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Beyond its Mineral/Natural Resources: Why Africa Matters to the World

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ABSTRACT

After independence, many African states assumed self-governance would produce good governance, but the experience proved otherwise with military coups, civil wars, poor trade relations, external debt and famines. These problems resulted in a sense of “Afro-pessimism.” However, after the end of the Cold War, a new phase of political maturity led to high growth in Africa and improving development indicators, resulting in a period of “Afro-enthusiasm” with African contributions to the global system increasing.

However multiple challenges remain that could threaten the progress already achieved. This paper examines several of these challenges but also opportunities that arise in tackling them, particularly on-going conflicts, economic inequality and poverty, new centres of gravity of world religions, climate change, demographic changes, the youth and unemployment, gender disparities, food insecurity, and weak governance systems. African leaders are cognisant of these challenges and have created important structures aimed at addressing these challenges.

As this paper argues, the crux is the need for further progress in improving political and economic governance in Africa. The most important of these are regional initiatives: The Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) aims to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is aimed at tackling governance issues in development and includes the voluntary African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) that allows countries to undergo review of their reforms by other participating states. The African Union (AU) Constitutive Act prohibits the takeover of power by unconstitutional means, and has real powers to punish members that undergo military coups.

These initiatives are markers of progress that will allow Africa to enter a new period where opportunities are recognised albeit with a realistic view of the difficulties Africa still faces as it grows. The importance of building peace, sustaining economic growth and providing conducive environments for investment are recognised, and will make Africa a significant region in global affairs.

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Prof Gambari was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria 1984-1985 and served as Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1990-1999. He joined the UN as Under-Secretary-General and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Africa from 1999-2005, during which period he was also the UNSG's Special Representative to Angola. He became Under-Secretary-General and Head of the UN Department of Political Affairs (2005-2007) and also served as UNSG's Special Envoy on Cyprus, Zimbabwe and Myanmar. Ambassador Gambari was Joint Special Representative of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur in 2010 and was Joint Chief Mediator in Sudan in 2011.

He is the author of *Political and Comparative Dimensions of Regional Integration: The Case of ECOWAS* and *Theory and Reality in Foreign Policy Making*.

Beyond its Minerals/Natural Resources: Why Africa Matters to the World

I. Introduction

1. Although trends do not neatly fit into decades, it is a fair observation that the first decade of independence for most African countries (1960–1970) was one largely of hopes, excitements and great expectations. The expectations were that self-governance would produce good governance and that independence would usher in economic growth, higher standard of living and over-all development. As illustrations, there was the famous statement made by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana who said, “seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will follow,” while the slogan of a major political party in Nigeria during this period was “life more abundant” for all citizens. Unfortunately, in the almost two succeeding decades, disillusionment soon followed as African countries experienced military coup d’états, poor governance, civil wars, low commodity prices, unfavourable external terms of trade, growing external debt, drought and famine.

2. Indeed, for the two decades following Africa’s decolonisation, the continent was in the media almost exclusively for its woes and other crises. At the international level, it seemed Africa had little effective voice. Factors that contributed to the continent’s international marginalisation range from its political and economic weaknesses to the destabilising effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For decades, international financial experts and development practitioners designed and attempted to apply different concepts in efforts to develop Africa’s markets and open them to the global market; however, contrary to their predictions and hopes, Africa continued to suffer from stagnant economic growth, coupled with high unemployment and inflationary pressure.¹ This period may be characterised as one of “Afro-pessimism.”

II. A New Era of Afro-Enthusiasm

3. However, with the end of the Cold War and the global pressures for open societies, demand for human rights and democratisation, Africa was entering, in the following two

¹ UNECA 2012.

decades, a new phase of political maturity and development. This period witnessed the end of colonialism and Apartheid in Africa and, in most countries, the transition from military rule and one-party state structures to civilian, multi-party democracies.

4. Coincidentally, the first decade of the new Millennium also marked the turn for Africa’s economic woes: Africa witnessed an upturn in economic growth that is far more than a passing phenomenon. From 2000–2010, its average growth rate was above 5%; some countries such as Angola and Equatorial Guinea even showed double-digit growth. According to a most recent study by the World Bank, overall, the region is forecast to grow at more than 5% on average over the 2013–2015 period.²

Growth in Gross Domestic Product, Select Sub-Saharan African Countries³			
Country	GDP per capita 2012 (2005 PPP \$)	Real GDP growth, 2000-2009 (%)	Real GDP per capita growth, 2000-2009 (%)
Ghana	1,652	5.8	3.5
Kenya	1,507	4.4	1.7
Nigeria	2,221	6.6	4.0
Rwanda	1,097	7.6	5.1
South Africa	9,678	4.1	2.8
Tanzania	1,334	7.1	4.2
Uganda	1,188	7.8	4.3
Zambia	1,423	5.4	3.0
Sub-Saharan Africa Average	2,094	5.1	3.1

Sources: *World Bank African Development Indicators 2011 and UNDP Human Development Report 2013*

5. Initially, Africa’s growth boom was caused by rising commodity prices. Africa is estimated to have about 12% of the world’s oil and about 40% of the world’s gold reserves, as well as vast arable land and forest resources.⁴ However, while African countries were also affected by the world economic and financial crisis in 2008, they were quick in bouncing

² World Bank 2013.

