

Repositioning Africa for Sustainable Development: Examining Shared Challenges and Common Solutions

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Abstract

This paper presents a pragmatic discussion of contemporary issues bedeviling the future role of African youth vis-à-vis the continent's challenges of governance and development. The focus of our contribution is on the African Union (AU), the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and the African Leadership Academy Model African Union (ALAMAU). These institutions are a response to the myriad of challenges confronting Africa today. This study is important because it provides an in-depth explanation of the problems and prospects of development in the continent. To attain this goal, it proposes and discusses strategies targeted at resolving these challenges and places an emphasis on the need for partnering for the identification and application of shared common solutions to Africa's development.

Introduction

The youth it is said by many commentators, is the future of any nation desirous of and committed to the attainment of sustainable development (Rutter 1985; Leahy et. al., 2007; Africa Commission 2009; Lin 2012). According to Clinton (2012), "there are underlying dynamics that are affecting young people everywhere – changes in demographics and technology, economics and politics that are bringing together this unique moment in history. Young people are at the heart of today's great strategic opportunities and challenges, from rebuilding the global economy to combating violent extremism to building sustainable democracies." Consequently, the ambition of this paper is to make a dynamic contribution to the ongoing debate on issues centered on the future role of the youth in development, particularly that of Africa. The paper also examines the challenges facing the continent, especially as they relate to governance and development. The discussion in this paper is premised on the roles and goals of following institutions: the African union (AU), formerly the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and the African Leadership Academy Model African Union (ALAMAU). These institutions were so selected because they mirror the myriad of historical challenges confronting Africa today, ranging from peace and security, socio-economic development, health, education and employment, the actualization of true independence, good governance and human rights, etc.

The formation of the OAU was informed by the desire to seek common solutions to Africa's problems (OAU 1973), which later became the AU. The advent of the AU is often described as an event of great magnitude in the institutional evolution of the continent. On the 9th of September 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the OAU issued a Declaration popularly referred to as the Sirte Declaration, calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, inter alia, to accelerating the process of integration in the continent so as to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multidimensional social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalization. The African union is an intergovernmental organization formed from 52 African states. It was established on July 9th 2002, under the Constitutive Act of the African Union with the laudable objectives to:

- a) Achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the people of Africa;
- b) Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States;
- c) Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent;
- d) Promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its people;
- e) Encourage international co-operation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human rights;
- f) Promote peace, security and stability on the continent;
- g) Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance;
- h) Promote and protect human and people's rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and other relevant human rights instruments;
- i) Establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations;
- j) Promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies;

- k) Promote co-operation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples;
 - l) Coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the union;
 - m) Advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular in science and technology;
 - n) Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent.
- h) Despite all efforts towards the realization of the laudable objectives of the AU, it is a truism that after over a quarter of a century of political independence, African peoples' aspirations and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled. This has not been, Promote peace, security and stability on the continent;
- i) Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance;
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 - n) Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent (Williams 2011; AU 2014).

Despite all efforts towards the realization of the laudable objectives of the AU, it is a truism that African peoples' aspirations and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled (Ezeanyika 2008). This has not been, however, a period of unmitigated failure in the history of the continent. Some successes have been achieved in education, public health, import substitution industries, and in the continuing process of decolonization (Harrison 1987). However the problems of development, peace and security, the health of the international economy and improving the environment which are globally interrelated issues, and thus, requiring global solutions remain daunting challenges for the African continent.

The PAP is an organ of the AU. It was inaugurated on March 18, 2004, as established under Article 17 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as one of the organs provided for in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) signed in Abuja, Nigeria, in 1991. The establishment of the PAP is informed by a vision to provide a common platform for African peoples and their grass-roots organizations to be more involved in discussions and decision-making on the problems and challenges facing the continent.

The Pan-African Parliamentarians represent all the peoples of Africa and pursue the objectives of promoting the principles of human rights and democracy in Africa, encouraging good governance, transparency and accountability in Member States, promoting peace, security and stability and contributing to a more prosperous future for the peoples of Africa by promoting collective self-reliance and economic recovery. The ultimate aim of the Pan-African Parliament is to evolve into an institution with full legislative powers, whose members are elected by universal adult suffrage.

