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Leon H. Sullivan Foundation Celebrates New Partnership for Africa's Development

Washington D.C., Tuesday, December 7, 2004 – The Leon H. Sullivan Foundation honored the new Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at a gala dinner on December 2 entitled "An Evening of Celebration." Nearly 800 American and African government officials, businesspeople and supporters of Africa gathered to kick off the new relationship between the African Union and the Sullivan Foundation.

Part of the mandate of that new relationship is that the Sullivan Foundation help Americans better understand African issues. One step in that process was a unique discussion between an African leader, the head of the world's largest international financial institution and former leader of one of the leading donor nations about the promise of NEPAD.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, Chairman of the African Union; James D. Wolfenson, President of the World Bank, and former Canadian Prime Minister Joseph S. Clark participated in this unique presentation, which was moderated by former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, Chairman of the Sullivan Foundation.

President Obasanjo recounted the origins of NEPAD – which arose from a mandate given to the five initiating Heads of State of Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, Egypt and Senegal, by the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) to develop an integrated socio-economic development framework for Africa. Designed to address the current challenges facing the African continent, NEPAD was adopted in July 2001 as a program of the Africa Union.

In his attempt to further explain NEPAD to the audience, President Obasanjo stressed the important role of partnerships (public-private, regional-interregional, national-international, etc.) in the concept. He also cited the construction of the new West Africa Gas pipeline from Nigeria through Ghana, Togo and Benin as an example of what NEPAD could accomplish for Africa. The president reiterated the fact that Africa is a wealthy continent with enormous natural resources that need to be explored, not exploited. He called on investors to drop their prejudices about the continent and explore it. He concluded by saying "the whole world stands to benefit if Africa moves ahead. That is the reality of globalization."

Mr. Wolfenson of the World Bank said he immediately welcomed the initiative, but questioned African leaders on how they were going to implement it before committing any World Bank support. Speaking on behalf of the world's most industrialized nations, he said that the G8 leaders also have embraced NEPAD and promised to help Africa in this partnership as long as African leaders keep their commitments to pursue peace and

security, good governance, regional cooperation and capacity building, which are the cardinal objectives of NEPAD.

For his part the former Canadian Prime Minister Mr. Clark commended the program for being initiated and managed by Africans leaders. He said the issue of African self-reliance was part of the appeal of NEPAD.

The Sullivan Foundation is in the process of disseminating this 25-minute leadership discussion on African Development.

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