria -- (in French).

PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA: (In French.)

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: Before another question, we want to know what the question is and what the answer is.

(Laughter.)

Okay, I've been overruled by my brother. Any other questions?

Q My question is to President Wade of Senegal. Mr. President, I think you tackle very often the question, the issue of infrastructures. What has been done effectively so far?

PRESIDENT WADE: Your question is very clear. First of all, excuse my English; as you know, I am French speaking.

I would say since two years, we have obtained financing from Canada, from Japan for 1 billion or \$60 million. Part of this will deal with infrastructure and also -- allocated \$450 million to West Africa, ECOWAS, and part of this will deal with infrastructure.

We have the African minister in many meetings -- all projects in infrastructure -- road, train, airport, and in all things. We have some money, but as said President Obasanjo, until now we should recognize that we have not

the capacity to implement. And we think that in few months maybe, we will be able to solve this problem.

Anyway, some projects are running now -- project of roads, project of dam in the Senegal Valley, and the -- plant. So I can say that I am satisfied by the way of which the things are going now. And I hope that we will be able to go faster.

I just will mention a personal position, hoping that it will be shared by everybody. I proposed to President Chirac in an experience to avoid the daily process; because when President Wade said if an African country asks for building of the road or any other things, that needs five years from the date of the demand to the finishing of the work. I say that Africa cannot wait nearly for so long.

To that I proposed to President Chirac, I told him, for the infrastructure program in Senegal, used as an example, he will not give me money. I don't want money; I want the road. I don't want money; I want the schools. You bring your enterprise -- French enterprise to Senegal to build the road. Just one thing -- this enterprise should subcontract with a Senegalese enterprise. The advantage is we will get rid of the -- all these things, and we will spare human resources that deal now with the --

I think with this, we will no more be accused of corruption. We will not money, but with real consideration. Thank you.

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: From Savannah --

Q I have a question for President Mbeki. The question is about Zimbabwe. Yesterday there was some disappointment expressed on the part of U.S. officials that NEPAT has not provided stronger intervention to what is happening in Zimbabwe. I'm wondering if Mr. Mbeki, perhaps Mr. Museveni, could comment on it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: We were reporting here on our discussions with the G8. As you know, the meeting lasted two hours and you had something like 15 people there. So it was impossible to discuss any particular country on the African country. So there was no discussion specific of Zimbabwe or any other country. But much to President Obasanjo has been raised about democracy, peace, stability

and so has been discussed globally and to say what does Zimbabwe do. So that particular matter wasn't discussed.

So our chairperson here, in his hands, we can't deal with the question of Zimbabwe. The essential point about Zimbabwe is that the political leadership of Zimbabwe, the ruling party, the opposition are meeting. They are having discussions among themselves to find a solution to the problems of Zimbabwe. And the rest of us support that process and encourage Zimbabwe to find the solutions to their problems.

But as I say, the matter of Zimbabwe or any other specific matter -- matters that President Obasanjo -- Western Sudan, Dafor, the Cote d'Ivoire, Somalia -- none of them were discussed in detail because there wouldn't have been enough time to discuss those matters in detail.

But what is happening in Zimbabwe, I'm saying, is that the leadership of that country is seated together, trying to resolve all of the problems that face that country.

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: President Museveni, I don't know if you want to add anything because you are mentioned in the fact?

Q My question goes to the President for Ghana. Mr. President, we are all aware of the importance that African economies have for the AU. Recently, Ghana offered to be reviewed as the first country in Africa. We heard that people from the panel of imminent persons from South Africa came to Ghana with the need to review the country. May we know the outcome of the review?

PRESIDENT KUFOUR: I can understand your high expectations with the review. But it's a long process and it's just begun. So it's just a matter of patience.

The whole idea of review is to enable the membership of the NEPAT -- those of us who have subscribed to submit to review -- to evolve a mechanism to stay the course of our promised good governance. It is not something like an inquisition that will be used to parade us about as failed or passed states. But I would urge you, just be patient. In due course, you may know of the evolution of the process. But it's only the beginning. Thank you.

Q I've got two questions. In your discussions with the G8 leaders today, did the issue of agricultural subsidies come up? The HIPIC initiative and debt relief for Africa? Thank you.

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: Well, agriculture came up. Like I said earlier, we have the program which we have all embraced and we say that that program needs to be assisted, to be helped. And as I said in my introductory remarks, we have the areas that we can claim that success has already been attained. Cassava, which is a crop that can grow almost anywhere in Africa; and then rice -- we have this new rice which will develop by WARDA -- West African Rice Development Authority -- called NERICA rice.

We mentioned, of course, the issue of WTO -- that the Doha development round should be pursued vigorously. All the political backing that it requires should be given to it so that we can get that done by the time set for it. I think early next year.

I believe we were told that the G8 among themselves talked about WTO and trade and their own economy. And of course, there are those who feel strongly about agricultural subsidies, and those who feel not so strongly about that. We were not privy to that discussion.

Our own discussion is what can we do in this area of agriculture so that we can be reasonably self-sufficient in food security and improved nutrition on the continent of Africa.

Now that is that on agriculture.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: HIPIC.

PRESIDENT OBASANJO: Oh, yes. The other one is HIPIC. Again, we mentioned this in a way. We understand that the G8 discussed it among themselves. We made the point that the proposal or the idea of 100 percent of consolidation of debt for HIPIC countries without any differentiation would help Africa.

We also made the point that all African debt needs to have relief. Otherwise, whatever we do in other areas will amount to eroding from what we need to have in terms of flow of resources to be able to move Africa forward.

3:10 P.M. EDT END