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## **A Global Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity: A Message from Africa**

**OAU Day Seminar - May 19th, 2000**

**United Nations University, Tokyo  
Conference statement**

### **I. Introduction**

This year the celebration of OAU Day had a particular significance. It took place six weeks before the G8 Summit in Okinawa in Japan in July, four months before the Millennium Summit at the United Nations in New York in September, and at the dawn of a new millennium. It thus provided a timely occasion to look at the past and look to the future.

We must use this opportunity to deepen our understanding about the challenges and opportunities facing African countries.

We must ensure that African issues rank high on the agenda of the G8 Summit in Okinawa and on the agenda of Millennium Summit in New York. The beginning of the 21st century provides an opportunity to refocus on Africa after the end of the Cold War diverted attention and resources elsewhere.

In an attempt to focus on these objectives, the African Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the United Nations University organized a conference on "A Global Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity: a Message from Africa" on May 19th, at the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan.

### **II. The State of the Continent**

Africa's present conditions continue to reflect the continent's historical background. The continent was ravaged by slavery between the 16th and 18th centuries, a period followed by colonization in the 19th century that plundered the continent and dismembered the nation states of Africa, disrupting their cultures and civilization. Colonialism for most of Africa ended between 1955 and 1990, generally later than for other continents.

At independence, most of the newly independent states in Africa inherited little or no infrastructure of roads, railways, telecommunications, power, education or health. The regional economy was on precarious foundations, based almost entirely on subsistence agriculture, primary commodity and mineral resource exports with very little value added. Foreign trade tended to be tightly linked to the former colonial powers. Africa was engaged on the basis of the "rent" offered by these primary commodities and mineral and natural resources. Africa was rarely engaged by its former colonizers and new development partners on the basis of its potential productive capacity, creative innovation and entrepreneurship.

Recent development experience suggests a combination of positive and negative trends in the political, social and economic fields in African countries. Political tensions and conflicts in many countries of the continent - Sierra Leone, Angola, Congo, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Eritrea - illustrate the continuing scourge of wars and conflicts between and within African societies and the divisive legacy of colonialism and underdevelopment. The overall indicators - particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa - present a grim picture of a region not integrated into the international economic system, excluded from the opportunities offered by international trade and investment and lagging far behind in the provision of basic human needs.

A recent World Bank report, "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?", highlights these facts. The average income per capita is lower today than it was at the end of the 1960s. Income assets and access to essential services, to opportunities, and to power and decision-making are unequally distributed. The region's total income is not much more than Belgium's, and is divided among African countries with median GDP of just over US\$2 billion. This is about the output of a town of 60,000 people in a rich country. Excluding South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa has fewer roads than Poland. Epidemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS are fast reversing some of the social gains of the last 40 years. Two African countries now have HIV infection rates in excess of 25% of the adult population (Botswana 25.1% and Zimbabwe 25.84%).

This is a world away from the 1960s and early 1970s when many GDPs in Africa grew at an approximate rate of 5% per annum, and buoyancy in commodity prices and terms of trade promised a bright future.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, virtually all African countries suffered from a catastrophic fall in the prices of their exports and a sharp increase in the prices of all their imports, including the prices of their energy imports between 1973 and 1979. This deterioration of the terms of trade had a devastating impact on economic growth, undermining their capacities to save, to invest, to produce, to trade and to service their debt, and jeopardizing the standard of fundamental social services.

Decisions on exchange rates and interest rates were taken by the industrialized countries with a view solely to serving their domestic concerns in the early, middle and late 1980s, and even as late as the beginning of the 1990s. They did not, and still do not, give due regard to the impact of these decisions on borrowing countries. They further complicated the financial situation of African countries and disrupted their development processes.

Yet behind the headlines and these grim figures there are encouraging signs. The 1990s ushered in a period of major structural reforms. The liberalizing of markets and trade, improved economic management, and prudent monetary, financial and fiscal policies have developed and promoted the private sector as an engine for growth. These reforms have begun to pay off in a majority of countries. These countries have been recording steady economic growth and increases in personal income above world averages for the past two years.

