

Poverty and the Quest for Sustainable Development in Africa: Reality, Challenges, and Opportunities

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By

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Your Eminences

Your Excellencies

Distinguished participants

Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to commend His Excellency Ambassador Godwin George Umo for taking the initiative to organize a conference of this nature on the global south and I am glad to be part of it.

Introduction

May I begin by telling a story. I happen to also work as the Chaplain of a hospital in a small town called Amelia in the Umbria Region of Italy and part of my work schedule is to do ward rounds visiting the sick and offering them words of encouragement and consolation. On a summer evening, precisely on 10th of August 2018, after my usual ward round, I decided to sit in front of the coffee shop by the receptionist’s office to rest my legs before returning to my residence. Just as I was about to sit down, the receptionist on duty came out of her office, sat opposite me and engaged me in a discussion. We talked about several issues until I excused myself to leave. While I was taking my leave, she stood up with excitement and announced to me that she was commencing her vacation the next day and that she will be resuming work in two weeks time. She said she hopes we will continue our discussion when she resumes work. I also took the opportunity to inform her that I would be on vacation by the time she resumes. She then asked where I was going to for my vacation. I replied that I was going to visit with my family and friends in Nigeria. She then said that her niece once visited Africa for some voluntary work but, unfortunately, she was living with a rich family in a palatial building with several house helps. She said she tells her niece that she didn’t experience the real Africa. So I asked her what the real Africa was. She replied that her niece was not exposed to slums, shanty towns, villages in thick forests, mud houses with thatched roofs and malnourished children at the risk of starvation, sickness and death. I then replied: “But Africa is not all about poverty”. And she quickly responded: “But that is what we see on television!”. That event reminded me of the Kenyan-born Binyavanga Wainaina’s essay entitled “How to Write About Africa”, on the stereotypes about Africa. It is an interesting piece and I encourage you all to read it, if you can lay your hands on it.

In the early 1960s, the face of poverty was Asia but today, it is Africa. As the title of this paper suggests, it aims to discuss the reality of poverty in Africa, the factors militating against Africa's socio-economic development, and the opportunities for growth and development on the continent. However, the literature on development research in Africa reveal that scholars are divided into several camps. Firstly, there are the Afro-pessimists. These are scholars who believe that Africa is simply a story of disappointment and failure as the continent has seemingly defied all attempts at helping it develop. These scholars often feel that Africans are not even ready to help themselves. In fact, some of them even give a biological or racial explanation to Africa's underdevelopment, arguing that Africans are naturally unintelligent and lazy. Some of their arguments are based on the colonial administrators' and anthropologists' "Heart of Darkness" theory which they espouse in new forms in discourses and academic publications. Afro-pessimism grew especially since the promotion of the use of foreign aid to pull Africa out of poverty, championed by economists like Jeffrey Sachs, seems to have failed in the eyes of some Western donors.

On the other end of the spectrum are the Afro-optimists. This is a more recent position that gained ascendancy during the recent period of commodity boom between 2000 and 2010. In this period some development experts were upbeat about Africa's economic future and the dominant cliché in development circles became "Africa rising", "Africa on the move" and the like. This optimistic attitude to Africa's development was epitomized in the 2010 McKinsey Global Institute report titled "Lions on the Move". However, between Afro-pessimists and Afro-optimists are the Afro-realists. Afro-realists take a middle course by arguing that Africa has not been static, that some improvements have taken place in the African society but the rate of progress is not in consonance with the pace of the world. They argue that with respect to other parts of the developing world, Africa is lagging far behind. Of course, statistics show that some progress has been recorded in Africa in terms of the average standard of living but there is still a wide disparity between the continent and other parts of the world. Moreover, even the marginal growth the continent has recorded doesn't seem to be sustainable. Probably, the awareness of this reality informed the cautious optimism that characterized the "Lions on the Move II" report of 2016.

In this paper, I adopt the Afro-realist approach in speaking to the topic. Hence, I will bring to the fore the economic reality of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, as presented by research data, discuss the challenges to sustainable development in Africa, identify some opportunities for improvement on living conditions on the continent and, finally, make suggestions on how Africa's economic growth can be sustainable. Meanwhile, before delving into the issues, it is important to clarify my usage of two key concepts: poverty and sustainable development.

