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**THE INTEGRATION OF THE NEW AFRICA-ASIA STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIP (NAASP) INTO AFRICAN UNION S  
TRUCTURES AND PROCESSES**  
*(Item Proposed by the Republic of South Africa)*

**THE INTEGRATION OF THE NEW AFRICA-ASIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP  
(NAASP) INTO AFRICAN UNION STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES  
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**A. Introduction**

1. During the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia in April 2005, Heads of State and Government reiterated commitments aimed at reinvigorating the "Spirit of Bandung" leading to the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement and thus evolve AASROC into New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership (NAASP). It was the hope of the African and Asian leaders that the NAASP, initiated in 2005, would continue the legacy and vision of African and Asian leaders of 1955 and would lead to even greater achievements. Therefore, the 2005 Summit paved the way for Asian-African co-operation to prosper in the new millennium. Leaders on both sides reaffirmed that the New Asian African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) would ensure a collective effort to improve the quality of the lives of people on both continents.

2. This reflected the common determination to take the destiny of Africa and Asia into its own hands. Afro-Asian solidarity was highly cognizant of the need to improve the lives of peoples of the two continents and determine their place within the global community of nations. It centered on Asian and African ownership based on a common vision, an equal partnership, mutual respect and benefit. NAASP has been viewed as a voluntary solidarity movement. This made NAASP an invigorating and fresh initiative towards Asian and African development. Furthermore, South-South co-operation would be practical and based on comparative advantage and mutual strength. It would focus on political solidarity, increased economic interaction and socio-cultural relations.

**B. Already agreed-upon identified potential areas of cooperation within NAASP**

3. Following the NAASP Senior Officials' Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia in October 2009, the eight key areas of identified cooperation are the following:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| (a) Food Security;   | (e) Combating Trans-national Organised Crime;     |
| (b) Energy Security; | (f) Asian-African Development University Network; |
| (c) Tourism;         | (g) Gender Equality and Women Empowerment; and    |
| (d) SMMEs;           | (h) Counter-terrorism.                            |

**C. Outcome of the AU Global Review of Africa's Strategic Partnerships**

4. The New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership (NAASP) is the only existing African Multilateral Partnership that does not fall under the overall framework on multilateral cooperation within the African Union (AU). The recommendations of the "Global Review of Africa's Strategic Partnerships with other Parts of the World" were endorsed by the

Executive Council of the African Union at its 20<sup>th</sup> Session held in January 2012. The recommendations of the Review regarding NAASP were as follows:

- The Africa-Asia Sub-regional Organisation Conference (AASROC), now known as the New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership (NAASP), would require a firm structure if it is to play an important role in facilitating cooperation between the two regions. At present, substantial progress has not been made in concretization of this Partnership;
- This Partnership was created outside of the structures of the African Union;
- Considering the foregoing, there is need for an evaluation of this process in terms of its sustainability and its revitalisation or possible downgrading to a Ministerial Meeting; and
- Continuation of this Partnership in its present form was not recommended.

5. When analysing the NAASP aims and objectives and the agreed-upon identified potential areas of cooperation within NAASP, it becomes clear that the NAASP could easily fall under the framework of AU Strategic Partnerships as a continent-to-continent Partnership. Furthermore, the NAASP has the potential to deliver on all elements required for the conducting of the Partnership.

#### **D Integration of NAASP into AU Structures and Processes**

6. Should there be a clear AU Assembly decision to integrate the NAASP into the wider framework of AU Multilateral Partnerships, the African Union Commission would become the first point of contact regarding the strategic political direction and the implementation of NAASP projects in Africa and Asia. Should this be the case, the restructuring of the NAASP would have to take other continental partnership models - for the Africa-EU and the ASA Partnerships - into account. An envisaged new structure for NAASP could be modelled along the following parameters:

- The NAASP could be housed within the newly created Partnerships Management and Coordination Division set up within the Office of the Chairperson of the African Union;
- The NAASP Summit could take place once in every three years. The hosting country for the NAASP Summit would alternate between the two regions. This is the current norm / cycle and hosting arrangements for most of the African strategic partnerships. While one of the recommendations of the Global Review is to consider the downgrading of the NAASP into a Ministerial Meeting, NAASP could be integrated into the AU as a fully fledged continent-to-continent Partnership. This would require Summit level

