

Africa Day Symposium 2001

The Millennium Africa Programme

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Your Excellencies, let me start by saying to African colleagues that when we have an occasion like this, there is every reason to congratulate ourselves and especially when we look at this situation as it is today- still almost less than a half a century since we became independent. Of course, generally when we look at it we will say our expectations at independence have not been met or if you would like have been shattered. But it has not been all, in my own mind, it has not been all unmitigated failure.

What I will try to do for the very brief period, I will want to talk to you this morning because I would rather want us to have a dialogue rather than a monologue on my part is to give a bit of the background to MAP and then how we have organized it and then what we hope to get at the end of it. Of course details will be filled in by members of steering committee who I understand are here from Algeria, from South Africa, from Egypt and even a member of my own delegation is one of those who started it off.

What is the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme? It is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and firm and shared conviction, that they have a present duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on the path of sustainable growth and development, and to participate actively in the world economy and body politic. It is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world. That is the introduction to the first part of the programme. And that so simply sums up what really was at the back of the mind of the leaders who conceived of this programme before putting our experts work.

Coincidentally, it was here in Tokyo that three of us, President Bouteflika of Algeria, President of Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and myself. Fortuitously it just happened that President Bouteflika was the chairman of OAU and he had been mandated by OAU to present the problem of OAU to the Group of Eight. President Thabo Mbeki was the Chairman of Non-aligned Movement and he had been mandated by the Non-aligned Movement to present the problem of Non-aligned Movement to the Group of Eight. From April last year in Havana I was elected the chairman of the Summit of G-77 and I was also charged with responsibility to present the same thing before the G-8. Now, I say fortuitously the three of us happened to be Africans and we came. And after we had made our presentations we then started talking about what should we do, what should be the follow-up, how do we present ourselves, what do we do for our

continent? And that's more or less how the idea of millennium partnership for the African recovery programme emanated.

And then we decided that we will initially set ourselves the task of the looking at it with our experts and if they can get something that is worth selling to our colleagues we will go ahead. And our experts started meeting. Now we have been able to expand it from three to five with Egypt joining and Senegal joining and when I was in Belgium only last week, we put our heads together and we have decided to also widen it to nine and we were invited four other countries to join. Of course we have informed, or we have appraised the OAU as we were going along and even sub-regional organizations. For instance, I have appraised ECOWAS and President Thabo Mbeki has appraised SADC. At the same time we are taking time to appraise leaders in the industrialized world-Britain, France, Germany, Italy, America, even the European Union. We have also appraised the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the IMF.

The ECA, Economic Commission for Africa, is also working with us. In fact, it is providing the technical aspects and filling it in. Now, I have heard, and some of you must have heard, people say look "Africa is a basket case. Forget about it. It is no use." One of the things we are trying to do in the first part of this plan is to make a strong case that "Africa is not a basket case." Africa has something that it can contribute to the world and it should not be de-linked from the world. And in fact we should make everything possible to make Africa contribute meaningfully to the world.

What about the rich complex of mineral, oil and gas deposits, its flora and fauna, and its wide unspoiled natural habit which provide the basis for mining, agriculture and tourism? That should be preserved, that should not be ignored. What about the ecological lung provided by continent's rainforests, and minimal presence of emissions and effluents that harm the environment-a global public good that benefits all humankind? That is not only good for Africa, it is good for the entire world. What about the paleontological and archeological sites containing evidence of the evolution of the earth, life and the human species, the natural habitats containing a wide variety of flora and fauna, and the open, uninhabited spaces that are a feature of the continent? That is in fact an asset of humankind, not just that of Africa. And the richness of Africa's culture and its contribution to the variety of culture of the world. Now, these are among the reasons I believe that Africa should not just be regarded as a basket case and the left to disintegrate and some people say: "well, whatever may happen may happen." Now, in recent times, because the strategy is not only for Africans to determine by themselves what should be the content and the components of this programme but also to make it a partnership, a partnership with the rest of the world.

And we are encouraged in that idea of partnership because of what have been happening in Africa itself in recent time and what has been happening in other part of the world vis-a-vis Africa. What has been happening in Africa itself, there has have been some change-particularly in the last decade of the 20th Century, in terms of the institutionalization of democracy, in terms of the management of our economy. When we met in our Algiers in 1999 at the Summit of OAU, we took a decision that never again will we allow any leader who came to power through the barrel of the gun

to sit among us. Some people laughed at us and said "well look, this too utopian to be possible, to be implemented." Within that same year, it happened with Côte d'Ivoire. And we made sure that we said to Côte d'Ivoire "you can not sit with us." Well, I would not say that the decision was responsible for the quick way that Côte d'voire went from military back to democracy, but that is something that is worthy of note. And we have had in Nigeria a ruthless military dictatorship giving way to democracy. We have had in other parts a change of baton from one democratic leadership to another that has gone very smoothly. These are signs that give us hope, hope for the present and hope for the future.

As was mentioned here, it was this country that first came up with the idea of dialogue with Africa - on the basis of TICAD. Then Europe followed, then China followed, and we believe that with that type of situation we can get the world to look at the partnership programme and be part of it. What we hope now is that that the partnership programme will be ready, at least in draft form, to be presented to OAU in July. And once it is endorsed by OAU we will be able to take it around the world. At the same time when I meet the G-8 in Genoa this year one of the things I will be equipped in meeting the G-8 will be this programme.

The key priorities of the programme, I just want to mention about five of them, are peace, security and governance, investing in Africa's people, diversification of Africa's production and exports, investing in information communication technology and other basic infrastructure, and developing financing mechanisms. These are the details that will now form the framework which any country will be able to take and apply to itself depending on its level of development, its resources and its programme. But we also realized that one very cardinal and important aspect of this programme will be integration and cooperation; because there are number of countries in Africa who own their own will find it very near impossible to make it. But together, collectively, they will be able to make it. And we do hope that when the time comes, we will be able to get people who will support this effort, this programme, not only on the basis of individual countries, individual nation, but also on the basis of regional or sub-regional programmes.

Thank you very much.

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