Moreover, many African countries are now functioning multi-party democracies led by leaders elected in free and fair elections.

### **III. Mobilizing & Guiding Principles**

A number of basic principles are central to Africa and its development partners as they consider their approach to the implementation of solutions addressing the priority issues. Global solidarity is such a principle. The principles of ownership and partnership, first advocated by TICAD, are also central to any development and aid efforts. The importance of an integrated regional approach, the principle of constructive

engagement, good governance and subsidiarity are also key.

### **1. Solidarity in Action**

World Solidarity, based upon the interdependence and shared destiny of humankind, is a basic principle and must continue to underscore humanitarian and development assistance. Excessive imbalances and disparities in access to opportunities and governance, in the fulfillment of basic needs and in economic development between countries and regions at the international level are detrimental to the viability and stability of the international system. They are as unsustainable as excessive imbalances between regions or social segments at the national level.

Therefore, solidarity should be a guiding value and principle for all international initiatives, especially those concerning poverty eradication, natural disaster relief and other humanitarian relief.

### **2. Ownership of Action**

Development processes by African countries and outside assistance programmes should be designed with the objective of local capacity building. "Ownership" of the processes of development by the local community, and empowerment of their populations in implementing social, economic, technological and cultural approaches of development, are central to just and sustainable development projects.

### **3. Partnership for Action**

For Africa - as was earlier the case for Europe, Asia and Latin America - the priority issues involve complex social, political and economic challenges. These can only be addressed on the basis of self-help and constructive, mutually beneficial partnerships between Africa, its development partners and all actors of development. This partnership must be established between local, national and international actors, public and private actors, and state and civil actors, on the basis of comparative efficiency, synergy and complementarity between these various actors.

### **4. Integrated Approach**

Designing solutions to priority issues must be based upon integrated, comprehensive and constructive approaches to both social and economic development, and to both short-term and long-term, as well as both local and global perspectives.

### **5. Constructive Engagement**

Africa should be constructively engaged by its development partners not only on the basis of "rent-seeking" and the basis of its endowment in mineral and natural resources with little or no value added to African communities. Engagement must be on the basis of Africa's human potential, its potential for productive work, its creative initiative, its capacity for innovation, and its historically proved capacity of adopting - and adapting - new ideas and technologies.

### **6. Good governance**

Good governance in African societies is central to addressing adequately the priority issues, the challenges and the opportunities that are confronting Africa. Yet national good governance is not sufficient without good global governance of international

affairs which gives equal attention, equal commitment and equal efforts to all regions in the world. Good global governance also strikes a balance between all interests, including the interests of African countries. It takes into account the impact of global decisions on the social, economic and political situations and processes of African countries.

## **7. Regional Integration**

Regional integration develops markets, promotes economic efficiency, and represents a step towards integration in the global economy. The regional level is also a most appropriate level for conflict resolution. Therefore, a regional approach to most African priority issues should be emphasized and should rest upon the promotion of regional integration, cooperation and networking.

## **8. Subsidiarity**

It is essential to strike the right balance between subsidiarity - whereby problems and solutions are oriented around the people who are affected by them, at the local level - and intersocietal approaches to challenges, whether international or global.

## **IV. Priority Issues**

Priority issues require both action by African countries themselves and partnership and assistance from the international community and Africa's industrial partners. These priority issues are:

1. Poverty eradication
2. Debt relief
3. Conflict prevention, management and resolution, and post-conflict peace building
4. Trade and Investment
5. Information technology and technology transfer
6. Education and training
7. Integration into globalization

### **1. Poverty eradication**

Poverty eradication is the overriding and overarching priority in social development. Poverty reduction has been made even more urgent by globalization and economic liberalization and restructuring. It should also be the overarching priority of the international community.

Mechanisms such as the poverty fund of the Asian Development Bank should be considered to materialize the principle of world solidarity and the international will to fight poverty.