³ For consistency throughout, eight economically high-performing Sub-Saharan countries of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia are cited throughout this paper, illustrating both their achievements and the fact that they continue to face real challenges in some areas. Data is not available for some categories in some countries.

⁴ AfDB, AUC, UNECA 2012.

back and returning to their pre-crisis growth rates.⁵ Africa's middle class is gaining ground. Today, spending in African households is more than in India and Russia, with Lagos being a larger consumer market than Mumbai. The rule of law and respect for private property rights is spreading along with improvements in the financial sector. The telecommunications revolution in Africa and its IT innovations have equally made a great contribution to growth and development in Africa. "These changes have lifted Africa out of an era of Afro-pessimism to a new era of Afro-enthusiasm."⁶

6. Yet, multiple challenges remain which threaten to undermine the progress already achieved. These include the surge in terrorist activities from Mali in the Sahel to Somalia in the Horn of Africa; continuing violent conflicts and insecurity in some other countries and regions in Africa; environmental degradation threatening the livelihoods of millions of farmers and cattle herders, as well as stable food supplies for millions of people more; poverty and unequal distribution of wealth; food insecurity; weak governance systems; youth unemployment, disparities in gender and political and economic governance. African leaders have, however, recognised and repeatedly stressed the urgent need to resolve these issues and advance in efforts towards lasting prosperity for all the people of Africa.

7. These challenges, however, also carry potentials, not only for Africa but for the whole world. Global efforts to contain trans-national security threats or alleviate the impacts of climate change, can only be successful if Africa is fully included in the planning and implementation of strategies to overcome these challenges. Addressing the root causes of people converging toward terrorist activities in Africa will have a great impact on the security and stability in Europe and the United States, for example. In this regard, Africa cannot and should not be viewed only as the recipient of a strategy or aid; rather the continent has to be involved and should be recognised as contributing to the search for and implementation of solutions to global problems. Only then will the world, partnering with Africa, be able to overcome these continuing challenges.

8. Unfortunately, in the over 20 years of interacting with the United Nations (UN), I have observed that, while the Organisation and its sister institutions are engaged in Africa across the full breath of issues at the core of the UN Charter, there is a discernible

⁵ UNECA 2012.

⁶ Carlos Lopes 2013.

reluctance in some quarters at the UN to accept full partnerships with African nations on the issues that affect the continent the most and on which Africans have sought to provide their own perspectives and solutions.

9. There is also in some quarters the erroneous and unfortunate perception—almost a stereotype—of Africans as passive recipients of UN assistance whether on peace and security, development, human rights and its corollary, humanitarian assistance. I am not disputing the view that Africa is at the centre of UN efforts in these three key aspects of the UN Charter. Many lives have been saved thanks to UN actions. My contention is with the attempt to confine the continent to a beneficiary status.

10. The reality is that Africa's role in the work of the UN is not limited to receiving international assistance. Since joining the UN, African nations have made significant contributions to the work of the Organisation, consistent with the UN Charter, on peace and security, human rights and humanitarian fields.

11. African countries continue to provide substantive support to peacekeeping across the globe as troop and police-contributing countries and in provision of civilian staff. For example, national personnel who are recruited in peacekeeping missions across Africa provide invaluable substantive local knowledge without which most such operations would be ineffective.

12. Several African contingents and civilian staff serve in high-risk environments where they live, often in precarious conditions, and die. As Head of the largest peacekeeping operation in the world with a predominantly African character, the African Union United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) until July 2012, I have witnessed and spoken about this reality often with pride but also great sadness.

13. African nations not only provide peacekeeping contingents; they also release their own cadres to lead UN efforts in the promotion of the Charter's values globally. Boutros-Boutros Ghali, Kofi Annan, Abi Farrah, Robert Gardner, Adebayo Adedeji, Teslim Elias, James Jonah, Francis Deng and several other sons and daughters of Africa, including my humble self, have been called upon to lead UN action at the level of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, UN agencies and in various theatres of operation globally.

Africa's assessed contribution to the UN budget may be relatively meagre, but the individual and collective contribution of its sons and daughters to the work of the Organisation has no other continent to envy.