1. Poverty: Poverty has a wide range of dimensions and can be defined from the point of view of different disciplines. For example, one can talk about spiritual poverty, moral poverty or even psychological poverty, amongst others. This paper is primarily concerned with the material or economic dimension of poverty. That is, the inability to meet the material needs that would assure one of a dignified standard of living. Of course, the concept of a dignified standard of living is relative to the society in which one lives. As such, this introduces the difference between relative and absolute poverty. Relative poverty is context-specific as it derives from the average standard of living in the society that is being studied. Hence, it can be defined in simple terms as a condition of living below the average standard of living of the society being studied.

Absolute, extreme, chronic or abject poverty, on the other hand, is when one is unable to provide for his or her basic needs like food, shelter, healthcare, and basic literacy. In monetary terms, absolute poverty has been defined as a condition in which one lives on less than 1.90 US dollars a day. Even when it was pegged at 1.25 US dollars a day Africa was doing poorly talk less of now that the benchmark is 1.90 US dollars.

2. Sustainable development: This term is of more recent origin relative to terms like economic growth or development in general. The term assumed prominence in global discourse on international development thanks to the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) that eventually gave birth to the famous 1987 Brundtland report titled “Our Common Future”. At the heart of the concept is the issue of the efficient use of resources, especially human and natural resources. As the 2015 sustainable development goals show, the term is made up of several component including: care for the environment and responsibility in the manner of exploiting resources, the use of the most efficient technology available in the production of goods and services, economic diversification, and social and economic inclusion. From the foregoing, it is evident that the concept of sustainable development is complex as it involves ecological, technological, economic and governance issues. Hence, it is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 43).

Having done a general introduction to the paper, we now proceed to the core issues.

Reality

Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa which is the principal focus of this paper, is a land of incredible contradictions, extremes and paradoxes. To begin with, the continent is unarguably the most naturally endowed in the world yet it is home to some of the poorest people in the world. It is a continent endowed with resources and commodities that have been essential to economic growth and development in other parts of the world, yet its combined GDP of 3.52 trillion US dollars 2017 is not up to Germany’s 3.68 trillion US dollars in the same year. Africa’s resources have been at the centre of the history of economics, yet it has nothing to show for it. Its high population growth has not translated to increased economic activity. It is the continent with the lowest rate of industrialization and green house emission, yet it suffers a disproportionate share of the negative effects of climate change. Unfortunately, scientists are forecasting that Africa will be the most impacted by climate change (global warming, desertification, drought, flood, etc.). Africa is a continent in dire need of human capital yet it records the highest rate of brain drain in the world. The continent has a chronic deficit of capital investment yet it records some of the highest rates of capital flight “with an estimated 40 percent of private funds held outside the continent, compared with only 5 percent for South Asia, 6 percent for East Asia, and 10 percent for Latin America (Obadina 2014: 50). It is a political entity with too many ungoverned spaces; vast deserts occupied by terrorist groups and human traffickers and thick rain forests and swamps infested by militia groups. It is a continent with a notable number of rivers and lakes yet a considerable percentage of its population does not have access to potable water. The continent has enough arable land and water to provide food for its population yet an estimated 300 million Africans suffer from malnutrition (Mills et al. 2017: 91). Some die of hunger while many live on food aid. While, on the average, only two percent of the population of developed countries are into agriculture and they are

able to produce more than their individual countries' food requirements, more than half the population of Africa are either directly or indirectly engaged in agricultural production yet most countries on the continent are net importers of food. With regard to the ability to save part of one's income for investment in other areas of life, Africans generally have little to save after their expenditure on food.

Whereas the average American spends just 6.7 percent of his income on food, tying with Singapore in first (i.e. cheapest) place, the first African country of the 92 surveyed by the US Department of Agriculture is South Africa, in the 47th place at 19.4 percent of income; Kenya and Nigeria fill the last two place, at 47 percent and 56.9 percent, respectively (Mills et al. 2017: 97).

The fact is that, going by available data, Africa is the world's poverty capital. While it is the aim of this paper to suggest ways of pulling Africa out of the poverty trap, we must, first all, identify the factors militating against the continent's economic development.

Challenges

1. Geography and climate: Firstly, the geographical location of many African countries impacts negatively on the cost of living in those countries. 15% of Africa's countries are landlocked and this translates into higher cost of transportation of goods into the hinterland as compared to countries with sea borders and well developed water transport system. Obviously, the cost of transportation is factored into the prices of goods which is eventually borne by the final consumer. Secondly, climatic conditions. Generally, countries located in the tropical zone of the earth are more prone to the outbreak of diseases and pandemics compared to those in the temperate and arctic zones of the world. Pathogens, pests, disease carrying insects and poisonous reptiles generally find suitable breeding grounds in warm environments. Since the environment exposes Africans to falling ill more frequently, productive hours are lost and capital that should have been invested in other economic activities are directed to the payment of hospital bills and funeral ceremonies. The nexus between climate and disease is compounded by the problem of poor sanitation in many sub-Saharan African societies.

