Building a Better Future for Africa

Summary of Debate
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The two-day Conference has been exceedingly rich in content and presentations. President Obasanjo has certainly already wrapped up the main elements of the discussion from a leadership perspective. So let me add my own observations and summary, also through the eyes of a non-African and being a friend of Africa. The conclusions could focus on a slightly adapted theme, **"Building the Future of and for Africa",** involving five main precepts.

First of all, **globalization matters** and dominates increasingly the affairs of the world and all regions today. Whether globalization was meant for us (Africans) and not by us (Africans) is besides the point. What is important is that globalization will have an impact on all economic and political spheres and must be taken into account as we discuss the future development of Africa.

Secondly, African leaders and Africans at large should seek to **seize opportunities provided by globalization**, bringing to bear their own African values and self-confidence, and leave drawbacks behind so as to establish themselves in and benefit from this new, globalizing world. As we are currently living through multiple crises (global financial and economic crisis, food crisis, climate change crisis and the environmental/climate change crisis) the objective must be to integrate the continent more fully into the global economy and the global trends and developments.

Thirdly, **politics matter in all walks of life**, particularly as governmental leadership is the central issue for the future of Africa. It is imperative that leadership be based on accountability and be corruption-free. Good leadership lays the foundation for Africans to become the architects of their own future. There ought to be a vision for the strategic advancement of the continent, which should encompass geo-strategic issues. African leaders should shape these policies, down to the village level, because leadership will not only stay at the global, international level but will also affect every man, woman and child. President Konaré's vision of an United States of Africa, the issue of drawing much more concretely on subregional organizations and revitalizing NEPAD, while acknowledging its particular role in determining Africa's future, is of utmost importance. As one of the Presidents said, "It can be done and it must be done."

Fourthly, the overarching objective for building the future of and for Africa is the **elimination of poverty and inequalities**. Eliminating poverty and inequality ought to determine the course of policies by African leaders, governments and all stakeholders. If we succeed in reducing poverty it will have a positive impact on all areas of development and will underpin all efforts to promote sustainable development and create sustainable societies. I believe that it also has ramifications for building a green economy and a green

society, which will increasingly be coming to the fore on the global agenda over the next few years.

Fifthly, **governance matters**. We heard President Obasanjo give an excellent summary of this issue when he referred to "humanity and dignity." Human rights and ethics are of fundamental importance and of equal importance will be how we deal with fundamentalism and radicalism, an issue that was addressed by the conference. Whatever happens in governance must be under the precepts of vigilance and understanding, which Ms Assié- Lumumba pointed out several times in her interventions over the course of the Conference.

After these precepts, what are **the key drivers**? Clearly, the **hardcore drivers are economic and financial policies** relating to growth; savings; reform of the economy; national budgets; debt; and - resistance to impositions from Bretton Woods organizations or not - to conditionality of international financial organizations; mobilization of official development assistance (ODA); attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI); trade policies and patterns; promotion of inter-African collaboration and trade; and lastly the management of natural resources.

Now, what would be the **soft drivers of development**, which represent the foundation for Africa's future prosperity? They include:

1) **Providing quality education for all**, higher education, and all types of capacity-building so as to prepare young people for the world of work, focusing in particular on girls and women to realize gender equality as as been stipulated by the Millennium Development Goals;

2) **Investing in science, technology and innovation by and for Africans**, drawing very much on indigenous knowledge and what exists already on the continent rather than importing expertise and losing out on opportunities; harness this know-how and further explore opportunities for endogenous development. The role of ICTs will be crucial in this endeavor. More must be done to further integrate the role of ICTs and the access of information into various African languages, e.g. through tools like wikipedia, as Mr Ghosh highlighted. This is an incredibly exciting prospect and we now need to see how we can capitalize on it.

3) **Building knowledge societies and making good use of them**. ICTs are crucial to this endeavor as they play a predominant role in the transformation of societies.

4) **Promoting culture and the arts**. Let me emphasize creativity. President Obasanjo has highlighted the linkage of culture, values and ethics, which is a little bit different focus. I think that the creative moments, which Dominique Malaquais underlined, and opportunities to unleash dynamism and enthusiasm among Africans in this particular way is of utmost importance. It provides a medium for Africans to assert themselves, appropriate their own culture and capitalize on their own culture.

5) **Health**. We have heard some presentations on the health issue, but we did not go into too much detail, perhaps because we were focusing more on UNESCO's domains of competence.

Some strategies that have been proposed on **the way forward** include:

1) Cross-cutting approaches, particularly relating to science and technology;
2) Human resource strategies – how do we build them?;
3) Empowerment strategies – how do we build them without hierarchical structures?;
4) Values orientation strategies;
5) Strategies to promote shared governance, networks and partnerships, civil society involvement, and private sector involvement;
6) Preserving and promoting diversity which brings out the best of all people – not monolithic approaches, but diverse approaches.