Seeking Development in Africa: The Global Coalition for Africa and the Challenge of Policy Reform

KEMPE RONALD HOPE, Sr.[*]
University of Botswana

ABSTRACT

The majority of African nations have not been able or willing to realign their policy frameworks to combat the deepening crisis of development that has plagued them during the past two decades. In particular, sub-Saharan Africa, with its undiversified economic structure and undeveloped policy infrastructure, has been immobilized by its inability to adjust to the external and internal shocks it has experienced. This paper discusses and analyses recent policy reform initiatives by the Global Coalition for Africa for addressing Africa's tragic decline and marginalization.

INTRODUCTION

Most African nations have not been able or willing to realign their policy frameworks to combat the deepening crisis of development that has plagued them during the past two decades. In particular, sub-Saharan Africa, with its undiversified economic structure and undeveloped policy infrastructure, has been immobilized by its inability to adjust to the external and internal shocks it has experienced. Yet, although the benefits of policy reform and change remain obvious, it is disturbing to think that some African leaders and policy-makers may have learnt nothing from the lost decade of the 1980s.

   In March 1996, the United Nations, in association with the World Bank, launched yet another initiative on African development in a desperate attempt to once again contribute in a bold way to the solving of Africa's development crisis. The aim of this ten year initiative, which is termed 'The UN System-wide Special Initiative for Africa', is to invest US$25 billion in the region to expand basic education and health care, promote peace and better governance, and improve water and food security. The World Bank will be responsible for mobilizing more than 85 percent of the target sum, the bulk of which will be for education and health services. To date, this is the largest ever coordinated action plan of the United Nations. It is indeed ambitious and seems to have been proposed in response to charges by African leaders that their continent was being marginalised as exhibited by a lack of response to Africa's problems by the industrialized nations.

But, herein lies one of the fundamental problems related to the crisis of development in Africa. African leaders and policy-makers still continue to put faith in the notion that Africa's problems are to be solved solely outside of Africa. Yet, internal obstacles to development in Africa are as important as those imposed by the international economic system and, perhaps, even more so (Callaghy 1994). Indeed, one recognizes that Africa needs some help to solve its problems. Moreover, continued neglect of these problems can have negative externalities which may have an impact on communities far beyond Africa. However, Africa's destiny lies squarely on the shoulders of its leaders to develop self-reliant initiatives that are sustainable over the long-term. Such initiatives will most certainly require not only regional assistance but also some international assistance. But, such external assistance is much more likely to be forthcoming as complementary to indigenous initiatives rather than as sole or stand-alone support.

In any case, the problems faced by Africa are daunting and are, therefore, unlikely to be resolved solely through reliance on UN/World Bank initiatives. It would also be myopic of those two institutions to share the view that their initiatives alone will pull Africa out of its development crisis. However, the UN and World Bank are to be applauded for once again trying to rescue the peoples of Africa from their despair. The factors contributing to such despair include a crippling total external debt which stood at US$313 billion for the region as a whole in 1994[1]; the weakening of the balance of payments; the intensification of the brain drain; the deepening of capital flight; declining agricultural productivity and foreign direct investment[2]; deteriorating physical infrastructure; escalating unemployment and crime; much more pronounced famine and malnutrition; soaring budget deficits; rapid urbanization; expanding environmental degradation; worsening political and civil strife; rampant corruption; and increasing poverty[3], socio-economic inequalities, population growth rates, and magnitude of the AIDS epidemic.

However, in this sea of despair, there are African countries, such as Botswana, which are models of success for the rest to emulate. Also, several other countries have begun to make the transition from the lost decade of the 1980s to the promise of the 21st century. Some countries have even made significant progress toward economic liberalization and democratization. The task therefore is one of spreading and sustaining these gains throughout the continent. To accomplish that requires, as stated before, a much more indigenous vision and long-term perspective thinking.

---

[1] This was equivalent to approximately 234 percent of their export income.

[2] The continent's share of foreign direct investment has declined considerably since 1989 and was at 3 percent for the period 1988-93. See Sader (1995).

[3] Africa is the only region in the world whose poverty is projected to rise over the next decade.

In that regard, one laudable attempt has been made under the auspices of the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA)[4], to try to guide African nations to defining and committing themselves to the kind of vision that would lead to the development of strategies that will address the primary economic and political issues facing Africa as the 21st century emerges. The GCA suggested, in May 1995, that there are several issues to be addressed[5]. Below, we summarize the content of those issues and analyse them within the context of the challenge of policy reform for Africa.

1. LEADERSHIP

The GCA recognizes that leadership has many dimensions. However, the dimension of political leadership is said to be of greatest significance since it determines the development of other forms of leadership. The fundamental principles involved here relate to legitimate leadership, freely chosen/elected by the people, with some regard for honesty, integrity, competence, commitment, accountability, responsibility, and so on. Moreover, mechanisms of sanction and control by neutral and independent institutions should be in place, and leaders should be required to declare their assets before taking office and upon leaving office.

This type of leadership has been missing in most of Africa during the past two decades. When asked about Africa's problems, most African leaders do not discuss the shortcomings of the continent's leadership. Instead, they tend to blame "colonialism, American imperialism, the pernicious effects of slavery, the unjust international economic system, and exploitation by multinational corporations" (Ayittey 1992: 23). In some instances they even blame the international development agencies and donor community from whom they went seeking assistance.