It is PAP's strong belief that the mainstreaming of African peoples into AU affairs will afford the opportunity, not only for the people to contribute to the policymaking processes of the organization, but also to scrutinize the actions of their leaders. To this extent, both PAP and ALAMAU have a huge potential to bring about accountability and development in the continent.

It is indeed a welcome initiative that an African youths' institution like the ALAMAU has conceptualized the vision of a Model AU conference as a means of educating the next generation of African and global leaders on the intricacies of diplomacy and Pan-African cooperation. During its 2014 international conference, 118 young leaders simulated five organs of the AU and one regional economic organization, attempting to resolve in five days of intense brainstorming and negotiations, some of the longest-running and most complicated issues on the continent.

ALAMAU is an organization modeled after the AU which has a vision of "an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena." It has the potential to inculcate the spirit of Pan-Africanism and prepare young Africans for leadership with the required knowledge and skills that can propel the creation of a prosperous Africa. This learning and knowledge acquisition process is an opportunity to identify and debate shared challenges and find common solutions to them. Such a strategy will mirror the myriads of problems and prospective solutions to Africa's underdevelopment and slow pace of development, through the prism of the AU.

Experience has shown that most African leaders came into leadership positions unprepared for it, with limited understanding of the daunting challenges facing the continent. Accordingly, their efforts in confronting the awesome problems of development and nation-building in most cases have been, at best, only a qualified success. Unfortunately future African leaders are often not perturbed by anything other than the pursuit of their professional careers. They have little or no time to devote to either acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of their own countries, region or the diverse cultures of their various ethnic nationalities. They neither have the time to learn about and understand the underlying objectives of the decisions and actions of their leaders and how they affect their future or the overall interest of the nation, talk less of what role they can play in this connection as citizens.

Thus, it has been observed that most young potential leaders have focused primarily on purely matters of personal interest issues, having no interest in critical national, regional and global challenges (Agulana 2006; *Thinking Africa Press* 2013). This problematic situation is further accentuated by the dearth of private institutions/organizations in Africa that are focused on and/or devoted to preparing potential leaders with that essential global outlook, which will enable them to cooperate within and across national, regional, and institutional boundaries. In addition, it has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, in many African countries to gain access to relevant and timely information on most national, regional, and global issues (Agha and Akhtar 1992; Hongladarom 2007).

Against the above background, those on whom the burden of leadership will fall on in the future must fully comprehend the nature of their responsibilities, duties, and obligations. In other words, they must be exposed to the nuances of governance in a global competitive political economy they are bound to face. This is the very essence of any purposeful youth gathering. It is therefore high time that institutions, public or private, like ALAMAU begin to engage young people as future statesmen and women in this area of learning, in order to enhance their knowledge and awareness of the multiple dimensions, complexities and dynamics of national, regional and global challenges calling for solution. Since the theme of this paper is centered on identifying and understanding shared challenges and finding common solutions to Africa's development, a take-off point will be an understanding of the concept of development and its challenges in Africa.

The Divide between Developed and Developing Countries

The concept of development has a wide range of perspectives. Some scholars construe it as a concept which is contested both theoretically and politically, and is inherently both complex and ambiguous. Recently development has taken on the limited meaning of the practice of development agencies, especially in aiming at reducing poverty and the Millennium Development Goals. (Thomas, 2004: 1, 2). Since development] depends on values (Cowen and Shenton 1998) and on alternative conceptions of the good life (Chambers 2004), there is no uniform or unique definition of the concept (Kanbur, 2006: 5).

The above notwithstanding, development is usually conceived as a process which attempts to optimize (reduce trade-offs between) essential societal goals like economic efficiency (for example economic growth), social justice (poverty alleviation, reduction of income differentials) and ecological management (not deplete natural resource base and not exceed assimilative capacity of environment) by optimal use of four types of capital; *physical capital* (capital, infrastructure, machines, tools, etc), *natural capital* (water, land, coal, wood, etc.), *human capital* (skills, ability to learn, family education, etc.) and *social capital*. Development promotes self-reliance, self-esteem, cultural identity, human rights and democracy and early paradigms of development were largely Keynesian and centered on the state. They placed a strong emphasis on growth. More recent understandings have negated that earlier belief (Ezeanyika et. al., 2010).

