Meeting of Three Worlds

Pamela Whitby wonders if China and India can be expected to stick by Africa in these tough economic times – and what Africa should do in return.

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On the global economy is an unprec-

dmented crisis and finance ministers

in capitals across the developed world

hold their heads in their hands in

despair. But are similar scenes being played

out in Beijing and Delhi?

Do not be fooled into thinking the global

recession has stopped the emerging econo-

mies in their tracks. India and China are still

growing, if more slowly – and Africa remains

at the heart of this growth. International

Monetary Fund figures show finance growth

date from eight percent last July to 5.6

per cent in January. China’s growth is still

impressive, despite declining from 9.3

per cent to 7.4 per cent in the same period.

We also need to remember that their

interest in Africa is strongly linked to

their economic success.

The Chinese are more integrated

into the global economy than the Indians.

They are more exposed to the West’s

problems. But one has to wonder just how wide the

gap is between the rhetoric of the master

and the threats – posed by China, which can

be both direct and indirect – the latter often

more significant,” says Kaplinsky. So, for

example, China’s competence in manufac-

turing means it has little interest in helping

Africa to industrialise. And without industry

there is no knock-on effect on wealth or jobs

in the West.

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here are various initiatives being

worked on by a range of bodies

including the African Union, the

UN’s Economic Commission for

Africa, the African Economic Research

Consortium and the New Partnership

for Africa’s Development. The goal, says

Kaplinsky, is to work with African govern-

ments to develop a framework that will

avoid fragmentation of individual policies

so that China, or India, for that matter,
cannot play countries off against one another.

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plan and the reality. ‘African governments

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