---

[4]   The Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) is a unique body that provides an informal high-level political forum for organizing a new partnership between Africa and the donor community. Launched in 1991, it provides the framework for a broad consultative process, for a policy dialogue involving, at different stages, at national and international levels, distinguished thinkers and decision-makers from among leaders of African governments, the private sector, the nongovernmental organizations active in the region, and the international donor community. The ultimate objective of this body is to be a means of assisting action by African governments to achieve economic growth, poverty alleviation and social progress, and an effective instrument for mobilizing international support for Africa. The GCA supports the efforts of African countries in designing and implementing their own economic and social policies and programs, improving governance, and fostering popular participation. See GCA (1992); and Pronk (1995).

[5]   Derived from ACDESS (1996).

However, much of the blame for the shortcomings of African leadership can be attributed to a tendency towards patrimonialism[6]. "The personalization or patrimonialization of power and authority structures, political and nonpolitical, is pervasive" (Callaghy 1994: 202). For most African leaders, of all ideological and policy persuasions, there is a preoccupation with the need for greater authority over their populace and territories (Callaghy 1994). Consequently, patrimonial systems have sprung up in which the object of obedience is the personal authority of the leader or ruler which he enjoys by virtue of the loyalty of his people (Healey and Robinson 1992), and whether or not such loyalty is voluntary or involuntary.

Four essential features of the patrimonial state in Africa have been identified by Callaghy (1986). The first is a highly centralized and personalized executive authority centred around a country's leader, civilian or military. The second is that charismatic and legal-rational doctrines are blended in an attempt to make the exercise of power somewhat routine. The third is that personal rulers are supported by officials and new administrative cadres based on patron-client networks. The final feature is that the state provides the major avenue of upward mobility, status, power, and wealth. These four features of the patrimonial state reveal a system of patronage, clientelism, and personal rule. Moreover, their impacts have further revealed an African leadership that is morally bankrupt and short on vision. This is in sharp contrast to the prevailing situation in the 1960s and early 1970s when the quality of leadership was a major ingredient in Africa's political progress and a key determinant in the improvements in socio-economic conditions (Sirleaf 1996). The deterioration in the quality of African leadership, which began in the early 1970s, resulted in the replacement of long-term objectives, strategies, and programs with myopic and short-term policies exemplified by large public sector deficits to support politically determined projects, overvaluation of currencies, inefficient regulation of domestic and foreign trade, and so on. On the political side, partisanship, tribal allegiance, and nepotism replaced inclusion and compromises, ultimately degenerating into a concentration of power and outright dictatorship, many times of a violent and repressive nature (Sirleaf 1996).

Implicit in the GCA's thinking on leadership, although not clearly specified, is the issue of good governance. Good governance exists where there is political accountability; bureaucratic transparency; the exercise of legitimate power; freedom of association and participation; freedom of information and expression; sound fiscal management and public financial accountability; respect for the rule of law; a predictable legal framework encompassing an independent and credible justice system; respect for human rights; an active legislature; enhanced opportunities for the development of pluralistic forces, including civil society; and capacity building.

---

[6] A formula definition of patrimonialism offered by Dia (1993) is: Patrimonialism = monopoly power + discretion - accountability - transparency.

African leadership, as exhibited through patrimonialism, has undermined good governance on the continent in several ways (Sandbrook 1985). For example, it has diminished or eliminated the independence of the bureaucracy which, in turn, led to the misuse of public resources and the entrenchment of corrupt activities; it placed the political requirements of both regime and personal survival over policies that are in the national economic interest; and it promoted a climate in which decision-making became based on narrow political considerations or for self-gratification, with total disregard for the negative long-term consequences. In essence, good governance is undermined because African patrimonial leadership is characterized by the inability or unwillingness of rulers or ruling elites to distinguish between personal and public patrimony (property). The power and authority of office are therefore used as a form of `currency', and loyalty of subordinates is exchanged for parcels of power or for privileges from office (Dia 1993).

The good governance approach in African political economy renews the concern of analysts with political leadership and legitimate politics (Bratton and Rothchild 1992). The conditions that facilitate good governance are said to be (1) citizen influence and oversight; (2) responsive and responsible leadership; and (3) social reciprocities (Hyden 1992). Citizen influence and oversight is related to the degree to which individual citizens can participate in the political process and thereby express preferences about public policy; the means of preference aggregation for effective policy-making; and the methods of public accountability. Responsive and responsible leadership refers to the attitudes of political leaders toward their role as public trustees and it entails the degree of respect for the civil public realm; the degree of transparency in public policy-making; and the extent of adherence to the rule of law. Social reciprocities is related to the degree of political equality enjoyed by citizens; the degree of intergroup tolerance; and the extent of acceptance in associational organizations bounded by kinship, ethnicity, or race.

Good governance is not a luxury that African countries can barely afford. It is one of the key factors to be ascertained in the process of achieving broad-based socio-economic growth which reduces poverty at the fastest rate. Among other things, by checking corruption and incompetence, good governance ensures the most efficient utilization of scarce resources in the promotion of development (Amoako 1996). Africans are acutely aware of the benefits of good governance. It is time for those African leaders, who have not already done so, to respond to this popular demand.