14. Africa's contributions in the development of new doctrines and practices are equally noteworthy. Many situations in Africa were test beds for emerging doctrines and new practices on a whole range of issues. As a few examples, I would cite protection of civilians mandate given by the Security Council to peacekeeping missions, the majority of which are operating in Africa; the Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons and Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations.

15. There have also been aspirations and sources of innovation of new jurisprudence from the continent. Many among this gathering would certainly recall the adoption by the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU)—now the African Union (AU)—in September 1969 of the OAU Refugee Convention, which was adopted in the context of the OAU-led decolonisation struggles in Southern Africa. The OAU Refugee Convention is still considered the most progressive international instrument on refugee protection. It reaffirmed the international refugee jurisprudence as contained in the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, but made an important contribution by elaborating the principles of voluntary repatriation, international solidarity and burden-sharing that were absent in the UN convention.

16. I also have in mind the OAU Algiers Declaration of 1999, which among others, considered terrorism a transnational phenomenon and a serious threat to the stability and security of states, their national institutions and, more importantly, to international peace and security. This was two years before 9/11! The Algiers Declaration also declared that unilateral use of force in international relations outside the duly conferred UN Security Council mandate opens the way to practices inimical to world peace and security.

17. In the development field, Africa has the largest number of active regional organisations with the stated objective of promoting regional integration. This trend was consolidated by the OAU-sponsored Abuja Treaty of 1990, which continues to spearhead integration efforts. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted in the early 2000s, broadens the Abuja Treaty by providing the nexus between security and development considerations.

18. Through the establishment and work of the AU, as well as the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African continent has advanced considerably in making its contribution to the search for solutions to African and global problems. Indeed, as contained in the Constitutive Act, the first objective of the AU is “to achieve greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples of Africa”. If the African countries manage to continue to converge over issues of common concern and develop joint solutions through the existing mechanisms of the RECs and the different organs of the AU, they will be able to enhance their impact and influence on international policy decisions relating to Africa.

III. Trans-national Security Threats Have to Be Addressed Globally

19. In general, African countries are more stable today compared to the end of the previous millennium. The number of African countries practicing multi-party democracy is on the rise; many countries have seen relatively seamless transfers of power based on the results of democratic elections, with the latest example being in Kenya. Countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Rwanda torn by civil war have managed to end hostilities and agree on comprehensive peace agreements. The foundation for sustainable peace, stability and development are being laid in these countries. Regional conflicts over access to resources have been addressed through continuous engagement and dialogue between the countries concerned and with the active encouragement by and role of the AU and the UN.

20. These positive developments notwithstanding, there are concerns that new and additional threats targeting both Africans and international actors present in Africa have surfaced, which require international response. These include the rise in terrorism and transnational crime, with networks spanning across the whole continent and linking it to theatres on other continents. The attacks at the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998; the attack at the UN building in Algiers in 2009; the bombing of the UN premises in Abuja in August 2011 and most recently the hostage crisis in Algeria in January this year testify to the threat emerging from these actors. What has changed from earlier guerrilla warfare is the fact that institutions that were previously “immune” to active violent conflicts, such as the UN and other humanitarian actors, are now direct targets for terrorist and other groups to protest international involvement in several conflict theatres and to

extract additional political and economic concessions. In addition, the planners and perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States were linked, through training, motivation and other engagement, to on-going conflicts around the world, including on the African continent. Therefore, the international community in general and the Western world in particular can no longer ignore the plight of victims of war and poverty in Africa. It now has a direct stake in most of the conflicts taking place on the continent.

21. In this regard, the root causes of new threats and deepening insecurity must be addressed bearing in mind that trans-national security threats are most difficult to combat where national institutions are weakest, where people are poorest and conflicts most enduring. Strong, democratic, economically viable societies are less likely to support terrorists or drug traffickers. What is needed is an integrated and comprehensive, yet coherent approach that includes, in addition to political and military activities, transparent and urgent improvements in the areas of human rights, good governance, democratisation, economic growth, poverty eradication, environmental protection and other measures. In all efforts, the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, be it the state institutions, non-governmental institutions or the communities directly, have to be in the centre of programme design and implementation.

22. African countries have been making a credible attempt at unifying and strengthening the continent through the establishment of the AU and giving it a strong mandate on peace and security issues. Since its inception, the AU has had a very strong focus on preventing, managing and resolving conflicts on the continent, with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as the heart of the AU's engagement in this area. In particular the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC), as the driving engine of APSA and the main decision-making body on all issues related to peace and security in Africa, has, to varying degrees, been able to address constructively and effectively several crises on the continent. In some instances, such as the crisis in Libya, the AU PSC has been criticised for reacting too slowly but in many other cases, including in relation to the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan or the crisis in Mali, it has managed to raise its profile through concerted and sometimes bold actions.