Development could be broadly conceived as a sustained change in the lives of the greatest majority of a populace leading to sustainable improvement (Ezeanyika 2010). Just like democracy, development is also a process not a project or a means but not an end (Ake 1995). The basic ingredients of development therefore include industrialization, modernization, economic growth, and other human development indices such as per capita income, standard of living, life expectancy, mortality rate, literacy rate, employment rate, etc. Therefore, it is the extent to which an economy has been able to achieve these indices that determines the level of its development (Carrey, 1993).

The term "development" encompasses the need and the means by which to provide better lives for people in poor countries. Its challenges include not only solutions to economic growth, although that is crucial, but also human development—providing for health, nutrition, education, and a clean environment. There are contrasting challenges and solutions associated with the process of "development." On one hand, development has resulted in serious inequalities between countries, whereby large numbers of the world's inhabitants are imprisoned in absolute and disproportionate poverty, especially in Africa for both historical and contemporary reasons, while inhabitants of the world's richest countries live in both relative and absolute luxury (Ezeanyika 2006).

The process of development garners so much attention because of the stark divide between rich (developed) and poor (developing) countries. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) rates countries' development annually according to its Human Development Index (HDI), which includes measurements of

citizens' access to healthcare, educational attainment, and standards of living, among other factors (HDR 2011). According to the Human Development Report (HDR) of 2013, the five countries with the highest HDI rankings were Norway, Australia, United States, Netherlands and Germany, while the five countries with the lowest rankings were Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Chad and Burkina Faso, all African countries. In fact, 37 of the 46 states ranked as having low human development are located in Africa. In contrast, 32 of the 47 countries considered to have scored very high in human development are found in Europe. As these figures demonstrate, development is often a highly localized issue, leading to great wealth disparities between distinct global regions (HDR 2013).

Contemporary Shared Challenges of Development

Today, the challenges facing developing countries (particularly those of Africa) revolve around what are generally called "structural constraints" to development (Gonick and Rosh 1988). First among these is geography—not just in the historical sense but also in the more contemporary aspect that a modern economy cannot function without a division and diversification of labor. Thus, countries with small populations may have trouble developing and gaining access to markets, while landlocked countries may struggle to integrate with global markets and expand their economies (Faye, McArthur, Sachs and Snow 2004; Erdenebileg 2006).

Other common challenges of development are high economic poverty, hunger, high mortality rates, unsafe water supplies, poor education systems, corrupt governments, war, and poor sanitation. These factors all combine to create what the World Bank calls "poverty traps"—cycles that must be broken for countries to develop. However, Countries with pragmatic policies can avoid poverty traps (Azariadis 2006; Easterly 2007; Kraay and McKenzie 2014). Likewise, geographic advantages do not always result in sound development in cases when governments squander valuable natural resources. According to suggestions proffered by the World Bank (Sachs 2004, 2005), countries should focus on six areas of policy to improve chances of development:

- Investment in education and health
- Increasing productivity of small farms
- Improving infrastructure (for example, roads)
- Developing an industrial policy to promote manufacturing
- Promoting democracy and human rights
- Ensuring environmental protection

Challenges of Economic Development

A careful examination of available statistics highlighting African development projects a mixed picture. According to the African Development Bank study (Madavo 2003; Dibia 2006; Ogujiuba and Jumade 2012), 61 percent of Africans live on less than \$2/day. Africa's middle class of 313 million has \$2-\$20 to spend daily. However, 180 million of them are vulnerable to economic shocks, as they only have \$2-\$4 to spend daily. There are also massive disparities in the continent: 100,000 of the richest Africans own 60 percent of the Africa's GDP.

According to African Development Bank Report (2011), Africa's GDP growth is promising. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been growing at an average of five percent annually since 2009; growth dipped in the last two years due to the financial crisis, but is expected to rise 5.5 percent in 2011 and 5.8 percent in 2012, and possibly at 6.1 percent in 2015. Natural resources accounted for 24 percent of Africa's GDP growth from 2000 to 2008; the rest is attributed to other industries.

A Harvard Business Review (2011) cites three factors contributing to Africa's GDP growth:

- 1) Decline in serious conflicts,
- 2) Healthier governments due to decreased budget deficits and decreased inflation; and
- 3) Adoption of market friendly policies, such as the privatization of state-owned enterprises, reduced trade barriers and corporate taxes.