### **2. Debt relief**

African debt is currently unsustainable. The majority of countries spend about 30% of their national revenue to service foreign debt. The Japanese contribution to the improvement of the debt situation brought about by the G8 Cologne Summit is to be applauded. The issue of eligibility for debt relief and further improvement of the situation of indebted countries by canceling all debts or converting them to grants is urgent. This would give African states a chance to develop in a sustainable manner that

would help them integrate the world economy. Sustainable debt relief to African countries will contribute immensely to poverty alleviation, and to the fight against disease and the protection of the environment. For debt relief to be sustainable, the root causes of the complications in the financial situations of indebted countries should be identified and addressed so as to prevent the recurrence of such complications.

Some of the root causes of the debt situation of African countries relate to bad debt management. Others relate to deterioration of the terms of trade, unpredictable fluctuations in exchange and interest rates, excessive dependence on debt financing of development rather than foreign direct investment financing, and inadequate feasibility studies, implementation and management of investment projects. Yet other causes relate to decisions made at the global level relating to exchange and interest rates, which do not give sufficient and due regard to the impact of decisions upon developing countries, including African countries.

### **3. Conflict resolution**

The re-emergence of armed conflict in some regions in Africa and the negative impact of these conflicts on national and international efforts to promote growth and fight environmental degradation is alarming. Rapid population growth, unequal access to resources and to opportunities, and unequal participation in national decision-making and governance are among the root causes of armed conflict.

The primary responsibility to actively pursue resolution of their disputes lies with the parties themselves.

In addition, regional (OAU) and sub-regional (SADC, ECOWAS) organizations may have a comparative advantage over international organizations because of their proximity to the field and their better understanding of the issues and of the context, their greater ability to fine-tune the measures and the mechanisms. As such they are preferred channels for the design and implementation of Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (CPMR) measures and mechanisms. However, these regional or sub-regional organizations must have the political will, the capacity and the resources.

The participation of the UN, the international community and particularly major powers will therefore remain crucial. Attention, commitment and efforts in conflict resolution should be evenly discharged regardless of the proximity or distance of the conflict to or from the areas of the major power so-called vital strategic interests. In addition, the participation of the UN and other actors from outside the proximity of conflict will contribute to the neutrality and objectivity of the initiatives and increase their acceptability to the parties concerned.

### **4. Trade and investment**

The contribution of trade and investment in strengthening the momentum of African economies and alleviating the need for debt financing of their development must be emphasized.

African countries have not sufficiently shared in the opportunities offered by the world economy in international trade or foreign direct investment. African exports of goods have grown by an average of 2 per cent compared to a world average of 7 per cent. The share of African exports decreased from 5.9 per cent of world exports in 1980, to 3 per cent in 1990 and 2.3 per cent in 1996. The determination of Japan and the international community to provide market access to African countries is to be applauded. In partnership with trade and development partners, African products with export potential

can be identified and upgraded to meet international standards, and offered international visibility and exposure. In addition, assistance to African countries in attracting foreign direct investment is essential.

## **5. Transfer of IT and other technologies**

Tremendous advances in science and technology have produced unprecedented economic development worldwide. However, the benefits are not shared widely and equally. In particular, Africa has been largely ignored by the technological revolution and has not shared in its prosperity dividends.

Today the knowledge and technology gap between Africa and other continents is wide and growing. Nowhere else is the digital divide more pronounced than between Africa and the developed North.

Yet historically Africa has proved its capacity to adopt - and adapt - new ideas and technologies, such as was the case when kasava, coffee, cocoa, cotton and other cultures were introduced to Africa.

Therefore, an appeal is made to the international community at large, and the G8 countries in particular, to facilitate and finance access to and transfer of technologies, especially information technologies, which may help Africa leap-frog some stages of development.

Information technology can contribute to the fight against poverty and social and economic development. IT can bring distance-learning, e-education, e-commerce, e-healthcare, e-jobs, and many other social services as well as many economic opportunities closer to Africa. Governments, international organizations, and business should unite their efforts to devise ways and means of getting IT to Africa.

## **6. Education and training**

Development experiences in Asia and other continents prove that education, training and human resources development is a key factor in successful social and economic development. A balanced labor force covering the needs of the socioeconomic system can be achieved only by a balanced education system between the various stages of education and training.

