

## Peace and Development in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

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Washington, D.C., USA—“Peace and Development in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities,” was the focus of UPF’s Office of Peace and Security Affairs’ monthly forum, which it hosted in partnership with the Adade Institute on November 12, 2015 at The Washington Times.

A follow-up to a forum held last year on “The Corruption Factor in the Endless Destabilization and Violence of African Societies,” the event brought together area experts to continue discussing the complex challenges confronting African nations and how to address them. Today, Africa is undergoing a difficult and demanding transformation. Terrorism and extremism continue to destabilize the continent, while drought, poor infrastructure and insecurity continue to limit development. In spite of all these challenges, Africa is a continent rich with human and natural resources. There was broad consensus among the forum speakers that the fundamental problem to addressing these challenges is a “lack of a unifying vision.”

This observation was underscored in the opening remarks given by Dr. Antonio Betancourt, director of UPF’s Office of Peace and Security Affairs, Washington, D.C. “UPF believes in Africa and has a hopeful vision for its future, but it is clear there is a direct relationship between Africa’s development and the deeper problems of corruption and nepotism. Governments will continue to commit large sums of money to address these multi-faceted problems, but money alone will not bring about the peace we all seek, or ensure growth and prosperity. There is a need for a new leadership generation of men and women of vision, character and integrity to lead this great continent.”

Co-moderators of the forum were Dr. Aaron Adade (Ghana), chairman of the board, Naija Worldwide Charities, a U.S.-based nonprofit that provides access to education and healthcare to women and youth in Africa, and Dr. Felicia Buadoo-Adade (Ghana), former director of Women’s Health Programs, Department of Health, government of the District of Columbia.

According to Mr. Franck Jocktane (Gabon), a human rights advocate, and a representative of the Union Nationale Party in Gabon, the African economy loses more than \$150 billion each year to corruption, but “corruption is not just an African problem. It is a worldwide problem.” Although corruption can be found at all levels of society, Mr. Jocktane believes the system itself is corrupt. “In Africa, corruption is sponsored most of the time by the state and the governments.” While there may be corruption in the U.S., there are people who are trying to stop it; however, in Africa, “the ones committing corruption are the ones in power. The common people do not have the power, nor the means to combat the guilty ones. If someone opposes corruption, they are jailed.” While crime impacts communities, “corruption is very serious problem because it robs the African people of a better way of life.” Funds donated by Western nations and charitable organizations, which are earmarked for hospitals, schools and roads, instead “end

up in the pockets of the powerful.” Mr. Jocktane said, “it’s crippling Africa and robbing Africa of its dreams!”

As an example, he spoke about an incident in which a 23-year old street vendor in Gabon was arrested for selling merchandise without a license. The police demanded he pay them a bribe. When the young man refused, they took him to the precinct. The police arrested him and began to burn his merchandise. The young man tried to stop the burning and in the process was doused with kerosene and set afire. He suffered serious burns and later died. The police tried to cover up the incident. “The government is working very hard to try to conceal what really happened because that young man was actually assassinated in the police station. There is an environment in the law enforcement culture to support corruption.”



Dr. Ignatius O. Ukpabi (Nigeria), chairman, board of directors, Sub-Saharan African Grassroots Alliance, said his homeland of Nigeria is known as “the corruption capital of the world.” Dr. Ukpabi traced his nation’s history to when the British Empire began laying claim to the area in the late 19th century, and in 1914, the British formally united the area as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, but administratively, the nation remained divided into the Northern and Southern Protectorates, and in 1960, Nigeria gained independence.

Dr. Ukpabi said, “My view about corruption is that it is embedded in us.” He told a story about his father who was a government employee in charge of road building and had the authority to hire employees. When someone was hired, the employee would give a gift of “appreciation,” in the form of money or food, such as yam paste. When he asked his father if this was “part of the system,” his father said, “no, [the employees] were showing their appreciation for what he had done.” His father had 12 wives and many children and needed whatever funds he could get to support his family. Dr. Ukpabi said this practice continues in modern Nigeria—with hiring and in politics. It doesn’t matter how qualified a prospective employee might be, “if you don’t give a gift of appreciation, then you will not be considered for the job.” In politics, “in order to get nominated and votes, you have to give money.” This system is perpetuated because the next person who is hired or elected must likewise give a gift of appreciation.