2. Infrastructure: Africa has a huge infrastructural deficit. Between 1980 and 1989 African countries spent, on the average, just a little over 1 percent of GDP on infrastructure while much more was spent on defence (Mills et al. 2017: 72). In order to close the infrastructural gap in sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that the region needs to spend about 93 billion dollars annually for the next ten years. This translates to about 15 percent of the region's GDP (World Bank Group 2017: 74). As of 2015, the total installed capacity of electricity in sub-Saharan Africa was about 96 gigawatts (GW) compared to India's 325 GW and China's 1,519 GW. South Africa alone, with a population of about 56 million, accounts for nearly half of the region's electricity generation capacity while Nigeria, with a population of almost 200 million, has only about a quarter of South Africa's total generation capacity. Unfortunately, many sub-Saharan African countries have less than 1 GW of installed generation capacity (World Bank Group 2018: 52). Frequent power cuts or even the absence of electricity has a wide range of effects on economic activities and poverty reduction on the continent. The majority of Africa's roads are unpaved and even the paved ones are often in bad shape. Worse still, when they are rural roads. Roads connecting farms and markets are

generally in bad shape while other means of mass transportation are still what were left by the colonial rulers. However, the most worrisome issue for African farmers is the dearth of post-harvest storage facilities, as a lot of harvested farm produce either depreciate in quality or are lost due to either poor storage or lack of it. The lack of storage facilities often force farmers to sell-off their products as soon as possible, at very cheap prices. Sometimes, farmers are not even able to recoup their investment talk less of making any profits because of produce glut (over-supply of the product).

In response to the infrastructural deficit on the continent, Africans resort to the private provisioning of most infrastructure: communities build roads for themselves, businesses and homes rely on private power generators for the generation of electricity, private security outfits are mushrooming all over the place in response to the demand for security in neighbourhoods, private homes and business premises. The lack of infrastructure has the biggest impact on the cost of providing quotidian needs. As earlier mentioned, African households spend way too much on food that they are left with very little to attend to other needs like housing, healthcare and education. In fact, lack of mass transit facilities, reliable energy supply and efficient machinery lowers productivity, increases the cost of goods and services and also impacts negatively on the rate of poverty on the continent.

3. Human capital: Knowledge and skills are very important variables in the fight against poverty. Africa has a huge population of people at the working age bracket but they are both unemployed and unemployable because they lack the education and skills necessary to drive a modern economy. Literacy level is still very low in some African countries. Let's take the example of adult literacy (age 15 and above). According to UNICEF's latest data, only 15 percent of adult Nigeriens can read and write (UNICEF 2015). Yet, we know that an uneducated or poorly educated population is a burden rather than an asset. Africa needs an army of skilled workers to build the infrastructures and carry out the activities necessary to jump-start the continent's sagging economy. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of skilled workers on the continent. Women are the back bone of household economic activities in Africa, yet for several reasons, especially cultural and religious, they have not been given the necessary incentives that will help improve their productivity. Apart from a generally lower rate of education compared to their male counterparts on the continent, for cultural and religious reasons, many African women are not able to obtain loans from commercial banks because they do not have the collateral required for such loans. Sometimes, even their basic freedoms, like the freedom of movement and association are limited. Another challenge regarding human capital is the low level of investment in research and development on the continent. In the modern business environment, any business or government that neglects research and development is bound to be penalized. In sum, with regard to productivity, Africans work hard but they don't work efficiently.

4. Intra-African trade: Another big challenge to African economic growth is the low volume of trade between African countries. Most African countries prefer to trade with non-African countries than with their African counterparts. Although it is understandable that most African countries are not producers of finished good that require high technical expertise, nevertheless, the volume of trade between them on agricultural products and other goods that do not require high technical skills

is still very low. However, the major challenges to intra-African trade are high tariffs, multiple taxation and bureaucratic bottlenecks like visa processing, company registration and xenophobia.