(and not Ministerial level) decisions like the other existing continent-to-continent Partnerships (Africa-EU and ASA Partnerships);

- The NAASP Action Plan could run concurrently with the NAASP Summit cycle i.e. the Action Plan could be on a three-year cycle. The NAASP Action Plan would be approved by the Heads of State and Government during the NAASP Summit ;
- A NAASP Ministerial Review Conference could be held at the mid-way point i.e. the holding of the NAASP Ministerial Review Meeting in the second year following the NAASP Summit. The purpose of the NAASP Ministerial Review Conference would be to take stock of the implementation of NAASP projects, assess and evaluate the rate of implementation, identify potential challenges that impede implementation, identify key deliverables for presentation at the NAASP Summit, discuss the mobilization of resources and funding mechanisms for concretization of NAASP projects, provide the parameters for the crafting of the next three-year cycle Action Plan etc.;
- A Senior Officials' Meeting could be held prior to the holding of the Ministerial Review Conference to undertake the necessary substance preparations for the Ministerial meeting;
- A NAASP Coordination Group - comprising of the African and the Asian NAASP Co-Chairs, the Commission of the African Union, ASEAN and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States – could be set up to oversee the workings of the Partnership – especially to avoid duplication of activities vis-à-vis other strategic partnerships . African and Asian RECs could also (on an ad hoc basis) be invited to participate in the work of the NAASP Coordination Group. In this regard, the Coordination Group could meet at least once a year;
- Based on the thematic areas of potential cooperation identified during the NAASP Senior Officials' Meetings held in 2009 (Jakarta), eight Joint Experts Groups (JEG) or Working Groups could be set up to identify programmes and projects for concrete implementation. Four or Five countries on each side could volunteer to be members of the various JEGs / Working Groups;
- The eight JEGs or Working Groups could be chaired by the “Champion Countries” - i.e. one African and one Asian Co-Chair for each JEG / Working Group that may have already been identified within the current NAASP structures;

- The eight JEGs or Working Groups could meet as often as possible and report on its activities to the NAASP Coordination Group on an annual basis;
- The African representatives (African NAASP Co-Chair and the Commission of the African Union) on the NAASP Coordination Group would be expected to work closely with the PRC - though the PRC Sub-Committee on Multilateral Cooperation – regarding all substance preparations for the NAASP Senior Officials’ Meetings, the NAASP Ministerial Review Conference and the NAASP Summit;
- The counterparts to the Commission of the African Union, regarding the roll-out of the NAASP Action Plan would be ASEAN (for all Asian NAASP member states) and the League of Arab States (for all Arab NAASP member states).

7. The above proposal is modelled entirely on a combination of the structures that have been set up for the Africa-EU and the ASA Partnerships. While both the Africa-EU and the ASA models have their own short-comings, the above proposal should be considered as the base model for the integration of NAASP into the wider framework of multilateral cooperation within the African Union. It should be borne in mind that all current structures within the various African Multilateral Partnerships are subject to constant review and restructuring - depending on how the specific Partnerships are delivering on their specific objectives.

## **E Conclusion**

8. The NAASP comprises of the highest number of countries - spanning three regions (Africa, Middle East and Asia-Pacific) – than any other African Multilateral Partnership. The potential for South-South cooperation is limitless, including trilateral cooperation which has in the past been a key focus of NAASP proposed engagements – an approach to cooperation not practised by other existing African multilateral partnerships. The involvement of the African Union in taking the NAASP process forward is also clearly not a new direction. All other African-Asian Multilateral Partnerships (e.g. TICAD and FOCAC), which initially started without the involvement of the AU have, over the past few years, come to include the AU as a key role-player. Thus, the movement of the NAASP into the wider AU framework of engaging all other Partnerships is proposed (Africa-EU; Africa-South America; Africa-Arab; Africa-Turkey; Africa-India; Africa-Korea; TICAD; FOCAC; G8-Africa etc) as it would, indeed, further solidify a common continental approach to African development partners.

2013-01-27

# The integration of the new Africa-Asia strategic partnership (NAASP) into African union s structures and processes (Item Proposed by the Republic of South Africa)

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