23. In addition to its focus on peace and security issues, the AU has developed and enacted numerous valuable framework and guidance documents on issues such as democracy, elections and governance; youth; the rights and welfare of the child; post-conflict reconstruction and development and many other issues of concern. Indeed, through the enactment of these documents, the AU has set high standards which have the potential to drive Africa forward and lay the foundation for peace, stability and prosperity benefitting all the people of Africa. What is required is to advance further in the full implementation of these guidance documents at the national levels.

IV. The Global Impact of Climate Change

24. The issue of climate change, with its global impact, is of particular relevance to Africa. In this regard, it is unfortunate that, while Africa's role in accelerating climate change is substantially small in comparison with other continents, it has been most hit by its consequences. Environmental degradation, desertification and scarcity of water have already drastically affected and contributed to the escalation of numerous conflicts throughout the continent. The UNEP Report of 2011⁷ estimates that by 2050, between 250 million and one billion people will be forcibly displaced by the impacts of climate change. This means six million newly displaced people each year, mainly from developing countries, including Africa. Environmental degradation is one of the driving forces of displacement and migration, further compounding already difficult conditions due to demographic pressures.

25. As one of the most vulnerable regions in the world, Africa faces numerous challenges related to and emanating from climate change. Experience from the recent droughts in the Horn of Africa and West Africa shows how quickly large numbers of people can be rendered destitute by a widespread failure of rains, given the narrow margin of food reserves and assets available to them. As a result, demographic pressure and urbanisation, inequitable access to land and water, and resource depletion further exacerbate existing underlying tensions between communities. In addition, the on-going depletion of Africa's biodiversity and continuing raids on forestation due to the quest for ever more natural resources will further impact global climate change and are likely to further erode socio-economic stability

⁷UNEP 2011.

and prosperity. These trends will increase the pressure on communities, further aggravating existing and underlying tensions due to scarcity of water and access to land.

26. However, at the same time, Africa also has a huge potential to contribute to maintaining the equilibrium in the biosphere and prevent further depletion of the ozone layer if it takes the required measures at the local, state and regional level and is assisted appropriately, with expertise and global bargaining power, internationally. Bold action in this area will also help to address the root causes of many conflicts on the continent by alleviating pressure on existing water resources and land. A strong partnership, regionally and internationally, is therefore required.

V. Addressing Poverty and Inequality

27. Many countries in the South, including in Sub-Saharan Africa, have made substantial progress in terms of human development.⁸ The pace of human development has been fastest in low and medium-income countries. However, all developing countries are not yet fully participating in the rise of the South. The UNDP Human Development Report 2013 found that the pace of progress is slower, for instance in most of the 49 least developed countries (34 of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa).

Poverty and Inequality Indicators, Select Sub-Saharan African Countries					
Country	Human Development Index Rank	Income Gini Coefficient	Population below PPP-adjusted \$1.25 per day (%)	Population vulnerable to poverty (%)	Population in severe poverty (%)
Ghana	135	42.8	28.6	21.6	11.4
Kenya	145	47.7	43.4	27.4	19.8
Nigeria	153	48.8	68.0	17.8	33.9
Rwanda	167	53.1	63.2	19.4	34.7
South Africa	121	63.1	13.8	22.2	2.4
Tanzania	152	37.6	67.9	21.0	33.4
Uganda	161	44.3	51.5	19.0	31.2
Zambia	163	54.6	68.5	17.2	34.8

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2013

⁸UNDP 2013.

28. In Sub-Saharan Africa, progress has been made in reducing absolute poverty, with improvements in primary education enrolment and a decline in under-five infant mortality rates.⁹ Most regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa, have shown declining inequality in health and education. In terms of income, inequality has remained stable in Sub-Saharan Africa.

29. Nonetheless, the point should be stressed that despite the robust growth which is being projected for Africa in the near future, several challenges or risks need to be recognised. These include, externally, the fragile global economy, the uncertainties in the Eurozone, the effect on global markets of trends in the U.S. economy and the declining rate of Chinese investment in Africa. The internal risks include domestic disruptions that may be caused by any macro instabilities of the economies in Africa and productive activities arising from political, civil and labour unrest.

30. The UNDP Human Development Report 2013 identifies three drivers of development: a proactive state developing strong policies for both public and private sectors; tapping of global markets and determined social policy and innovation. Engagement with the global market is an important factor but cannot be the only priority of developing countries. The UNDP Human Development Report 2013 finds that countries tend to open more to global trade as they develop: Almost all developing countries that achieved the most progress in human development relative to their peers between 1990 and 2012 have integrated considerably more with the world economy over the past two decades.