5. Global interconnectedness: Given that Africa lags behind in almost all economic indices, global interconnectedness is not necessarily to its advantage. African economies are exposed to unfair competition with bigger and more mature economies. While multinationals are taking away land from rural communities, the impact of the influx of big supermarket chains is beginning to be felt by small businesses that are the bedrock of household economies in towns and cities. Both phenomena contribute to increasing the rate of unemployment and, consequently, poverty on the continent. Moreover, the rise of the capital market has led to the redirection of a considerable amount of foreign investment to the virtual economy rather than to economic activities that can create jobs for a larger part of the population.

6. Governance: Governance is at the heart of poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The first challenge with regard to governance is socio-political instability. Africa has experienced too many civil wars and communal conflicts of which their immediate consequences are the displacement of people, loss of farming seasons by farmers, destruction of markets and business premises and the destruction of the few available infrastructure like roads and bridges. Businesses thrive in a stable environment. Hence, no business man or woman will invest in a volatile or highly risky environment. The second governance challenge is policy instability. Business detests uncertainty and no investor will invest in highly unpredictable environments. African politicians are notorious for frequently changing economic policies. In the 1970s, the general trend was the nationalization of key sectors of the economy, now in a mostly democratic Africa, policy changes accompany transition periods. Almost every new government in Africa comes with a new economic plan, often significantly different from that of the previous administration, even when it involves a change in government between people of the same political party (intra-party transition). Very often, existing projects are totally abandoned or hardly completed. The problem of policy instability is also compounded by misplaced priorities and location of projects in unviable and unproductive places, very often, just to satisfy political reasons (politics of redistribution).

Despite the invitation of potential investors to consider investing in Africa, African economies are characterized by protectionist policies, tariffs of different types and multiple taxation. Bureaucratic bottlenecks alone constitute a major cost to business. According to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business indicators, African countries rank high in the most difficult places to do business. For example, in Angola, it takes an average of 146 days to start a business and 1,011 days to enforce contracts. This is even worse in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo (Obadina 2014: 93). The third governance challenge to economic development in Africa is corruption. A lot of African countries are deeply corrupt, as evident in their low performance on Transparency International's corruption perception index.

7. Data and planning: Africa has a huge problem of economic planning. This is largely due to unreliable data and statistics. In 2013, the economic historian, Jarven Morten, published an interesting book titled "*Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do about It*". In this work, he stressed the unreliability of most of Africa's economic data ranging from population census to economic data from central banks and offices of statistics. Firstly, population censuses in Africa are highly politicized and largely unreliable. The history of

population census in Nigeria is a typical example of the politicization of population census (see Suberu 2001). Secondly, many of the offices of statistics and central banks in Africa are hardly independent. Hence, they are wont to producing economic data that are favourable to the government. In the long run, all poverty alleviation programmes amount to nothing if planning is based on poor or outrightly bad data.

8. *Climate change:* Climate change is becoming one of the greatest threats to poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Africa. The effects of climate change are felt in different ways on the continent. For example, a recent assessment of land degradation and desertification by FAO/UNEP puts the rate of desertification in the semi-arid areas of West Africa at five kilometres annually. Unusually heavy and long rains leading to floods are on the increase all over the continent. Drought and desertification have led to increased competition and conflict between semi-nomadic cattle herders and crop farming communities in several parts of Nigeria. As I mentioned earlier, unfortunately, experts predict that Africa will experience some of the greatest impact of climate change despite being the least polluter.

Opportunities

Africa has a lot of developmental challenges but that is not the end of her story. The continent has a lot of potential and it can still recover lost grounds if her leaders put their acts together. If properly harnessed, some of the factors that would contribute to Africa's economic development in the nearest future include:

1. *Population:* Africa's fast growing population is currently a huge burden because it lacks human capital. However, if African governments consolidate on the little progress being recorded in the education and health sectors, the population will be better prepared to work more efficiently and increase productivity significantly. While most developed countries are faced with an ageing population, Africa's youthful population could be a major attraction for investment and the opening of new industries. This will, nevertheless, depend on improved human capital, a more attractive business environment, better infrastructure, and security.

2. *Regional integration:* The recent project of regional integration embarked upon by the African Union promises to strengthen intra-African trade. Already, the result of this project is beginning to be seen in the removal of certain trade barriers between African countries. For example, the policy of Visa waiver recently embarked upon by some African countries for fellow Africans has improved the ease of travel and some of the benefits are already being felt, at least, in the tourism sector. It is hoped that the African Union's project of a common African citizenship and customs union will aid the movement of people, goods and services, boost inter-African trade and bring real benefits to the poor. If properly harnessed, Africa's population of over a billion people is a huge market that can stand on its own and also bring real economic benefits to its citizens.