Dr. Ukpabi gave an example of someone driving from one city to the next in Nigeria. They will likely be stopped by the police 3 to 5 times. The police will ask the same questions. They know there is nothing wrong and that the driver is not guilty of any crime, but they are expecting a bribe. The police are poorly paid and justify their actions to supplement their incomes so they can feed their families.

He shared another story of a policeman whose position was changed. Instead of having the opportunity to directly deal with the public and demand bribes, he was transferred to an administrative position where he had limited contact. Eventually the policeman resigned because he wasn’t making enough money.

The new leader of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, had previously taken power in a military coup d’état in 1983. When Mr. Buhari was an army officer he brought structure and rules to Nigeria. For example, people were expected to stand in line to board a bus. In contrast, there is no sense of courtesy or politeness in modern Nigeria; instead, it is survival of the fittest.



In 1985, General Buhari was overthrown in another military coup. Now that Mr. Buhari has been elected in a landslide election not as an army officer, Nigerians are hoping he can do what he did when he was one—which is to bring a sense of order and structure; to bring back rules so that people do not take advantage of one another.

Dr. Ukpabi believes there is a difference between the generation that came of age before Nigeria's independence (in 1960) and the younger generation who grew up after independence, not only in Nigeria but also in all the former British colonies in West Africa (the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria).

The educational training pre- and post-independence is different according to Dr. Ukpabi who describes pre-independence education as being more disciplined and structured. "The majority of Nigerians went to mission schools, or what they call voluntary agencies. How they handled things, how they thought was quite different from people who were educated while the military was governing Nigeria. In my opinion, the military made it worse. There was corruption in those days but it was not as widespread as it is now. Today, corruption is rampant at all levels."



Dr. Augustine Blay (Ghana), national executive committee member of the New Patriotic Party, USA branch spoke about the current situation of peace and development in Africa in terms of economics and politics. From an economic perspective, there is lack of law and order, and property rights are not secure. There are barriers and regulations that prevent the smooth functioning of markets. Politically, power is concentrated in the hands of a few. There is also no rule of law or a system of checks and balances.

Botswana, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, is an example of an African nation that has succeeded in spite of many challenges. Upon independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world; it had a total of 12 kilometers of paved roads, and only 22 citizens had graduated from university, and 100 from secondary school. It was also almost completely surrounded by hostile regimes in South Africa, Namibia and Rhodesia, at the time. In the subsequent 45 years, Botswana has become a stable democracy and has achieved one of the fastest growth rates in the world. Today, it has the highest income level in sub-Saharan Africa, on par with countries such as Estonia, Hungary and Costa Rica.

Good leadership is the reason why. Dr. Blay points to the skills and character of Botswana's first and second presidents: Mr. Seretse Khama and Mr. Quett Masire.

He described Africa's timeline history in the following manner:

- Africa 1.0 - pre-colonialization
- Africa 2.0 - colonization
- Africa 3.0 – independence
- Africa 4.0 - confusion (military rule)
- Africa 5.0 – multiparty wind
- Africa 6.0 – economic wind
- Africa 7.0 - sustainability

Economically speaking, the continent has been described as having gone “from hopeless to hopeful in 15 years.” The economy is growing at 5.3% a year and 7 of the fastest growing economies are in Africa.

Dr. Blay said that Africa needs to maintain its growth and development but must carefully avoid making the same mistakes as other industrial leaders, mistakes that have led pollution, deforestation and erosion.

There are enormous opportunities in Africa, including hydropower from the Inga Dams—two hydroelectric dams connected to one of the largest waterfalls in the world, Inga Falls, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as solar energy.

What actions are needed? Dr. Blay suggests: (1) African nations trade internationally as an African bloc instead of as individual countries, (2) reduce dependence on government for employment, (3) boost internal and external competitiveness, and most importantly, (4) a change in the West’s consciousness; interaction must not be based on pity but on economic freedom.



Dr. Adeola Molajo (Nigeria), managing partner, Stem & Leaf Technology, Inc., a Washington-based statistical consulting company, gave several anecdotes. (1) In 1966, while on a Pan Am (Pan American) Airways flight departing from Monrovia, Liberia, the pilot told him to look out the window and asked, “Young man, what do you see?” He replied that there was only darkness. The pilot said, “That’s why it is called the ‘Dark Continent.’” (2) In 1953, his mother gave a gift of fruits and cigarettes to an official of the Department of Public Works. Unless she gave this small gift, she told her son, the department would not wash and maintain the gutters. (3) In the days before Nigeria’s independence, people bought firewood on the honor system. Money would be left alongside the pile of wood. Since independence, “Every law in the book has been violated, 24/7. Why? Because we have never established the tradition of the rule of law.”