Yet, that growth might not be sustainable. The Africa Progress Panel (2011) states that the GDP growth is of low quality because there has been little structural transformation and diversification. In 2009, 16 of 47 African economies got 50 percent of their earnings from a single export and for a few African countries one commodity (oil) accounts for 90 percent of the country's GDP. There are exceptions: Kenya, South Africa, and Tanzania, have all diversified their exports (Collier 2007; Chandy, Ledhie and Penciakova 2013).

Much of Africa's GDP growth is due the increased price of commodities. Africa has 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, 40 percent of its gold ore, and 80-90 percent of chromium and platinum deposits. The increased price for commodities, such as gold and oil, as well as food products, has been a boon and a liability for the continent. Africa's commodities have attracted a lot of foreign investment, particularly by the BRIC countries. China is mainly interested in commodities, especially oil, while India has also invested in the telecommunications sector (Ezeanyika 2014).

Unfortunately, much of the gains have not trickled down to the citizens, and remains in the hands of the multinational corporations (MNCs) and corrupt government officials. Nigeria, the largest African oil exporter, has

earned an estimated \$6 trillion from oil, yet 70 percent of its citizens live in abject and absolute poverty (Ikejiaku 2009). Kidnapping and violence in the Niger delta and the northern regions are still persistent and widespread.

The high price for food products and oil has been problematic for the urban poor, leading to recent protests and violent demonstrations in numerous countries, such as Uganda and Burkina Faso. African countries that are dependent on food imports are the most vulnerable to the high food prices. In general because of the recent economic crisis and the last food crisis in 2008, most governments have few funds to help the most vulnerable in the present food crisis (Greeley 1994 and Alcock 1997).

The Challenge of Poverty

Poverty remains the most recalcitrant challenge in Africa. It has impeded the realization of many other goals that Africans have strived to achieve. Absolute poverty creates a lot of suffering to Africans and undermines the efforts at bringing about sustainable development. It engenders indignities, fuels corruption and denial of justice to many and even generates and compounds conflicts (Sandbrook 1982; Spicker 1992; Oppenheim 1993 and Chambers 1994). For as long as the vicious circle of poverty continues it is going to be very difficult to realize the AU's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena" (Nyasulu 2010)

In Africans' struggle against poverty and its vicissitudes, we must recognize certain realities. It is universally recognized that Africa is clearly one of the richest continents with tremendous resources in terms of agriculture, water resources, minerals, forestry, as well as fauna and flora reserves. Yet, it is also recognized that it is the continent with the poorest people. How do Africans, therefore, overcome such anomaly of having the richest continent with the poorest people? Indeed, it cannot be denied that there are deficiencies that are due to Africans' own making; and there are others that are beyond their control. While Africans strive for a fairer international system and a more just international economic order, while they campaign for such measures as debt cancellation, they must also look inwards to see how resources are used to serve their peoples as a whole, rather than to serve individuals, through corruption and mismanagement.

Is Africa Emerging from the "Poverty Trap"?

Media around the world have been reporting on a recent African Development Bank study (Ncube and Shimeles 2012) claiming that Africa has a new middle class of 313 million, a size on par with middle classes in India and China. This news was orchestrated in the Western media. The *Wall Street Journal* (May 2, 2011) published an article entitled "A New Class of Consumers Grows in Africa." A similar story appeared in the *Financial Times* (May 18, 2011) entitled "Africa: Ripe for reappraisal." Meanwhile, the World Bank is also excited about African growth, reporting that "*Sub-Saharan Africa in 2011 has an unprecedented opportunity for transformation and sustained growth*" (World Bank 2011). Further jumping on the pro-growth bandwagon, the *Harvard Business Review* (May 2011) published its own positive outlook on African investment entitled "The Globe: Cracking the Next Growth Market: Africa."

However, some African newspapers are not convinced that the continent is experiencing a rebirth. South Africa's *Globe and Mail* (May 9, 2011) writes, "*Africa's stunning growth can't hide pervasive poverty.*" A story on AllAfrica.com (May 12, 2011) debunks the African Development Bank and World Bank reports writing that "*the global financial agencies' desperation for an African success story should be taken with not a grain, but a calabash full of salt*" (World Bank 2011). Recognizing, the multitude of shared challenges facing Africa, including those of fragile governments and conflicts, poor infrastructure, corruption, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDs, etc., the media and, certainly investors, are still looking to Africa as the next frontier.

