

A VISION FOR A DEVELOPED AFRICA

Letlapa Mphahlele – 22 Jan 2018, Kwale Kenya

'The future of Africa will be what Africans make it.'

These words of Robert Sobukwe are as relevant today as they were more than half a century ago. Here the making or breaking of Africa is placed squarely on the shoulders of Africans, irrespective of colour, creed or gender. It is an empowering statement because it gives the citizens of Africa a voice in the making of the future of their homeland.

Who is an African?

Faced with this question, an African sage answered:

'I'm not an African because I live in Africa. I'm an African because Africa lives in me.'

We are gathered here today, stirred by hope and dreams and aspirations we cherish for Africa.

In a way, we're here to assert our Africanness. Retracing our foot steps to the land of human origin.

Even before we can explore a vision of a developed Africa, it's important to take a look at the dynamics of Africa's past. Because they have a bearing on the present.

Without doubt the slave trade and colonial conquest negatively impacted on Africa's economic, cultural and social development. We are still trapped in that legacy as we strive and struggle to rebuild the future after centuries of dehumanization. That which took hundreds of years to construct cannot be undone overnight.

In their book. 'The Next Africa', Jake Bright and Aubrey Hruby argue:

'The colonial administrations designed and built only outward oriented infrastructure. In Ghana, railroad expenditures accounted for 31.4 percent of the colonial budget between 1898 and 1931. Extraction was the dominant economic paradigm, and railroads were constructed to carry minerals, rubber, palm oil, coffee, and cocoa to ports rather than to connect a vast continent.

On the flip side, all finished goods were imported, and development rarely extended far beyond the colonial capitals. The continent was simply not 'wired' for intra-African trade.'

With the advent of independence, most African governments stifled private sector as they mistakenly thought the state was the engine of economic growth.

- **Bureaucracy** ballooned beyond fiscal affordability.
- **Instability** set in as politicians and soldiers scrambled to have their hands on the levers of power.
- This **stampede for resources** ushered in a new era of military takeovers.

Africa has suffered more than 200 coups and coup attempts since independence. We have witnessed civil wars flaring up in Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, the list is long. In these wars, millions of people perished and millions were displaced.

Dr. Paul Collier of Oxford University has calculated the cost of the average civil war to be \$64 billion (not including health effects).

- **Brain drain** is taking its toll. Due to the state of political unpredictability and poor economic incentives, the best of Africa's brains are leaving the continent for greener pastures. These would be engineers, surgeons, scientists, IT gurus and highly skilled technicians.

- Africa's woes are compounded by **false invoicing known as 'transfer pricing.'**

Goods that are sold in developing countries are invoiced at a higher price than their worth, with the excess funds transferred to offshore bank accounts in the world's 91 tax havens.

Today corruption starkly stands out as the greatest obstacle standing between Africa and prosperity.

It is in the nature of corruption to benefit the few and impoverish the many. The post-independence ruling elite evidently failed to deliver African people to the land of prosperity and security.

A Developed Africa

In order to realize a developed Africa, we need a developed African.

- An African with upright moral standing and whose integrity is beyond reproach.
- An African who neither gives bribes nor receives them. Nor keeps quiet indifferently while watching bribes changing hands.
- We need a new African who courageously breaks the cocoon of ethnic allegiance.
Because **ethnic politics retards Africa's march to prosperity and to unity in diversity.**

To attain a developed Africa, we need an African with a developed and sharp sense of civic responsibility.

- An African who will hold government to account without giving in to intimidation, blackmail or patronage.
- An African who knows his or her citizen's rights; and who screams when those rights are trampled underfoot by the state or by corporate giants.

Indeed, to achieve a developed Africa, we need an economically active African.

- A productive African who is well equipped with skills to industrialize the continent and release its people from the clutches of joblessness, poverty, hunger and disease.
- We need a creative and innovative African who will modernize while preserving and conserving the earth.

Certainly, we need a developed African to usher in a new dawn of a developed Africa.

For we can't have a developed Africa without a developed African.

A developed African needs to transform his or her attitude:

- From being a consumer of wealth to being a **producer of wealth.**
- From being dependent on state handouts to being a **meaningful taxpayer.**
- From being a blame game player to being a **skillful economic player on the global stage.**
A developed African never wallows in self-pity.
- We need a daring African entrepreneur who is never paralyzed by fear of failure. **Ready to trade with the outside world on fair and just terms** instead of being a pathetic recipient of charity and foreign aid.
- We need more M-Pesa innovators, more African **inventors and investors.**
- We need a developed African who will at first **keep pace with the global technological and electronic race, and later set the pace.**

To sum up, a developed Africa needs the following six pillars to rest on:

- Attitude transformation (change from victim to victor)
- Good governance
- Skilled workforce
- Industrial productivity
- Intra-African trade
- Free movement of people, goods and services across 1885 Berlin Conference-sanctioned borders

Finally, let Kwame Nkrumah have the last word on a vision for a developed Africa.

He says: '**As Africans we should look neither east, nor west, but forward.**'

I thank you.