31. In addition, experience has shown that without investment in people, returns from global markets are likely to be limited. It is necessary to harness the opportunities while at the same time protecting the citizens from downside risks. The aim should be to create a policy framework in which growth and social policies reinforce each other. In this regard, education, health care, social protection, legal empowerment and social organisation all enable poor people to participate in, and ultimately contribute to growth.

32. While continued volatility in commodity prices is likely to continue to challenge African economies, the opportunities presented have to be used and turned into long-term stable development for all segments of African society. The UNDP Human Development Report 2013 indicates that countries with low human development standards could

⁹AfDB, AUC, UNECA 2012.

converge towards higher levels: for Sub-Saharan Africa, the report suggests that by 2050, the Human Development Index could rise by 52% if policies are geared towards enhancing equity, including among men and women within society. Such policy interventions would also have a positive impact on the fight against poverty. Indeed, as the recent World Bank report on Africa argues, “Better governance of mineral resources, high agricultural prices, the demographic dividend and rapid urbanization present opportunities for making growth more poverty reducing.”¹⁰

VI. New Centres of Gravity for Practice of World Religions

33. Another challenge, accompanied by opportunities, is the fact that Africa plays a growing role for the practice of the world religions, especially Islam and Christianity. According to the Pew Forum, 24% of the global Christian population live in Sub-Saharan Africa (26% in Europe, 24% in Latin America and the Caribbean). Sixteen per cent of the global Muslim population live in Sub-Saharan Africa. This means the region has the third biggest Muslim population on earth after the Asia Pacific region (62%) and the Middle East and North Africa (20%). According to the Pew Forum, Nigeria hosts the fifth largest Muslim population (77.3 million—ahead of Iran and Turkey) as well as the sixth largest Christian population (78 million) of all countries in the world.

34. In view of current patterns of population growth, the share of Africans in the community of Christian and Muslim faithful will likely increase. According to estimates of the Pew Forum, the share of Africans amongst the global Muslim population will grow from 15% in 2010 to 17.6% in 2030.¹¹ And the growing importance of Africans amongst the Christian faithful is reflected in challenges posed to “traditional” patterns of leadership and notions of identity. Within the Catholic Church for instance, Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson of Ghana was believed to have been a candidate in the search for a potential successor to Pope Benedict XVI. African televangelists like Nigerian Pentecostal Pastor Enoch Adeboye win converts in the Western world. Adeboye sums up the history of his Redeemed Church of God as “made in heaven, assembled in Nigeria, exported to the world.”

¹⁰ World Bank 2013.

¹¹ Pew Forum 2011a and 2011b, Pew Forum 2012.

VII. The Global Context of Demographic Factors in Africa

35. Africa's population is the fastest growing on earth. By 2100, one in three persons on earth will be African (35.3% of the world population in 2100 as compared to 15% in 2011) according to UN projections.¹² According to the UN, the population of all Africa (including North Africa) has grown from 230 million in 1950 to 1,046 million in 2011, and is projected to surpass 2 billion by 2050.¹³

36. In 2011, 60% of the world's population lived in Asia, and 15% in Africa. Africa's population is growing very rapidly, at 2.3% per year during 2010–2015, a rate more than double that of Asia's population (1% per year). The population of Africa first surpassed a billion in 2009 and is expected to add another billion in just 35 years (by 2044), even as its fertility drops from 4.6 children per woman in 2005–2010 to 3 children per woman in 2040–2045. By 2100 Asia's population may be only 28% higher than that of Africa (4.6 billion in Asia vs. 3.6 billion in Africa).

By the turn of the century, Africa's population, which in 2011 was equivalent to 61% of the population of the Americas, Europe and Oceania taken together, might surpass them by 83%. In 2100, Africa could be five times as populous as North America and over four times more populous than either Europe or Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁴

VIII. Young Africans Are Central to African Renaissance Prospects

37. Africa remains the only continent with a significantly growing youth population. In less than three generations, 41% of the world's youth will be African. By 2035, Africa's labour force will be larger than China's.¹⁵ It is, therefore, of central importance that Africa uses its growing young population to its advantage. The energy, resourcefulness and enthusiasm of the young people have the potential to lift the continent from its current challenges towards increasing socio-economic development. Africa cannot afford to fail the aspirations and hopes of its youth; rather, it will have to build on them through

¹² UN 2011.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2012.

empowerment and full participation. This will require the provision of comprehensive skills and labour development and through addressing inadequate access to credit and productive resources. There has to be systematic and strategic investment in young people's education, employment, health care, empowerment and civil participation.¹⁶

Population Data, Select Sub-Saharan African Countries				
Country	Population (millions, 2012)	Projected Population (millions, 2030)	Projected Annual Growth (%, 2010-2015)	Youth Unemployment (%)
Ghana	25.5	36.5	2.3	...
Kenya	42.7	65.9	2.7	...
Nigeria	166.6	257.8	2.5	...
Rwanda	11.3	17.6	2.9	...
South Africa	50.7	54.7	0.5	55.0
Tanzania	47.7	81.9	3.1	10.1
Uganda	35.6	59.8	3.1	5.4
Zambia	13.9	24.5	3.0	23.4
Sub-Saharan Africa Average	852.5	1284.0	2.5	...