In this respect, the initiative currently being taken by African leaders in developing an African Common Initiative for Development that addresses the sectoral prerequisites for the progress and prosperity of Africans needs to be actively and effectively supported (World Bank 2011). Indeed, the deficiencies in systems of infrastructure in Africa, low level of investments in the development of human capital, distortions in the institutional framework for economic management are some of the critical factors that have handicapped the harnessing of the rich resource potential in the continent, and also forestalled economic development in our societies.

Other Shared Challenges Facing Africa

There are many other challenges still plaguing Africa. A World Bank Report of 2011 identified the challenges as: un-diversified production structure, low human capital, weak governance, state fragility, lack of women's empowerment, lack of youth employment, and climate change (World Bank Report 2011). A finding by Global Financial Integrity notes that \$358bn flowed out of Africa between 2000 and 2008, due to corruption, trade distorted pricing, and other illicit activity (Global Financial Integrity 2013).

Political violence is another challenge (Farah, Kiamba and Mazongo 2011). In May 2011, following the elections Nigeria, a wave of violence left hundreds dead (Bambogse 2012). The Boko Haram crisis in the northern

regions of Nigeria has continued till date unabated. Similar post-election violence occurred in the Ivory Coast and Kenya (Aremu and Omotola 2007; Basedau, Erdmann and Mehler 2007; Souare 2008; Bamgbose 2008).

Africa's brain drain is both a challenge and source of income for the continent. The loss of skilled workers impedes development, decreases productivity spill-over, and reduces the potential for home-grown creative businesses, amongst other problems. On the other hand, remittances to Africa quadrupled from 1990 to 2010, providing \$40 billion in income in 2010 alone (Docquier, Lohest and Marfouk 2007; Omonijo, Nnedum and Ezeokana 2011; Gibson and McKenzie 2011).

One source of problematic funding for the continent has been foreign aid. The national budgets of most SSA countries are now dependent on this aid and, for some countries, it accounts for more than 80 percent of the national budget. The World Bank estimated in 2011 that about 30 percent of aid funding goes to corrupt officials (World Bank 2011). Furthermore, aid is often tied to the agenda of the giving country, therefore Africans are not setting the pace and direction of their own development.

Common Solutions to Africa's Development

Governments, corporations, non-profits, and international organizations seem to be partnering together to tackle different shared challenges in an attempt to find common solutions. The prevailing wisdom focuses on common solutions, while recognizing that each country has its own strengths and weaknesses.

World Bank (2011) unveiled a new Africa strategy addressing:

- 1) Competitiveness and employment, covering all traded goods and services, and
- 2) Vulnerability and resilience, covering macroeconomic shocks.

Underlying these priorities is an emphasis on governance and public sector capacity. The World Bank (2011) seeks to strengthen citizens' voices using communications technologies and is building capacity of African leaders through training and peer networks. The strategy will be implemented in partnerships among governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other aid bodies.

The United Nations (UN) recommends regional integration as a means to achieve economic development, such as integrating infrastructure, harmonizing standards and regulations, developing common approaches to macroeconomic policy, and sharing management of natural resources (Haas 1970; Thakur and Langenhove 2006). Integrating would lead to a regional industrial policy because of the presence of market scale, large labor pools, diversified resources and a production base, which taps into the trend of growing urbanization in Africa. Integration will be achieved through policy decisions and initiatives made by African leaders and by African regional bodies.

African countries and organizations are already engaged in the creation of a conducive environment for domestic and foreign investment. What is required on their part is the deepening of efforts in this regard. The AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have put in place mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts within and between Member States. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which is the flagship of AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development Program (NEPAD) is aimed at enhancing good political and economic governance in Africa.

The increasing adherence of African countries to the principles of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, transparency and accountability, has contributed to the reduction of conflicts, enhancement of political stability, and reduction of political risks for investors on the continent. Economic policy reforms, including privatization and the strengthening of public-private sector partnerships as mentioned above, are also creating opportunities for private investment in Africa. With regard to investment regulatory framework, several aspects of this are being reshaped to improve environment for investment. For example, many African countries have simplified investment procedures by creating one-stop shop investment centers for the completion of registration and establishment of business. This has reduced the length of time as well as the cost of business establishment. Restrictions on the repatriation of profits and the use of non-indigenous manpower are being eliminated or reduced. Also, in many African countries where foreign ownership of business was limited to that of minority share holding, changes in policy have been introduced to permit complete or majority ownership of business by foreigners.