## **7. Globalization**

The processes of liberalization and globalization of the world economy have profound implication for African countries in terms of their position in the world economy, their development prospects and the nature of their economic policies. The international community should endeavor to collectively establish and implement a framework which helps all to face up to the challenges and share in the opportunities of globalization.

## **Conclusion**

1) The end of the Cold War and the salience of the newly emergent states of the former communist bloc diverted attention and resources from Africa and African issues. By organizing TICAD I in October 1993 and TICAD II in October 1998 with the UN and

the Global Coalition for Africa, as well as other meetings and workshops, and by other initiatives, Japan played an important role in putting and maintaining Africa and African issues back on top of the agenda of the international community. TICAD will be a particularly valuable framework to which the G8, the OAU and the ECA should be more closely associated.

- 2) It is imperative that Japan, the G8 and the international community put Africa and African issues high on the agendas of the Okinawa Summit in July and the UN Millennium Summit in September in New York City.
- 3) It is hoped that Japan will enlist the international community and particularly the G8 and the Millennium Summit in adopting the objective of making Africa the frontier of international efforts to help the continent claim the 21st century and promote the stability and the prosperity of the entire world.
- 4) In particular it is hoped that the G8, the UN Millennium Summit and the international community will adopt an integrated and constructive approach in addressing real issues of development, security and sustainability in Africa with a global perspective.
- 5) In doing so, the G8, the UN and the international community are urged to embrace the principles of ownership, partnership and solidarity for peace, progress and prosperity.
- 6) World solidarity in general and world solidarity with Africa in particular should be adopted as a principle which underlines all international initiatives, especially those aiming at poverty and disease eradication.
- 7) Poverty is not only a source of suffering and injustice but also a major source of instability and a threat to peace at the national, regional and international levels.
- 8) HIV/AIDS is a threat to development and the very foundations of African societies. The international community has a crucial role to play in financing treatment and prevention programmes. The recent announcement by some US companies, with the support of the US government, to dramatically reduce the price of drugs sold to Africa for ameliorating HIV/AIDS is to be applauded, encouraged, and widened.
- 9) The African Diplomatic Corps in Japan impress on the G8, the UN Millennium Summit and the international community the gravity of the external debt situation of some African countries and the urgency of quickly adopting and implementing measures of sustainable debt relief.
- 10) They are convinced that debt relief will be sustainable only if debt financing of development is complemented by equity financing of development in the form of foreign direct investment and by the integration of African economies in the world economy and the participation of the African private sector in international trade and investment.
- 11) They appeal to the G8 and the United Nations to recognize that regional and sub-regional arrangements and organizations may have a comparative advantage over international organizations in addressing African issues, because of their proximity to the field and their better understanding of the issues and context. Nevertheless, the participation of the UN and other external actors will contribute to the neutrality and objectivity of the initiatives and increase their acceptability to the parties concerned. Such participation will also augment the capacity of regional and sub-regional organizations to handle the complex issues involved in the different types of crisis.
- 12) Globalization, trade and foreign direct investment present enormous opportunities to Africa. However, these opportunities cannot be fulfilled without the collective establishment and implementation of a framework that enables all countries to face up

together to the challenges and share in the dividends of globalization, investment and free trade. Aid is no substitute for trade; in fact, Africa loses more to trade barriers than it gains through aid. The multilateral trading system must therefore be responsive to the development aspirations of Africa.

13) Governments, aid organizations and international institutions should be encouraged to devise ways and means of giving access to telecommunication and information technology to developing countries, especially in Africa. The technology gap must be addressed. These technologies would improve economic opportunities and bring social services closer to the poor and help bridge the digital divide.

14) The African Diplomatic Corps in Japan acknowledge with great satisfaction that development issues relevant to both developed and developing countries - such as education, information technology, debt relief, environment protection and human security - are more prominent on the G8 Okinawa Summit Agenda than on the agenda of any previous G8 Summits. They also recognize the great effort made by Japan to engage a constructive and broad process of consultation prior to the Okinawa Summit.

15) The international community's support for the United Nations must be redoubled, for support for the UN is support for Africa.

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