2. INSTITUTIONS

The GCA advocates that democratic institutions should be designed to facilitate the peaceful transfer of power and existing institutions should be democratized and their capacities improved. In addition, merit should be the basis for recruitment and

promotion in all institutions. In order to ensure checks and balances, separation of power should be a fundamental guiding principle and all players should abide by the constitution.

Given the patrimonial style of leadership that currently exists in most of Africa, then it is expected that there would be very serious institutional weaknesses in those countries. The challenge here is to implement public sector management and civil service reform to bring all institutions into the realm of democracy and good governance. When institutions are weak, then there is limited implementation capacity and service delivery also remains weak. In such an environment, socio-economic development also remains elusive.

However, institutional change can be a complicated and lengthy process. Institutions typically change incrementally rather than in discontinuous fashion. Informal cultural constraints embodied in customs and traditions tend to be much more impervious to deliberate policies (North 1990). Consequently, the relative success of institutional change would be a function of the environmental factors which the political leadership have been instrumental in setting in place.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY

The GCA posits that African civil society is currently weak, fragile, and needs to be strengthened since democracy can only be consolidated when there exists a vibrant, dynamic, and pluralistic civil society. Furthermore, the GCA is of the view that civil society should not only be conceived in opposition to the state but should be a locus of continuous exchange of information between society and government.

The recent renewed interest in civil society in Africa stems from the understanding that democratization requires a strong civil society through which people can freely associate, assist in the construction of democratic and participatory institutions, and can hold government accountable (Tripp 1994). Civil society can be regarded as a countervailing mechanism to state power while simultaneously engaging the state. It can be defined as "the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules" (Diamond 1994: 5). It is an intermediary entity which stands between the private arena and the state. It includes formal and informal associations whose interests may be economic, cultural, informational and educational, professional, developmental, intellectual, or civic (Diamond 1994).

However, civil society should not be confused with a `civic community' since it is not an all-encompassing movement of popular empowerment and economic change (Fatton 1995). In contrast, a civic community is "marked by an active, public-spirited citizenry, by egalitarian political relations, by a social fabric of trust and cooperation. . . Citizens in a civic community, though not selfless saints, regard

the public domain as more than a battle-ground for pursuing personal interest" (Putnam 1993: 15-88). Civil society, on the other hand, is influenced by class interests, ethnic identities, individual egotism, and religious and secular fundamentalism (Fatton 1995).

In Africa, for purely historical and communal reasons, civil society is perceived in a manner different to that in Western societies or in the rest of the Third World for that matter. Due particularly to Africa's historically low levels of industrialization, most African countries did not develop extensive economic and social class systems or powerful associational groups whose interests or identities were separate from or opposed to the African state and its leaders. At the same time, however, Africans have always exhibited the capacity to come together to address their local problems wherever and whenever they have been allowed the political latitude to do so (USAID 1994).

On the whole, the vast majority of Africans have been excluded from participation in matters related to national affairs since the patrimonial state rendered any form of associational activities as impractical and improbable. Indeed, through coercion, manipulation, and control, the components of civil society have been denied the necessary autonomy to be effective as a countervailing mechanism to state power. Due to the weakness of restraining institutions in African patrimonial states, there is little chance of stopping a political leader's use of coercion, manipulation, and control of the forces of civil society (Cartwright 1983). Beyond that, there is also the contention that civil society does not always embrace the peaceful harmony of associational pluralism (Lemarchand 1992). It is argued by Fatton (1995: 73) that "civil society in Africa is conflict-ridden and prone to Hobbesian wars of all against all. It is the prime repository of 'invented' ethnic hierarchies, conflicting class visions, patriarchal domination and irredentist identities fuelling deadly conflicts in many areas of the continent".

However, assuming that a vibrant civil society will possess the values and the social power to impel a responsive, democratic, and capable state along the road to egalitarian development (Sandbrook 1993), the challenge therefore is how can civil society be activated and empowered in Africa as a key component of the region's democratic transition. Undoubtedly, such a task will be a lengthy process. It will take years, for example, just to reorient thinking toward the proven idea that the state itself benefits in many practical ways from a broad-based and vibrant civil society. Beyond accomplishing that, both sets of actors - state and civil associations - would need to engage themselves in efforts aimed at promoting and organizing a vibrant civil society.

With respect to civil associations, they must, themselves, be able to put in place internal democratic procedures and eliminate all forms of discrimination and inequalities based solely on gender, ethnicity, and status (Sandbrook 1993). In addition, all civil associations should strive to develop independent means of support for their activities which would further allow them to distance themselves

from, and strengthen their role as a counterweight to, the state. In this latter regard, civil associations with similar objectives and ideals should come together and form umbrella groups through which they can pool their scarce resources to achieve their goals. Moreover, individual shortcomings would be overcome under the rubric of a group.

It has also been advocated that networking between civil associations enhances their ability to shape government policy. For example, Clark (1991: 86) has argued that "building up strong networks of similar NGOs and projects can help to overcome any sense of isolation and provide useful forums for learning skills and exchanging techniques". Such networks can be strengthened by external donors who can target their resources towards enhancing how associations interact with each other and their impact on `distributional' issues (Woods 1994). However, there are limits to such assistance which can also have negative effects. Consequently, the donor community would be well-advised not to make a regular practice of bypassing the state to empower civil society as against the state. Such practices may breed suspicions and hamper attempts to reconcile the relationship between the state and civil society in Africa. In effect, it is essential that donors know when to `back off' and refrain from either providing assistance or providing too much of it. This is also important for maintaining the autonomy of African civil associations and for removing the risk of those associations being perceived as donor creations or donor agents (Barkan and Ottaway 1994).