Source: *UNDP Human Development Report 2013*

38. Meanwhile, high unemployment, especially among youth, continues to plague Africa's labour market.¹⁷ The youth unemployment crisis has to be prioritised as one of the most critical challenges to Africa's future. It can only be addressed through a combination of strong, broad-based growth and targeted social and economic measures. There is an urgent need to continue to increase the global competitiveness of African youth, especially through training and skills development and available opportunities in the national and international labour markets. Considerable progress has been achieved in ensuring universal primary education; however, in order to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development, secondary and tertiary education has to be further enhanced and promoted so as to allow the African countries to make full use of their youth's potential.

39. Along with efforts to promote meaningful youth employment, there must also be activities and programmes to strengthen political participation among the young people. Otherwise, they will feel disenfranchised and marginalised with possible attendant negative

¹⁶ UNECA 2011.

¹⁷ UNECA 2012.

consequences for political and social stability within a country. Marginalised youth may gravitate towards violence and constitute pools for recruitment as child soldiers and for other destructive purposes. It is already the case that electoral turnout has been declining among African youth.¹⁸

40. Fortunately, the African Youth Charter, adopted by the African Heads of State and Government on 2 July 2006 in Banjul, Gambia, and which entered into force in August 2009, provides a useful framework and policy document to promote the continued prioritisation of youth development. It is the first legal framework on youth in Africa and takes into consideration provisions and successes of previous declarations, Plans of Action and charters particularly, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the NEPAD Strategic Framework for Youth, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Specifically, it facilitates the institutionalisation of youth participation in political debates, decision making and development processes at national, regional and continental levels; it contributes to the strengthening of the capacity building programs for young leaders in Africa and it opens the possibility of dialogue on youth development issues and facilitates relevant action for improvement through education, training and skills development.

IX. Women and African Development

41. Women have played a pivotal role in Africa's socio-economic development, accounting for about half of the continent's agricultural labour force and managing a large proportion of its small enterprises. As farmers, entrepreneurs, traders and innovators, there is no question that women are key economic actors in the continent. However, while women have been a strong force across emerging markets in Africa, their role in Africa's development has not been fully realised.

¹⁸Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2012.

Gender Indicators, Select Sub-Saharan African Countries				
Country	Population with at least Secondary Education (% aged 25 and older, 2006-2010)		Labour Force Participation Rate (% aged 15 and older, 2011)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Ghana	45.7	61.8	66.9	71.8
Kenya	25.3	52.3	61.5	71.8
Nigeria	47.9	63.3
Rwanda	7.4	8.0	86.4	85.4
South Africa	68.9	72.2	44.0	60.8
Tanzania	5.6	9.2	88.2	90.3
Uganda	23.0	23.9	76.0	79.5
Zambia	25.7	44.2	73.2	85.6
Sub-Saharan Africa Average	23.7	35.1	64.7	76.2

Source: *UNDP Human Development Report 2013*

42. Women in Africa still struggle to access and control economic and social resources. The continent's female primary school completion rate is among the lowest in the developing world and secondary school enrolment of girls compared with boys remains unbalanced.¹⁹ While unemployment on the continent has been a daunting challenge, women have disproportionately carried its burden. In 2012, the share of women in vulnerable employment in Africa was 15 percentage points higher than that of men.²⁰ Women also face significant health concerns, including HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 woman in 39 is at risk of dying from pregnancy and delivery-related complications, compared to 1 in 4000 in developed countries.²¹ While Africa's many development advances are to be praised, these advances have not been sufficiently inclusive of women and, as a result, Africa remains far from reaching its full potential.

43. Empowerment of women is one of the surest and perhaps quickest means for Africa to banish poverty and achieve sustainable economic growth. In order to achieve transformative and inclusive growth, women must be included in all aspects of Africa's economic, social and political spheres. To do this, policymakers, corporate organisations and political leaders must step up measures to empower women and remove the barriers that impede their development. Women must have equal access to education—from primary

¹⁹ World Bank 2011.

²⁰ ILO 2012.