Dr. Molajo has lived in every capital in Africa thanks to his work with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), so he speaks from experience. In the case of Nigeria, since the 1966 coup d’état, “when the military took over there has been one dictator after another, each of them stealing the country blind, to the point where one American dollar is now worth 235 Nairas (Nigerian currency).”

Although Nigeria must take responsibility for its own situation, at the same time, he believes the U.S. has added to the problem because it “refuses to allow Africa to grow up.”

Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected president of Congo, was one of the first leaders in Africa to really understand what it takes for the continent to move forward and stand side-by-side with other nations. However, the CIA, under Allen Dulles, had Lumumba assassinated. There is evidence that indicates that when U.S. President John F. Kennedy found out about the assassination, he fired the CIA director. Unfortunately, Kennedy died young and wasn’t able to support the leaders and change needed in Africa. By removing Lumumba from public office, it robbed the young people of a role model. Dr. Molajo also claimed the CIA informed the apartheid government of South Africa of Nelson Mandela’s whereabouts so he could be arrested.



Africa remains underdeveloped. It lacks even the basic tools to protect itself. “Africa is really naked, naked in every sense, like an animal in the wild.” Whenever a promising leader emerges, he becomes a target, whether from within the nation or from foreign powers. “The violence that you see in Africa is not violence of our own making; it is violence that the West has transferred to us.”

Speaking about Islamic militant extremism, Dr. Molajo said there is no longer peace in Mali. The militants are trying to claim areas of land, but the local governments are helpless and therefore have no choice but to allow French forces to deal with the extremists.

He also spoke about corruption in hospitals. If someone needs a medical service, they must bring a gift before they can be treated. “Many people walk away without treatment.”

He relayed a sad story of a young couple arrested about two years ago after they carried their dead infant child and wanted to throw it into the river because they could not afford to bury their child!

There are many barriers to growth in Africa. Systemic corruption is like a cancer that permeates all aspects of society.



Dr. Gnaka Lagoke (Cote d’Ivoire), professor of African History, Montgomery College in Maryland, focused his remarks on a new vision for the development of Africa. Although poverty, poor leadership and corruption exists, Dr. Lagoke, who has conducted extensive research on development in Africa, believes the fundamental problem is a lack of a unifying vision. “Africa is poor because of the loss or lack of a vision.”

Africa has produced many great African leaders: Patrice Lumumba, Nelson Mandela and Thomas Sankara (former President of Burkina Faso), and also African Americans, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. All of them irrespective of their origins or life philosophy agreed on the importance and the necessity of Pan-Africanism. “Pan-Africanism is a vision of unity for Africa and for the people of African descent.” Dr. Lagoke believes that Pan-Africanism is “the framework upon which we can come and try to bring some solution to the problems of Africa.” Its origins can be traced back to Henry S. Williams, who, in 1897, formed an “African Association.” Other regions of the world have dealt with the question of regional unity, for example, Germany, Italy, the Balkans, Latin America under Simón Bolívar, as well as the American Revolution, which similarly promoted the concept of unity in the formulation of a country, the United States of America.

In this age of globalization, Africa cannot deal economically with the European Union, U.S., Russia, or China while it is divided. Dr. Lagoke asked the question, “What is the vision in this 21st century that can advance Pan-African peace and address the evils of our society, in leadership, corruption, or the racketeering of the police forces?” The answer is “the concept of Ubuntu which puts emphasis on unity, solidarity, compassion, on sharing a love of service, on citizenry.” Capitalism cannot be the framework to

bring solutions to the world's problems. He believes the solution is tied to Ubuntu, which represents a value system. Dr. Lagoke said Thomas Sankara was "the embodiment of Ubuntu."