3. *Diaspora:* The emigration of able-bodied Africans from the continent has always been a serious concern. This is especially when it involves the emigration of much needed experts like doctors, nurses, university professors, etc., from the continent. Of course, in the short-term, it is a problem. However, it should be noted that migration is not always a one-way traffic and its eventual positive benefits are not restricted to the receiving country. There is also the phenomenon of reverse migration when living conditions improve in the sending country. The history of migration in

several parts of the world attests to this. Apart from the financial remittances of migrants while they are still abroad, when they return to their home countries, they come back with improved human and cultural capital that shape their views on how business, institutions and society can be better organized for greater productivity. In addition, even while in foreign lands the expertise and experience of the diaspora can be engaged in their home countries. However, there is significant evidence that an improved business environment is capable of attracting the diaspora who have both private capital and expertise to invest in their home countries. With respect to the role of financial remittances in African economies, the World Bank's 2018 report on migration and remittances says that financial remittances to sub-Saharan Africa was 38 billion US dollars and it is expected to grow in 2019.

The largest remittance recipients in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2017 included Nigeria (\$22 billion), Senegal (\$2.2 billion), Ghana (\$2.2 billion), Kenya (\$2.0 billion), Uganda (\$1.4 billion), and Mali (\$1.0 billion). These countries will likely remain the largest recipients in the region in 2018 and 2019. Remittances represent a particularly large share of the GDP of Liberia (27 percent), Comoros (21 percent), the Gambia (21 percent), Lesotho (15 percent), Senegal (14 percent), and Cabo Verde (13 percent) (World Bank Group 2018: 33).

Suffice it to note that, firstly, these monies are mostly sent to family members. As such, they have a direct impact on household livelihoods. Secondly, the figures reported do not include informal remittances which are often higher than formal remittances. Nevertheless, financial remittances are a major source of external development finance for many African countries. Regarding cultural remittance, the work of *Associazione Don Bosco 2000* in Senegal is a typical example of how returning migrants who bring with them skills and experience are helped to reintegrate into their societies so that they can contribute positively to the local economy.

4. Technology: There is an ongoing process of the democratization of technology in the world. Both hard and softwares are getting increasingly cheaper and within the reach of ordinary people. Today, farmers and rural dwellers in Africa are using mobile phone applications like M-Pesa, PayGo, E-Wallet to receive money and make payments. There are also mobile phone applications that aid rural farmers to access information on extension service, provide them with daily update on the prices of goods in the market and also give them information on weather forecast and disaster management. Drones are being used to send blood samples for testing in Malawi and to deliver medicines to health centres on the hills of Rwanda, relatively cheap solar systems are being used to pump water from boreholes and to light bulbs in rural communities. For some people, these developments might seem rudimentary but they make a great impact on livelihoods in rural communities in Africa. Trials are presently being run in various African communities on how the use of tablet computers could improve educational outcomes in primary and secondary schools while distant learning programmes are becoming more accessible and popular on the continent. As a matter of fact, technology promises to be a major factor in leapfrogging both the economy and living conditions in Africa.

5. Natural resources: Africa's huge natural resources will continue to play a key role in her development. However, Africa must learn to leverage her arable land, fresh water, and mineral resources in her relationship with the world. Africa's agricultural products were the key drivers of industrialization in the West and, more recently, the continent's crude oil, iron ore and other

minerals are driving economies in China and the West. Currently, the world is moving towards abandoning fossil fuel and embracing renewable, green or clean energy and the highly coveted coltan, a mineral currently found in large quantities in the Central African region, especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo, is key to this transition. Coltan has become the coveted mineral of the moment because of the capacity of its tantalum derivative to store huge amounts of energy. Unfortunately, up till now, Africa's mineral wealth has largely been a curse rather than a blessing to her (the famous Dutch disease).

6. Democratization: There is an established correlation between democracy and sustainable economic development, and it is heartwarming to observe that democracy is not only becoming the preferred system of government in Africa but it is spreading fast and gradually consolidating in most African states. Today, there is no military dictatorship in Africa and Swaziland is the only remaining absolute monarchy on the continent. On the one hand, we recognize that democracy is still young on the continent and that a good number of African leaders have been in power for more than fifteen years. We also acknowledge the fact of *de facto* one party systems in some African countries, whereby the ruling party dominates the political space and power-shift is an intra-party affair. However, it is also encouraging to witness the alternation of power from one political party to another in some countries. This is very encouraging given that the cost of losing elections to an opposition party is very high in Africa. Nevertheless, as democracy consolidates on the continent, we hope to see improved governance, better economic planning, more stable policies, protection of human and property rights, stronger institutions, and a more inclusive society. All these contribute to a more peaceful society, sustainable economic growth, improved livelihoods and a more cohesive society.