²¹ WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank 2012.

education all the way up to tertiary education—as well as to tools such as credit, training and technology. They must have access to full employment and decent work, property rights and quality healthcare, particularly related to reducing maternal deaths and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Gender-based violence is another area of concern in many African countries and is especially alarming in conflicts, wars and post-conflict situations in African States. Women constitute one half of Africa’s population and, as such, one half of the continent’s human capital and one half of the continent’s potential strength. Only through empowering women can Africa work at full strength and achieve its development goals.

X. Addressing Continuing Food Insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa

44. Notwithstanding the considerably high growth rates in Africa since the turn of the millennium, coupled with improvements in some human development indicators, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to grapple with food insecurity, that is, the inability to consistently acquire enough calories and nutrients for a healthy and productive life.²² Famines have recurrently hit different regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, most recently in 2011 in Somalia and in 2012 in the Sahel region of West Africa. In addition, millions of people in Sub-Saharan African are malnourished and suffer from seasonal lack of food. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation states that more than one in four Africans is undernourished.²³

²² UNDP 2012.

²³ Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2011.

Food Security Indicators, Select Sub-Saharan African Countries				
Country	Food Supply (kcal per capita per day)	Net Cereal Imports (kg per capita)	Food Aid Deliveries (’000 tonnes)	Undernourishment Prevalence (% of population)
Ghana	2,849.0	32	30.5	5
Kenya	2,060.0	38	269.4	33
Nigeria	2,708.0	29	0.0	6
Rwanda	2,054.0	9	28.9	32
South Africa	2,985.7	30	0.0	...
Tanzania	2,017.0	13	29.3	34
Uganda	2,247.3	11	111.7	22
Zambia	1,885.3	-9	15.2	44
Sub-Saharan Africa Average	2,292.5	26	2,688.4	27

Source: *UNDP Africa Human Development Report 2012*

45. While droughts are often triggers of major famines, they are not the only cause of persistent under- and malnourishment. Rather, uneven access to food, due to weak distribution systems and lack of funds to purchase the food constitutes the main reason for continuing hunger. In addition, two major biases—towards towns rather than rural areas and towards men, not women—have been further factors in explaining Africa’s food insecurity.²⁴ Moreover, despite its vast arable lands, Africa currently generates only 10% of global agricultural output and imports tens of billions of dollars of food a year.

46. According to the UNDP Africa Human Development Report 2012, the first focusing exclusively on Africa, African countries can address chronic under- and malnourishment through the adoption of a four-pronged approach: enhancing agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers; more effective nutrition policies, especially for children; greater community and household resilience to cope with shocks and wider popular participation and empowerment, especially of women and the rural poor.

47. Smallholder farmers are the backbone of African food production. In particular, women are significant food producers, but their control of land in Sub-Saharan Africa is less than in any other region. They should therefore be in the centre of agricultural development programmes as a means to improve local economy, provide long-term stable nutrition and strengthen the role of women in society.

²⁴ *ibid.*

48. There is a need to ensure predictable long-term funding of agricultural development programmes. Equitable private sector investment in smallholder agriculture should complement donor funding as the most cost-effective high-impact strategy to reduce poverty and improve lives of people.²⁵

49. African leaders, on their part, have recognised the importance of prioritising the development of Africa's agriculture and established in 2003 the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) with the aim of eliminating hunger and reducing poverty through agricultural development. CAADP focuses on improving food security, nutrition and increasing incomes in Africa's largely farming-based economies. It aims to do this by raising agricultural productivity by at least 6% per year and increasing public investment in agriculture to 10% of national budgets per year. It is structured in four pillars: Sustainable Land and Water Management; Market Access; Food Supply and Hunger and Agricultural Research. Each pillar oversees various programs working to achieve CAADP's goals. The CAADP is an important initiative which should continue to be given full attention at the highest level to achieve its ambitious goals.

XI. Need for Further Progress in Improving Political and Economic Governance in Africa

50. There is a need for enhanced efforts in improving Africa's political and economic governance in order to ensure continuing and sustainable growth in the African continent. The second African Governance Report²⁶ published in 2009 assessed and monitored the progress on governance in Africa, identified capacity gaps in governance institutions and proposed policy interventions to promote good governance. Concerning economic governance, some notable progress has been recorded. Economic management, pro-investment policies and efficiency of the tax system were all evaluated positively by the authors of the study and no doubt contributed to Africa's average annual growth of 5% in the first decade of 2000.

²⁵ The All Party Parliamentary Group on Agriculture and Food for Development 2011.

²⁶ UNECA 2009.