Dr. Antonio Betancourt, who was born in Colombia, said that Latin America has its own unique journey, but that "we can relate to a lot of the problems in Africa." The problems of Africa are the result of "many bad decisions by the colonial powers. For example, a serious mistake was the arbitrary division of the land and the creation of artificial states and nations. What is most fundamental to a nation is its sense of identity. No matter how brutal a colonial power may act, what keeps a nation alive is its sense of identity as a people and nation." He cited the example of Korea, which, in the 1950s, was one of the poorest countries in the world, even poorer than any African country; yet, today, South Korea is the 12th largest economy in the world. The unshakeable treasure they have is a "national will and the spiritual teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Shamanism." Many countries in Southeast Asia tap into their legacy of Christianity and Shamanism. Africa also has many traditional religions besides Christianity, Islam and Judaism, which are still practiced by more than 100 million people. These traditions have a rich value system that can be tapped into to build a vision, one that is based on character, integrity and patriotic love for the nation.

In America, the visionary documents that have guided this nation since 1776 are The Bill of Rights, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, which are based on the Gospels and the legacy of Jesus. The Founding Fathers of America were able to translate those aspirations into a larger secular vision, which encompasses the aspirations of all people. "Countries don't have to emulate America, but rather capture the universal message that is within those documents."



Jean-Marie Bukuru (Burundi), a research fellow of the Center for Economic and Social Justice (CESJ), and formerly with the Ministry of Water Environment, Land Management and Urban Affairs in Burundi. Mr. Bukuru was educated at Cornell University in New York. His main point is "there is no peace when there is no justice. Where the people teach law, they don't teach justice. Are there any universities nowadays which teach about justice today? They talk about laws and rules, but not justice."

Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu (a South African retired Anglican bishop and social rights activist) popularized the concept of Ubuntu outside of South Africa. Mr. Bukuru said economic justice must be promoted for the benefit of this generation and future ones. The CESJ focuses on social and economic justice, and has come up with an innovative approach called the "Just Third Way," that is based on the idea that "there is no political democracy without economic democracy."

The Just Third Way stands on four pillars: (1) limited economic power of the state, (2) the full rights of private property (3) free, open and anti-monopolistic markets for determining just wages, just prices and just profits, and (4) universal access and equal opportunity to acquire capital ownership.

Mr. Bukuru said, "We need to stand up as African leaders because today our continent is facing a lack of leaders who don't have a vision for Africa. We have opportunities but we don't have vision. Burundi is rich in nickel. The Chinese are coming. The Russians are coming. They are supporting the current



president. The UN is just talking but there is no action. There is a solution: All the leaders in African must come together with a new vision and stand up for Africa.”



Dr. Norman Kurland, president of the CESJ, said, “The problem is not about greed, evil people or bad people. The corporate system wasn't made by God. It was made by people and if there were mistakes or errors in the design, then people can change it.” Dr. Kurland shared about his background as a military officer, his involvement in the civil rights movement and the marches for civil rights in Mississippi, and how impressed he was when he first heard about the ideas of Louis Kelso. A political economist, Kelso invented the idea of the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) to enable working people without savings to buy stock in their employer company and pay for it out of its future dividend yield. It was Kelso who taught that political democracy does not work without economic democracy.

Dr. Kurland said, “What I hear is that we're still depending on money for growth and development and this is not true. Money is a social tool. There has to be something useful. Money should always be backed by some assets, but the money system of today's world is not backed by assets. They are backed by government debt. Money is like government. It is a social tool; it is not people.” Kelso co-authored *The Capitalist Manifesto* (1958), a best-selling book with Mortimer Adler, an American philosopher.

Dr. Kurland said there are 10,000 companies with over 5 million workers in America who have incorporated the ideas behind the Just Third Way, including United Airlines, United Parcel Service, Kelly-Moore Paints, and Armstrong Garden Centers. He is optimistic that the Just Third Way can be successfully applied to Africa. “Africa can be the leader. What I've heard today is that you are looking for a new vision. I agree with that. It has to be a vision where every human being is important. Every family is important. Then you have a society of shareholders who have a vested interest to build a just and peaceful nation and a world.”

### **Conclusion:**

The experts who gathered to discuss “Peace and Development in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities,” were in agreement that a paradigm of leadership and a vision for good governance are crucial for the future growth and development of Africa. Governments cannot solve all the problems, nor even provide all the services its citizens need. Non-governmental organizations, such as UPF, the Pan-African Organization, the Adade Institute, as well as faith-based organizations, representatives of civil society, communities, and the private sector have a role to play; they must work together for the greater good to build a better and peaceful nation, region, continent, and world.