7. International environment: The international community is beginning to be impatient with Africa's poverty and under-development. Africa appears to be a bottomless pit that keeps swallowing foreign aid with little to show for it. Western policy makers and development experts seem to be at their wits end on how to approach poverty and under-development on the continent. This situation has also led to increased donor apathy as donors are becoming tired, insensitive and immuned to Africa's tales of woes. However, the current international environment offers some opportunities for improvement in Africa. First, the new approach of tying aid to certain conditions like improvement in governance and the development of strong institutions could help in improving how donor aid is being used to improve the lives of people. Second, some donor groups bypass African governments and their agencies and relate directly with local communities. This approach makes it easier for aid to go directly to those who need it. Third, following the recent influx of African migrants through the mediterranean sea and the corresponding rise of populist/extreme right, anti-immigrant political parties in Europe, major European leaders are beginning to seriously consider foreign policies that are targeted at incentivizing job creation for the teeming youthful population in the sending countries. Fourth, the growing awareness of some African leaders like the Ghanaian President, Nana Akufo-Addo, of the need to wean their countries from dependence on foreign aid is a sign that African leaders are now considering new ways of doing things.

Having discussed the reality of Africa's under-development, the reasons why the continent has not been able to unleash her economic potentials, and the opportunities for Africa's economic development, I am cautiously optimistic that if certain fundamentals are put in place, some day,

Africa will no longer be the sick man of the world but a story of what a people can do when there is good will. We now proceed to discuss some of those fundamentals.

Towards sustainable development

From the history of economics, we learn that no country or continent has been able to maintain a constant economic trajectory all through her history. Like countries in other continents, African countries have experienced years of abundance and austerity, boom and burst, hope and delusion. Most African countries have enjoyed some period of economic prosperity, especially when the prices of commodities rise. The problem, however, has been the inability of their leaders to make bold, tough and, sometimes, unpopular decisions that would lay a solid foundation for their economic growth and help in keeping them afloat in difficult times. With regard to sustainable economic management, African countries need to put in place, not only mechanisms that will provide the economy with buffers from excessive shocks during economic downturns, but they also need to build a resilient population that is able to bounce back as quickly as possible after periods of economic crisis. In order to achieve these goals, certain fundamentals must be put in place.

1. Governance: We cannot over-emphasize the role of good governance in the promotion of sustainable economies and the eradication of extreme poverty. Good governance includes ensuring socio-political stability, respecting human and property rights, investing in critical infrastructures (roads, railway, ports, electricity) and making smart and stable policies. By smart policies I mean policies that are targeted at sustaining the country's area of comparative and competitive advantage as well as ensuring a careful mix of short-term policies aimed at poverty alleviation and long-term policies of sustainable growth. This is important because needy populations are not patient enough to wait for long-term solutions. Short-term deliverables are necessary for confidence building and for inspiring hope in the population while they await long-term sustainable solutions.

2. Research and development: Sustainable economic growth entails a continuous search for efficient ways of producing and delivering goods and services. In Africa, this would involve the promotion of innovation through the provision of more funding for research and development, particularly, in information technology and improved productivity in agriculture. All these would depend on investment in human capital development. Hence, the need for improved access to education and better educational outcomes, especially in mathematics and the sciences.

3. Openness to business: As the indicators of the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business show, many African countries are not open to business. If African countries want to run sustainable economies, they must not only make it easier for investors to register and run businesses but they must also actively support start-ups, be open to foreign participation in critical sectors of the economy, especially where local expertise is lacking, and promote a national culture that is devoid of unnecessary suspicion of foreigners, envy and xenophobia.

4. Regional economic integration: With a population of over a billion people, African countries have a huge market for their goods and services, if only their economies are better integrated. There is, therefore, need for more bilateral and multilateral agreements between African states.

5. Ecological protection: Due attention must be given to the effects of economic activities on the environment (fauna and flora), cultural heritage like shrines, sacred and historical sites, other items

of material culture as well as the sources of livelihood of rural communities. As such, there must be an efficient regulation of the extraction of mineral, forest, land, and water resources.

It is only when these fundamentals are put in place that we can hope for both sustainable economic growth and a resilient population in Africa.

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