In terms of the state, there needs to be fundamental acceptance by political leaders and bureaucrats that a vibrant civil society is a vital instrument for complementing a responsive state in the accomplishment of its tasks. A robust associational life supplements the role of political parties in stimulating political participation, increasing the political efficacy and skill of citizens, and promoting an understanding as well as an appreciation of the rights of democratic citizenship (Diamond 1994).

Following on that, the state would need to retreat from coercive behaviour and reduce its bureaucracy so as to extend the space for associational activities and create new opportunities for political involvement by previously excluded groups (Healy and Robinson 1992). More particularly, the state would need to offer incentives so that civil associations may become engaged in national affairs in a most vibrant way. Such incentives should include, among other things, clear policy statements that recognize the rights and role of civil society in consolidating and maintaining democracy; the scheduling of regular meetings and consultations between political leaders, the state bureaucracy, and civil associations; and enhanced opportunities for civil associations to make representations and submissions before political leaders, the state bureaucracy, and public institutions at the national, regional, and local levels.

4. RESTRUCTURING THE NATION STATE

It is the position of the GCA that: (1) existing national boundaries should be respected in accordance with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter; (2) balanced growth should be ensured in order to avoid internal conflicts; (3) regional cooperation and integration can reduce inter-state conflicts and should therefore be emphasized; (4) the nation state should pursue cultural equality so that its members, although coming from different ethnic backgrounds, will feel that they are guaranteed equal rights; (5) political power should be shared fairly among all communities, and wealth and resources for development should be equitably redistributed; and (6) a decentralized political, administrative, and fiscal structure is regarded as most essential in creating a sense of fairness and belonging.

The challenge of restructuring the nation state in Africa is indeed a formidable one although a necessary prerequisite for growth and development in Africa. African states are characterized by, among other things, their centralized nature and their unequal distribution of income. Decentralization of power and financial resources to local governments, and attempts to redistribute income are therefore important goals. Likewise, regional cooperation and integration are essential to the individual and collective growth and prosperity of African countries. In a world economy marked by the existence of large trading blocks, regional integration would enable Africa to project itself as a large and important destination for trade and investment and also to take advantage of economies of scale offered by a larger market and increased competition (Amoako 1996).

However, progress on regional integration in Africa has been very slow, particularly hampered by counter-demands from potential member states. In May 1994, the treaty on the establishment of the African Economic Community came into force and there is now renewed hope that this attempt at regional integration would be fully implemented in the future as a way of responding to the regionalising world political economy. Moreover, regional integration has the potential to narrow the various gaps between Africa and the rest of the world economy as well as among African countries. In the latter case, this also has the potential to reduce or eliminate conflicts between African states. Regional integration promotes industrialization and it is a key element in the quest for reducing Africa's external dependence (Kayira 1993). Africa's leaders now need to renew their commitment to the achievement of this important goal.

5. CULTURE, VALUES AND AFRICA'S PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD

The GCA has taken the view that there is need for Africans to overcome a philanthropic vision of the world and develop a better understanding of the mechanisms that govern the world as a necessary condition for the continent's

competitiveness; that cultural heritage and values should be harnessed for national development while at the same time creating the right environment to enable Africa to get the best out of her people so as to foster a sense of pride, patriotism, and nationalism; and there should be the promotion of Africa's cultural renaissance through a generalized use of local languages and the development of a continental African language, the teaching of African history, and the recovery of Africa's technological memory.

Undoubtedly, the promotion of cultural values and heritage is a noble idea. To the extent that such values and heritage are consistent with the development process and do not lead to ethnic conflicts or insularity, they should be enthusiastically supported. Essentially, as long as cultural values and attitudes release the creative capacity of Africans then it augurs well for the development process. Cultures are better or worse depending on the degree to which they support innate human capacities as they emerge. At the same time, the creative capacity of human beings is at the heart of the development process. Development happens through the human ability to imagine, theorize, conceptualize, innovate, articulate, organize, manage, solve problems, and do other things with the mind and hands that contribute to the progress of the individual and of human kind (Harrison 1985). Several factors, including climate, natural resources, and government policies, influence the direction and pace of progress. However, the key factor is human creative capacity as has been demonstrated in the East Asian countries (Naya and McCleery 1994).

With respect to the need for Africans to overcome a philanthropic vision of the world, this is quite consistent with the push for a more self-reliant development. Indeed, one of the fundamental weaknesses of African development policy is that it is too dependent on external forces. The reality of change from external dependence to reliance on local initiatives is also a function of the fact that the rather static quality of African development policy has been superseded by changing global realities, leading to what has now come to be regarded as the marginalization of the continent (Shaw and Inegbedion 1994). Those global realities, including the end of the Cold War, have shifted around the security and economic interests of the industrialized nations which, in turn, have led to massive reductions in the foreign assistance made available to Africa.

Africa, therefore, has no other choice but to embark on a path of sustainable local, national, regional, and continental self-reliance that is market-oriented. Past attempts at non-market-oriented self reliance, such as `Ujaama socialism' in Tanzania, have been grand failures and have long since been discredited (Ayittey 1994). The challenge here is very clear, African countries must develop and implement market-oriented self-reliant policies in the interest of their own survival. The new world order suggests that nothing short of that will do. Ironically, such a situation, consonant with marginality, allows for a new creativity and the

redefinition of sustainable and democratic development as determined by local peoples rather than foreign entities (Shaw and Inegbedion 1994).