Although Africa's business environment is becoming more conducive as result of the above measures, there are some areas where much still needs to be done to improve investment friendliness. Poor infrastructure imposes high operational risks and costs on investors. Elimination of infrastructure deficiencies is necessary for making the African environment more investment friendly. Also critical are the strengthening and improvement of the administrative, judicial and financial systems. As part of the strategy for creating a more investment friendly climate, African organizations, especially the RECs, are building Free Trade Areas (FTAs) by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers to intra-regional trade. They will also need to set up Customs Unions and adopt Common External Tariffs (CETs) to facilitate trade with other partners.

Underlying the call for the Common Initiative, as it complements the operationalization of the AU is a recognition that Africa's strength lies in working together, through cooperation and integration. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to address the essential priorities and prerequisites for integration. In this connection

and in terms of the shared challenges of realizing the African vision, African leaders should realize that health is wealth. Accordingly, a healthy continent is a wealthy one. African leaders should therefore openly and collectively address the issue of health for its population. As a matter of urgency, the gravity of health challenges posed by the HIV-AIDS and the Ebola pandemics necessitate drastic action in the continent. Recent information indicates that HIV is now vigorously attacking African youths, the continent's hope for the future. The situation therefore calls for concerted efforts towards prevention and behavior change, the provision of affordable drugs and the promotion of the search for the appropriate vaccine to fight the pandemic, as well as the growing threat of Ebola.

Concluding Remarks

While significant progress has been made by African leaders in their efforts to reduce crises and resolve conflicts, however, their capacity to prevent violent conflicts in the continent remains limited. Both the Member States and the AU have not developed the necessary institutional capacities to preempt conflicts from escalating and becoming violent and destabilizing. It is therefore essential to develop the capacity to anticipate and mitigate the eruption of violence that leads to instability. But more fundamental is the need to promote political systems within African countries that can be robust enough to accommodate differences without turning them into sources of antagonism and causes of confrontation.

Above all, Africans need to inculcate and/or strengthen the culture of peace, democracy and tolerance in their societies. Africans must do so by emphasizing the fact that in any society, conflict is endemic and therefore unavoidable. What is required is how to effectively manage it when it arises. Associated with the issue of conflict is the whole question of respect for human rights and ensuring the actualization of good governance. On the issue of human rights, Africans should be in the forefront of the struggle because no other community of nations can claim to have been more affected as a result of violations of human rights than Africa - starting from slavery, colonialism to apartheid. When African people fought for independence, the objective was not only for freedom but it was also to ensure that people regain their dignity as human being.

Indeed, a lot of changes have occurred, in terms of according greater respect for human rights in many areas of African societies. Nonetheless, Africans still have a long way to go. They need to build and strengthen institutions that underpin respect of human rights. The issue of human rights has to be an African agenda, in Africa, not something that is imposed from outside. In the same vein, the aspired Africa which can make a difference and which is vibrant, should be, a priori, the continent where there is rule of law, where people can decide how they are governed, by whom and for how long, through the institutionalization of appropriate framework for the attainment of such goals.

Without mincing words, African people are very clear and convinced on what future they want. Indeed, the prospects for attaining this future are increasingly becoming brighter, though there are challenges to be overcome. First and foremost is the need to realize that it is the African people themselves, who can bring about the future that they desire. The international community can, and should, provide support through various means. However, the main responsibility of attaining African goals and objectives lies essentially on Africans including its leadership.

Thus, today's global scenario is such that every country, including the development partners in West, gives priority to their own national and regional preoccupations. African countries cannot expect their problems and concerns to be given prime priority by countries outside the continent. Therefore, there is the need for African leaders to urgently look inwards to determine African solutions to African problems without ignoring multilateral partnerships for mutual support.

Further studies are encouraged focussing on the creation of sustainable institutions capable of building the capacity of mitigating violent conflicts. This institutionalization process will be best sustained if more knowledge is acquired from Africa's home-grown alternatives, indigenous to the people and a part of their socio-cultural values, which had, hitherto sustained growth and development, peace and stability in the continent.

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