

Some notes for possible use in the preparation of an Address on
“ The African Union and the New Strategies for Development in Africa”

1 African countries have taken a highly significant step in transforming the OAU to the AU. The transformation is of equal importance to that momentous decision of creating the OAU in Addis Ababa in 1963. Consequently, more than in 1963, the expectation of the African people today is more focused on economic development. This expectation is felt widely by the ordinary African person and therefore the principle of raising the standard of living of the masses and of equity in the distribution of wealth, is at the core of the people’s expectations. And this expectation is felt deeply and strongly

2. NEPAD has been adopted as a programme of the AU’s new and therefore it is seen as encompassing the AU’s development strategies. NEPAD, if it is to be useful at all, cannot be a fossilized document, frozen like a Constitution of a country. It is a living document which is subject to elaboration and adapting to local, regional, continental and global conditions. As such, the developmental process emanating from NEPAD, could easily incorporate the basic principles of the Lagos Plan of Action – at the national or sub-regional levels. These principles are:-

- (a) self-reliance as an organising principle of economic and other forms of development,**
- (b) equality as a fundamental principle and goal of economic development,**
- (c) strong role for the public sector,**
- (d) the continuous interrogation of the present international economic order and the continuous fight by various methods for a NIEO,**
- (e) much stronger efforts towards economic cooperation and integration than in NEPAD.**

3. The new development strategies of the AU, whether we call it NEPAD or another name, will necessarily have three levels:-

- (i) the national level**
- (ii) the sub-regional level**
- (iii) the Global level**

There are certain enabling environment and principles which are essential if the new development strategies are to have any impact in terms of economic development and in terms of fulfilling the aspirations of the African people.

At the national level

The new development strategies need :-

(a) peace and security throughout the country and a stable political system; these can only come about if the fault lines of ethnic/religious and class tensions are resolved in a democratic manner and not at the expense of particular groups – whether majority or minority; furthermore, democratic governance must be at the core of government practice; these are essential principles which create the enabling environment for peace, security and stability;

(b) a developmental state – which guides the “hidden hand of the market” to strategic national priorities, and at the same time ensure equity in the developmental process;

Thus (a) and (b) are essential pre-conditions for implementing a development strategy and policies which are likely to bring about steady and acceptable economic growth.

At the sub-regional level

The essential enabling conditions are (a) to deepen political integration through a steady process of giving up sovereignty of the states to democratically established sub-regional institutions; this process will be achieved more quickly if the people are consulted on the decisions rather than decisions being made and vested in the states only where politicians and bureaucrats alike, feel threatened when it comes to shifting power to sub-regional institutions which they do not control; through deepening political integrations many issues such as borders, mobility, sharing of critical resources become easier to resolve;

(b) sub-regional trade and investment will be intensified if the issue of the scale of national economies are harmonized through compensatory mechanism and through deliberate policies of spreading economic growth in poor and under developed areas;

© harmonization of legal, education, health policies and institutions as well as integrating important critical infrastructures sub-region wide;

These are necessary steps which will bring about deeper political and economic integration and which will enable a faster economic growth throughout the sub-region;

The sub-regional groups – the RECs – need to be restructured by becoming democratic institutions instead of being simply static bureaucratic institutions; as democratic institutions, and as the sub-regional economy grows stronger, the RECs will be in a stronger situation to support the AU in its struggle to develop continental strategies to face the one sided global economy;

At the Global level

There is unanimity that the global economy is one sided and is generally detrimental to the economic interest of African countries. And the process of

globalization which is intensifying is thus deepening this disadvantage or marginal position of Africa in the global economy. Some important aspect of the globalization process - such as technological monopoly by the industrialized countries, intellectual property rights, monopoly of major sectors of the new global economy and the power of the few Western countries in the international institutions (the WB, IMF, WTO etc) – these aspects of the global economy give so much power to the industrialized countries driving the process. And this is the reality which African countries are facing. Hence they have no option but to negotiate through the existing global institution over which they have little power. Hence Africa can only succeed to defend itself from total marginalisation and possibly to make a few gains if they negotiate from a position of strength. And this is where the AU and the RECs can play an important role in ensuring a unified African front in all negotiation and on all issues. The AU, the RECs and individual countries must undertake serious preparation in their dealing with the global institutions as well as in their dealing with the global market and the MNCs. They must build capacity at all these levels not only to have accurate information of what is going on globally, but also to have analytical capacity as well as negotiating capacity.

This issue must be at the core of the new AU development strategies as well as of the RECs and individual countries.

Understanding what is going at the global level – economic, political and technological trends – is essential for Africa. And the ability to negotiate is ultimately based on such knowledge as well as the strength the country's and sub-regional economies.

Most importantly, Africa must have the political will to be both tough and rough (despite its weak position) in its negotiations and also have the will and courage to say NO, clearly, openly and loudly.

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