The need to embark on a market-oriented self-reliant approach cannot be overstressed. Africa's prospects for growth and development lie in such an approach. Moreover, it is necessary to reverse the continent's decline and marginalization[7]. It has been argued by Shaw and Inegbedion (1994), for example, that Africa's decline has reduced it to `Fourth World' status comprising most of the least developed countries and, with the possible exception of South Africa, without any newly industrializing countries (NICs) or even near-NICs. Certainly, such a state of affairs needs to be rectified with some urgency.

6. CAPACITY BUILDING

Africa is recognized by the GCA as being behind other regions of the world with respect to skills. Consequently, it is necessary to prioritize needs and develop skills in areas that will jump start the continent into the 21st century. In this regard, the retention of skilled individuals is imperative. In addition, the importance of education, at all levels, for national development should be emphasized through the implementation of appropriate national educational policies that are allocated adequate resources.

Capacity is central to African development. It is the combination of human resources and institutions that permits countries to achieve their development goals. "It engenders self-reliance that comes with the ability of people to make choices and take actions to achieve the objectives they set themselves. This entails the ability to identify and analyse problems formulate solutions and implement them" (World Bank 1996: 5).

Capacity building in Africa is important because, among other things, it generates the capability for those countries to develop indigenous and self-reliant development policies. Moreover, the relevant skills would be developed without which Africa would be unable to transform its agriculture, effectively link its industrialization with its natural resource base, and become scientifically and technologically advanced. In addition, a skills base would emerge for establishing linkages and complementarities among the production sectors, serving as an effective domestic catalyst for growth and socio-economic development, and following strategies that are most appropriate to the continent's needs and realities.

Furthermore, the quality of policy analysis, formulation, and implementation depends, in part, on the existence of a substantial and appropriately organized pool

---

[7] Africa is now the most marginal of the Third World regions in terms of economic, military, technological, and skilled labour resources. See Shaw and Inegbedion (1994); and Sandbrook (1993).

of skilled individuals in both the private and public sectors. If that resource does not exist or becomes dissipated, it is very difficult to find people for such tasks who are sufficiently experienced. Furthermore, putting a policy capacity in place is a first order of business, to be inevitably accompanied by more protracted efforts to build even greater capacity. Robust capacity building may also have a long-term pay-off for broader institutional development, since it strengthens critical information systems, training, and implementation capacity, and also contributes to the accumulation of staff skills and experience (Lamb 1987).

African governments have a particularly important responsibility for capacity building. Rather than donors, African governments should be providing vision and taking the initiative in implementing means of overcoming gaps in national capacity (World Bank 1996). When capacity is lacking, development policy cannot be adequately implemented.

7. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

It is the view of the GCA that due to the dominance of science and technology in this and the next century, African countries need to bring science and technology to the centre of the development endeavour as a part of the political agenda. In that regard, general education of the population and, in particular, science education during the early stages of the education system, is an important means of inculcating science and technology culture in the general population.

The areas of priority are deemed to be (1) food and nutrition security, which is not limited to production but includes preservation, and diversification and transformation of staples to different products. It also involves the formulation of appropriate pricing and marketing policies and radical changes in extension services; (2) health security, the rich biological resources which have an enormous potential for the development of pharmaceutical industries and the use of biotechnology as a basis for expanding into new industries including agro-industries; (3) Water - although Africa is rich in natural resources it is water poor and water is going to be a major problem in the future; and (4) population management, the management of the rapid growth of the population.

In all of the above four priority areas, the role of women is viewed as critical. Consequently, the education of women must be given special attention. Science and technology have often been neglected in African development policy. This has led to considerable dependence on external sources for food, medicine, nutrition programs, technology, and so on. African universities and research centres are totally delinked from the productive and marketing sectors and attempts must now be made to forge useful links among them. This is an imperative given the context of self-reliance and the necessity for the use of environmentally sound and appropriate technology suited to local circumstances.

Environmentally sound and appropriate technology refers, in general, to production methods that are less damaging to the environment than previously used methods, consume less energy and fewer resources, and recycles wastes or handles them more acceptably. The idea of appropriate technology must be looked at in terms of demand (basic needs goals) and supply (the appropriate production processes). There is an urgent need for the harmonization of these two factors to bring about the management and production techniques that are best suited to the resources and future development potential of the individual African countries. Such technology should contribute to sustainable development (Hope 1996a).

Technological decisions and the pace of technical change affect all development processes and, in turn, are affected by them. The various combinations and proportions in which labour, material resources, and capital are used influence not only the type and quantity of goods and services produced, but also the distribution of their benefits and the prospects for overall growth. The significance of technological choices made in the course of development extends beyond economics to social structure and political processes as well. The growing interest in finding and implementing appropriate technologies reflects an implicit, if not always explicit, recognition of the essential role of technology in sustainable development policy (Hope 1996a).

Because the use of any particular technology is not an end in itself, the criteria of appropriateness for the choice of technology must be found in the goals of sustainable development. These goals are concerned not only with the volumes of output and income generated by a country's economy but also with the way they are produced and distributed among the population. Hence, sustainable development would be unachievable if technology is insufficient in quantity and inappropriate in quality. Consequently, the acquisition of technology in Africa must be limited to appropriate technology.

8. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND REFORM

The economies of Africa must perform better and be more competitive. To accomplish that the GCA advocates that Africa must improve and increase its domestic resource mobilization; create productive employment; give priority to developing the agricultural sector while at the same time recognizing the linkage between agriculture and industry and promoting industrial development as the engine for growth in the long-term; adequately address the debt problem; create an enabling environment to encourage savings and development; and use human resources as the basis for improving economic performance. The achievement of these goals would require that governments be efficient, accountable, legitimate, and serviced by an efficient and professional bureaucracy guided by known public policies.

Africa's economic performance can best be improved through the harnessing of market forces. Markets are not perfect. However, when they are free of distortions, they are the most efficient mechanism for mobilizing and allocating scarce resources for poverty-reducing socio-economic development (Amoako 1996). Moreover, the alternatives, state planning and intervention in economic affairs, have been disastrous for Africa and are directly linked to the continent's economic crisis.

The harnessing of market forces in Africa has the potential to, among other things, increase private investment, including foreign direct investment which, in turn, would create employment opportunities. Prudent fiscal and monetary policies would need to be pursued to reduce or eliminate budget deficits and generally to restore macroeconomic balance and economic confidence. In those African countries that have harnessed market forces and engaged in prudent fiscal and monetary policies, economic performance has been good and, in some instances, even spectacular. Examples are Ghana and Botswana, respectively.

African governments have accumulated huge budget deficits during the past two decades which are due, in part, to parasitic public enterprises, weak fiscal management, and questionable expenditures on projects and misplaced socio-economic development priorities. Public enterprises, in particular, have been a drain on African treasuries. They operate at a loss; they do not pay taxes; they have yielded a very low rate of return on the large amount of resources invested in them; their cash flows do not even cover running costs; and their operating costs are covered by transfers from government budgets and the banking system.

The consequences of excessive fiscal deficits include inflation, the crowding-out of private investment, debt problems, balance of payments problems, and low levels of domestic savings primarily as a result of public dis-saving. Increasing public saving (reducing the deficit) is the only policy measure known to be effective in raising national savings (Easterly and Schmidt-Hebbel 1994), and that, in turn, makes resources available for investment and reduces the need for external borrowing.

The need for African nations to reduce their debt is an obvious conclusion. Debt reduction is necessary for the recovery and resumption of growth in Africa (Amoako 1996). The magnitude of Africa's debt is simply not now sustainable. By 1994, the long-term debt of sub-Saharan Africa as percentage of GNP was approximately 65 percent and as a percentage of exports it exceeded 254 percent[8]. Servicing this debt requires not only an increase in future revenues, but in effect those revenues must be raised in foreign currency since the debt is overwhelmingly denominated in US dollars or other foreign currency. A few African governments enjoy direct ownership of exportable products such as minerals. However, most

---

[8]   Since 1990 the arrears on this debt has doubled and was approximately US$53.2 billion in 1994.

governments are unable to raise revenues directly in foreign currency. Instead, unless they can borrow further abroad, they must buy the foreign currency directly or indirectly from exporters (Little et al., 1993). Since it is unlikely that the majority of African countries would be able to grow their way out of their debt crisis, creditors should consider the possibility of offering them debt relief or extending existing debt relief measures. This ought to be done on a case by case basis to benefit only those countries that have made sustained progress in economic and political liberalization.

9. NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

The GCA has enunciated a general principle that Africa must not only exploit its natural resources for export but must begin to strengthen its processing and production of finished products in the continent. The mining industry is seen as an example in this respect. African countries are also required to balance development with proper protection and conservation of the environment since sustainable development can only be ensured if it is environmentally sound.

Environmental degradation remains a major concern in Africa. Forest cover, estimated at 679 million hectares in 1980, has been diminishing at a rate of 2.9 million hectares per year; the rate of deforestation has been increasing; about 50 percent of the farmland in sub-Saharan Africa is affected by soil degradation and erosion; and as much as 80 percent of Africa's pasture and range areas show signs of degradation (Cleaver and Schreiber 1994). Degraded soils lose their productive capability with significant negative consequences on vegetation. Also, degradation and destruction of forests have a severe impact on wildlife habitat and biodiversity. It is estimated that 64 percent of the original wildlife habitat in sub-Saharan Africa has already been lost (Cleaver and Schreiber 1994).

In the 21st century, environmental management will assume even greater importance around the world and Africa will come under increasing pressure to put its environmental house in order. All African countries should therefore prepare Environmental Action Plans (EAPs) which take into consideration not only their own unique circumstances related to pollution, deforestation, agriculture, population growth, conservation, and so on, but also international requirements like the need to phase out the use of ozone-depleting substances such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as stipulated in the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. By the year 2025, for example, emissions of CFCs in Africa are projected to be 12 percent of the world's total compared to 2 percent in the Middle East, 8 percent in Latin America, and 16 percent in South East Asia (Hope 1996b). One factor that African governments must take into consideration in the preparation of their EAPs is the participation of local communities and environmental and/or conservation groups. Without such participation,

environmental management and conservation programs would not stir people to action. Instead, such programs are likely to be either ignored or resisted. The Botswana government, for example, has encountered resistance from the Basarwa peoples in the Kalahari desert region over their removal from land that the government has designated as a game reserve. The Basarwa claim that they are being moved from their natural and ancestral habitat without prior and appropriate consultation. However, it is the government's position that the Basarwa peoples are being settled in areas where they would now have access to schools, health facilities, and so on, while at the same time their original habitat would be preserved for the area's wildlife and for ecotourism.

10. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The GCA regards the role of government as particularly important in defining a new vision for Africa. This is so because governments are needed to change laws and regulations to implement various aspects of the new vision; to provide budgetary allocations to finance the implementation of the new vision; and to take executive action for all phases of adoption and implementation of programs based on the national long-term vision.

Since government represents the legal instrument through which these things are to be accomplished, then the role of government is indeed important in the process of implementing this new vision and long-term perspective thinking. African governments would also have to play major roles in negotiations and discussions with regional organizations such as the OAU, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the African Development Bank (AfDB), for example. In addition, African governments would be required to reach out to all stakeholders including the citizenry and civil associations to guarantee as much non-governmental participation as possible to garner popular support for the adoption and implementation of the new development agenda.

Following from the experiences of the East Asian countries, African governments must not only set forth the long-term vision for development, but must also establish a rule of law that is simple and transparent, develop and implement good macroeconomic policies, avoid unnecessary intervention in the market place, and develop effective public/private sector cooperation.

11. CONCLUSIONS

It is undisputed that Africa needs to develop a new shared vision of its future that embraces economic and political liberalization as well as regional cooperation and integration. Improving policies alone can boost growth substantially, but if

neighbouring countries adopt a policy change together, the effects on growth would be more than double what they would be with one country acting alone (Easterly and Levine 1995).

The post-colonial interventionist state has been a major disaster for Africa and Africa's ensuing decline and marginalization are nothing short of a major tragedy. Moving from decline and marginalization to progress towards ending absolute poverty and improving the human condition, for example, will neither come on its own nor from outside the region. The challenges on the road to Africa's development have to be overcome in Africa itself (Amoako 1996).

In that respect, the GCA should be commended for putting forward a sober vision and strategy for responding to the continent's crisis. The challenge of policy reform and change is never an easy task to address. However, there now seems to be an emerging consensus on Africa's critical path to revitalization for the 21st century. Of course, the most significant variable influencing the outcomes is the extent to which the current and subsequent political leadership would be committed to the goals and vision of this type of initiative.

Policy reform and change are of crucial importance in Africa. But so also are the political processes from which those policy reform and change choices emerge, are implemented, and sustained. Undoubtedly, politics has been an obstacle to development in post-independence Africa (Killick 1993). This work has amply demonstrated that bad governance has been bad for the development process in Africa. Consequently, if the vision for the 21st century is to be realized, Africa's leaders will need to display a new political resolve to disengage from authoritarian or other nondemocratic systems of personal rule, and to dismantle bureaucratic obstacles to policy reform and change. Then, and only then, can such policy reform and change take hold to reverse the continent's tragic decline and its accompanying negative consequences.

Finally, some brief comments on the relevance of the Asian development experience to Africa. It has been pointed out by Naya and McCleery (1994) that the currently dynamic economies of Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan were also considered hopeless after World War II. The lessons of their development experience suggest that African countries should not be written off as `basket cases'. Just as Asians have been able to turn around former `basket cases' into dynamic centres of growth and prosperity, Africans face the challenge of putting their abundant resources to work in realizing their own visions of development and progress.

Unlocking Africa's potential requires effective policy reform and change as discussed above. Complementary to that, the Asian development experience suggests that there are ten critical policy areas for sustainable development (Naya and McCleery 1994). These are (1) macroeconomic stability; (2) agricultural development; (3) human resource development; (4) mobilization of savings, development of financial intermediation, and incentives for productive investment;

(5) outward-orientation and attraction of foreign direct investment; (6) effective management of foreign exchange resources and incentives to potential producers of foreign exchange; (7) proper sequencing of structural adjustment policies; (8) institutional capacity building and attention to the problem of governance; (9) development of the information sector; and (10) encouragement of a dynamic private sector working in cooperation with government toward a society-wide vision of development.

REFERENCES

ACDESS 1996.
     (= African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies). **Bulletin**, January: 3-6.
Amoako, K. Y. 1996.
     Africa: Development Challenges of the Twenty-First Century. Paper Presented to the Conference of African Ministers of Planning and UNDP Resident Representatives in the Africa Region, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, January 30-31.
Apter, D. and C. G. Rosberg (eds.) 1994.
     Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
Ayittey, G. B.N. 1992.
     Africa Betrayed. New York: St. Martin's Press.
 1994   The Failure of Development Planning in Africa. In: *The Collapse of Development Planning*, Peter J. Boettke (ed.), pp. 146-181. New York: New York University Press.
Barkan, J. D. and M. Ottaway 1994.
     Democratization and Civil Society. Paper Presented for the Democracy Roundtable Series, Overseas Development Council, Washington, DC, May 24.
Boettke, P. J. (ed.) 1994.
     The Collapse of Development Planning. New York: New York University Press.
Bratton, M. and D. Rothchild 1992.
     The Institutional Bases of Governance in Africa. In: *Governance and Politics in Africa*, Goran Hyden and Michael Bratton (eds.), pp. 263-284. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
Callaghy, T. M. 1986.
     Politics and Vision in Africa: The Interplay of Domination, Equality and Liberty. In: *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of*

Power, Patrick Chabal (ed.), pp. 30-51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1994   State, Choice, and Context: Comparative Reflections on Reform and Intractability. In: *Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa*, David Apter and Carl G. Rosberg (eds.), pp. 184-218. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.