Governance Indicators, Select Sub-Saharan African Countries					
Country	Overall Score (Change 2006-2011)	Safety & Rule of Law (Change 2006-2011)	Participation & Human Rights (Change 2006-2011)	Sustainable Economic Opportunity (Change 2006-2011)	Human Development (Change 2006-2011)
Ghana	66.3 (+2.0)	72.0 (-0.9)	69.2 (-0.7)	54.5 (+2.0)	69.4 (+7.9)
Kenya	52.7 (-1.2)	49.0 (-2.8)	50.6 (-7.7)	48.0 (-1.3)	63.3 (+7.0)
Nigeria	42.0 (+0.2)	40.6 (-2.5)	38.5 (-2.5)	41.1 (+1.7)	47.8 (+4.1)
Rwanda	53.5 (+2.0)	49.4 (-2.6)	43.2 (-0.2)	57.2 (+3.9)	64.2 (+7.0)
South Africa	70.7 (-1.1)	71.5 (-1.9)	73.3 (-2.4)	61.6 (-0.9)	76.6 (+0.9)
Tanzania	58.8 (+0.4)	62.3 (-1.2)	62.3 (-1.1)	54.2 (+1.8)	56.4 (+2.1)
Uganda	55.1 (+1.3)	56.8 (+3.6)	54.8 (+1.9)	50.9 (-4.3)	57.9 (+3.9)
Zambia	58.5 (+2.1)	64.4 (-0.6)	59.1 (-0.3)	50.8 (+3.8)	59.5 (+5.4)
Sub-Saharan Africa Average	51.2 (+1.1)	53.3 (-2.1)	47.6 (-0.1)	47.3 (+2.7)	56.7 (+4.1)

Source: *Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2012*

51. As the table above shows, the governance record across Sub-Saharan Africa was positive overall, but this is largely due to gains in sustainable economic opportunity and human development. Safety & rule of law and participation & human rights measures mostly declined in the preceding five years, and this could threaten the gains made in the other areas.

52. Nonetheless, the issue of corruption remains the single greatest challenge to effective and accountable political and economic policy making and implementation.²⁷ In this regard, there is a need for full implementation of the advanced anti-corruption legislation passed by many African states. And while there have been important breakthroughs in the investigations and persecutions of anti-corruption cases in several countries, such as in Nigeria, more needs to be done. This is the critical path to further promoting and sustaining economic development and, therefore, the realisation of the MDGs in Africa. Meanwhile, it is indeed encouraging that the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance was enacted by African Heads of State and Government in 2007. Furthermore, the following year, the AU merged the Court of Justice of the AU and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights into a single judicial body, the African Court for

²⁷ op. cit.

Justice on Human Rights. The new Continental Court must be granted the necessary autonomy and adequate funding so as to fulfil its mandate.

53. Furthermore, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), established in the framework of NEPAD is an important contribution promoting political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards among African countries. The APRM focuses on four thematic areas in assessing compliance with a wide range of African and international human rights treaties and standards: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance and socio-economic development. It is noteworthy that a growing number of African countries have subscribed to this voluntary APRM although my hope is that all AU members will eventually do so.

XII. Conclusion

54. Despite the impressive achievements in Africa's socio-economic and political agenda, the challenge for African leaders remains how to sustain the progress achieved so far and turn them into long-term development gains benefitting all their peoples. There is the need to sustain current growth rates and relentlessly implement the institutional and policy reforms in Africa in order to ensure accelerated progress in over-all human development. At the same time, Africa will not be immune from the impact of several areas of global concerns: climate change; the activities of multinational terrorist networks and transnational crimes, including drug and human trafficking. African countries cannot and should not be expected to address these issues alone; global challenges require global action on the basis of global solidarity. In this context, Africa's voice must be heard loud and clear and the continent must be adequately represented in international and inter-governmental institutions and fora in order to help find optimal, durable and just solutions for African and global problems.

55. On their part, African countries need to fully implement a large number of the AU Agreements and Framework documents. These include the Constitutive Act itself, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), aimed at accelerating

regional integration and advancing the creation of a Common Market. In this way, their bargaining position vis-à-vis its partners would also be enhanced. Furthermore, African countries must aggressively invest in infrastructure and human capital; continue the process of diversification of their economies; create jobs for their young populations and ensure sustainable and equitable growth benefitting all layers of their societies. In this way, Africa can and will become a global pole of growth.²⁸ This will strengthen the demand by African countries for a long-overdue realignment and restructuring of the global economic and political order.

56. In conclusion, I would argue that in highlighting the positive socio-economic and political development in Africa while also recognising the challenges, there is an urgent need to change the conventional narrative about the continent from “Afro-pessimism” to “Afro-realism.” Indeed, there are now conditions for “Afro-opportunity”; for building peace; for sustained economic growth and domestic and foreign investments for the benefit of the peoples of the continent and the world as a whole.

²⁸ UNECA 2012.

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