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Continuing the miracle into South Africa's second decade

FW de Klerk Foundation

Check Against Delivery

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“THE CRISIS IN AFRICA?”

Speech by former president FW de Klerk to the Sixth Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, Rome

Earlier this year, for a brief moment before and after the meeting of the G8 at Gleneagles, the attention of the world was focused on the plight of Africa. Bob Geldof's Live Eight campaign had sensitized the populations of developed countries to the crisis in Africa. At the insistence of Tony Blair the G8 rouse to the occasion and renewed its intention to address the continent's crippling burden of debt and to give consideration again to the iniquitous impact of OECD agricultural subsidies on the economic prospects of the continent.

And then the media caravan moved on. The world's attention shifted back to the war in Iraq; to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina and to the terrible earthquake in northern Pakistan.

But still the emergency in Africa persisted – regardless of whether or not the world was watching. The conflict in Dafur remained unresolved; famine continued to stalk parts of the Sahel region. Tensions flared anew in the simmering border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The looming crisis in the Ivory Coast threatened to erupt once again into violence and in Zimbabwe President Mugabe continued to preside over the systematic destruction of his economy.

The perception is that Africa is lagging further and further behind in the global race. Between 1960 and 2000 the human development index in the developing world as a whole increased from 0,260 to 0,655 on a scale where 1,0 represents the highest levels of development. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa it increased only from 0,2 to 0,486¹. Between 1975 and 2000 GNP per capita income in Sub-Saharan Africa declined by an average of 0,7% per year, compared with an average annual growth of 2,2% for the rest of the developing world during the same period.²

All of this has led to a situation where the rest of the world is increasingly inclined to write off the whole continent - despite their protestations to the contrary.

¹ UNDP. 1994. *Human Development Report 1993*. New York: Oxford UP.

² World Bank Atlas, Vols 1975, 1986 and 1995, Washington DC and the World Development Report 1994, Oxford: World Bank and Oxford UP, 1994

However, if we look at Africa with greater discernment we begin realize how unfair this perception is. To start with, much of sub-Saharan Africa has, during the past fifteen years made heartening strides toward democratic government. Freedom House, a New York-based organization which monitors the state of civil and political rights in countries around the world, now classifies 8 of sub-Saharan Africa's 47 states as being 'free' multi-party democracies; another 22 are regarded as being 'partly free' and 17 as 'not free'. This represents substantial progress since the 1970s.

Nor is it true that Africa presents an unremitting picture of economic decline: 14 sub-Saharan countries registered average growth rates of more than 4% between 1990 and 1998. The region's growth for this year will exceed 4%.

There are, indeed, too many countries that continue to conform to the African stereotype of poverty, conflict and tyranny. However, such states conform to the stereotype not because they are African, but because poverty, tyranny and conflict go hand in hand throughout the world and throughout history and not just in Africa. The nine countries in Africa that have experienced the bitterest conflict during the past decade have one thing in common: they are all poor. The average per capita GNP incomes of these countries is less than US\$ 200.00.

Poverty and the state of political development also go hand in hand: the average per capita GNP income of the sub-Sahara African countries that are classified as 'not free' is US\$ 352; that of the countries that are regarded as being 'partly free' is US\$ 552; and that of the free countries is US\$ 2115.

The problem, accordingly, is poverty - and not Africa.

The challenge for the world should be to help Africans to address the root causes of the vicious cycle of poverty, conflict and tyranny in their continent. The key to such success may, in my opinion, be found in the following simple premises:

- A better life is not possible without rapid and sustained economic growth;
- Economic growth is not possible without peace and stability; and
- Peace and stability are not possible without development toward representative government and proper accommodation of the different ethnic communities that are found in most African countries.

African governments should create the environment in which economic growth can take place. This will require the implementation of the right policies. According to Tony Blair's Commission for Africa, African governments need to improve the integrity of their legal systems and upgrade their physical infrastructure. They must address problems of poor governance and corruption and must stop over-regulating the private sector. They should stimulate trade through greater regional integration and the lowering of tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

African countries must also stop the flight of capital. Although Africa rightly complains about its crippling debt burden, the reality is that US\$ 285 billion left the continent between 1970 and 1996. Each year Africa loses another US\$ 20 billion - which means that for every dollar lent to Africa in recent decades 80 cents has returned to the developed world.

Steps should also be taken to increase Africa's diminishing share in global trade - which has declined from 2% in 1980 to 1% in 1999. Although European nations are quick to give lip service to the need to help develop African economies, they are often ruthless when their own interests are adversely affected. The tariffs that they imposed on agricultural imports from Africa are four to seven times higher than the tariffs they impose on manufactured exports. .

The developed countries continue to subsidise their farmers to the tune of US\$ 280 billion per annum. By so doing they make it difficult for Africans to compete in the one area where they have a competitive advantage. At the same time Africa needs to liberalise its own tariffs which are among the highest in the world. It must expand intra-regional trade which now accounts for only 10% of its total trade compared with intraregional trade in Europe and North America which account for 67% and 40% of their total trade respectively.

Africa needs two things - a fair break from the rest of the world and the determination to address its own problems. The New Partnership for Africa's Development - NEPAD - is doing precisely this. It has spelled out the requirements for sustained development which include fiscal responsibility, good governance and democratic institutions. It is also implementing a voluntary peer review mechanism in terms of which African governments will have to account for their efforts to meet NEPAD's goals. The challenge will be to give real content to NEPAD and to ensure that it does not deteriorate into yet another talk shop with a bloated bureaucracy.

There is a continuing emergency in Africa - but it is an emergency that can be solved only by Africa and the international community working in collaboration.