Cartwright, J. 1983.
Political Leadership in Africa. London: Croom Helm.

Chabal, P. (ed.) 1986.
Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clark, J. 1991.
Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organizations. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Cleaver, K. M. and G. A. Schreiber 1994.
Reversing the Spiral: The Population, Agriculture, and Environment Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Dia, M. 1993.
A Governance Approach to Civil Service Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Diamond, L. 1994.
Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation. **Journal of Democracy** 5(3): 4-17.

Easterly, W. and K. Schmidt-Hebbel 1994.
Fiscal Adjustment and Macroeconomic Performance: A Synthesis. In: *Public Sector Deficits and Macroeconomic Performance*, William Easterly, Carlos Afredo Rodríguez, and Klaus Schmidt-Hebbel (eds.), pp. 15-78. New York: Oxford University Press.

Easterly, W. and R. Levine 1995.
Africa's Growth Tragedy: A Retrospective 1960-89. Policy Research Working Paper 1503. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Easterly, W., C. A. Rodríguez and K. Schmidt-Hebbel (eds.) 1994.
Public Sector Deficits and Macroeconomic Performance. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fatton, R., Jr. 1995.
Africa in the Age of Democratization: The Civic Limitations of Civil Society. **African Studies Review** 38(2): 67-99.

Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) 1992.
Global Coalition for Africa: Documents on: Development, Democracy and Debt. The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Harrison, L. E. 1985.
Underdevelopment is a State of Mind. Lanham, MD: Madison Books.

Healey, J. and M. Robinson 1992.

  Democracy, Governance and Economic Policy: Sub-Saharan Africa in Comparative Perspective. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Hope, K. R., Sr. 1996a.

  Promoting Sustainable Community Development in Developing Countries: The Role of Technology Transfer. **Community Development Journal** 31(3): 193-200.

  1996b *International Trade and International Technology Transfer to Eliminate Ozone-Depleting Substances.* **International Environmental Affairs** 8(1): 32-40.

Hyden, G. 1992.

  Governance and the Study of Politics. In: *Governance and Politics in Africa*, Goran Hyden and Michael Bratton (eds.), pp. 1-26. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Hyden, G. and Bratton, M. (eds.) 1992.

  Governance and Politics in Africa. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Kayira, G. K. 1993.

  A Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration - The African Experience. In: *Integrating SADC Economies: From Resolutions to Action*, Gladson K. Kayira, Amy G. Luhanga, and Ponny N.L. Walakira (eds.), pp. 25-64. Gaborone, Botswana: IDM Publications.

Kayira, G. K., A. G. Luhanga and P. N. L. Walakira (eds.) 1993.

  Integrating SADC Economies: From Resolutions to Action. Gaborone, Botswana: IDM Publications.

Killick, T. 1993.

  The Adaptive Economy: Adjustment Policies in Small, Low-Income Countries. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Lamb, G. 1987.

  Managing Economic Policy Change: Institutional Dimensions. Discussion Paper 14. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Lemarchand, R. 1992.

  Uncivil States and Civil Societies: How Illusion Became Reality. **The Journal of Modern African Studies** 30(2): 177-191.

Little, I.M.D., et al. 1993.

  Boom, Crisis, and Adjustment: The Macroeconomic Experience of Developing Countries. New York: Oxford University Press.

Naya, S. and R. McCleery 1994.

  Relevance of Asian Development Experiences to African Problems. San Francisco: ICS Press.

North, D. C. 1990.

  Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pronk, J. 1995.
     Global Coalition Looks to the Year 2000. **Africa Recovery** 9(1): 18.
Putnam, R. D. 1993.
     Making Democracy Work. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Sader, F. 1995.
     Privatizing Public Enterprises and Foreign Investment in Developing Countries, 1988-93. Washington, DC: World Bank.
Sandbrook, R. 1985.
     The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  1993   *The Politics of Africa's Economic Recovery.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Shaw, T. M. and E. J. Inegbedion 1994.
     The Marginalization of Africa in the New World (Dis)Order. In: *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order,* Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R.D. Underhill (eds.), pp. 390-403. New York: St. Martin's Press.
Sirleaf, E. J. 1996.
     Challenges to Africa's Leadership. Statement to the Conference of African Ministers of Planning and UNDP Resident Representatives in the Africa Region, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, January 30-31.
Stubbs, R. and G. R. D. Underhill (eds.) 1994.
     Political Economy and the Changing Global Order. New York: St. Martin's Press.
Tripp, A. M. 1994.
     The Universe of Civil Society: The Heterogeneity of Associations in Africa. Paper Presented at a USAID Workshop on Civil Society, Democracy and Development in Africa, Washington, DC, June 9-10.
USAID. 1994.
     Executive Summary. USAID Workshop on Civil Society, Democracy and Development in Africa, Washington DC, June 9-10.
Woods, D. 1994.
     The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions to Associational Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa. Paper Presented at a USAID Workshop on Civil Society, Democracy and Development in Africa, Washington, DC, June 9-10.
World Bank 1996.
     Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank.