

THE PROSPECTS OF AFRICA

**Being a paper presented by Michael Anyiam-Osigwe on the occasion of an
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Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

The Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation Delegation is happy to be here today in Warsaw to be part of this very significant and laudable occasion. We take this opportunity to express our profound appreciation to The Amicus Europae Foundation for inviting us to be part of this worthy event. We believe that given the turn of events in the world today, when nations are entering into alignments and making realignments in their relationships and focus, it is of critical importance for Europe and Africa to exchange visions and ideas for viable partnership in the emerging new world order.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, significant events occurred that posed new challenges on bilateral relations among the comity of nations. During this period, traditional economic and power structures shifted with such intensity that some old empires faded away and new nations were born. Amidst all of these currents a new Europe emerged, and as expected, a new Africa was born. So much has been said about the new Europe. So much has also been said about what Europe can offer Africa today. However, it would appear that not much has been said about what Africa has to offer. As the world is changing rapidly and bold strides are made to renew the traditional relationship between Europe and Africa, it is important to examine the prospects of Africa within the

framework of the challenges and prospects for cooperation with the European Union. This is the subject of my discussion today?

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

In discussing this topic, I shall begin by making a preliminary observation. I am of the opinion that since the end of the last century a new Africa has been born. This new Africa pulsates with immense potentialities and offers limitless possibilities. My observation is that the essence of the new Africa is still largely uncomprehended and its real potentials have remained unnoticed, unadvertised and untapped. I have also observed that although bold and well meaning initiatives have been taken to integrate Africa into the new world order, these initiatives have been hindered by wrong perceptions. My thesis therefore is that in order to understand and appreciate the prospects of Africa, new perceptions are needed. A new and holistic understanding is required to ensure that Africa is integrated into the new world order as a viable entity.

A HISTORICAL EXPLANATION

The relationship between Europe and Africa has spanned for well over 700 years. That period covered the era of the European adventurers, the era of slavery, the era of colonialism, the era of African nationalism and independence, the era of the cold war and the current era of globalization. We need not catalogue the trauma and pains associated with these periods, but it is sufficient to state that this long history was largely a mixed-bag of bitterness, misery and very little to cheer, the end result of which was suspicion and misunderstanding.

THE EUROPEAN UNION & AFRICA

Relations between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states are a particularly important aspect of the EU development cooperation policy and, more widely, of its external action.

From 1975 until 2000 these relations were governed by the regularly adapted and updated **Lomé Convention**. However, major upheavals on the international stage, socio-economic

and political changes in the ACP countries, the spreading of poverty, resulting in instability and potential conflict, all highlighted the need for a re-thinking of cooperation.

The February 2000 expiration of the Lomé Convention provided an ideal opportunity for a thorough review of the future of ACP-EU relations. Against a background of an intensive public debate, based on a Commission Green paper (1996)* and a discussion paper**, negotiations started in September 1998 and were successfully concluded in early February 2000. The new ACP-EC agreement was signed on 23rd of June 2000 in Cotonou, Benin Republic and was concluded for a twenty-year period from March 2000 to February 2020.

The Cotonou Agreement is a global and exemplary Agreement, introducing radical changes and ambitious objectives while preserving the 'acquis' of 25 years of ACP-EU cooperation. It is based on five interdependent pillars with the underlying objective of the fight against poverty: an enhanced political dimension, increased participation, a more strategic approach to cooperation focusing on poverty reduction, new economic and trade partnerships and improved financial cooperation.

The Cotonou Agreement provides for a revision clause which foresees that the Agreement is adapted every five years. In accordance with this clause, negotiations to revise the Agreement were launched in May 2004 and concluded on 23rd February 2005. The overriding objective of the revision process was to enhance the effectiveness and quality of the ACP-EU partnership.

In December 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the EU adopted a new Strategy for Africa, with the title "The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership".

The purpose of this new Strategy is to give the EU a comprehensive, integrated and long-term framework for its relations with the African continent. It is designed to guide interaction between the whole of Europe and Africa at all levels, including pan-African institutions such as the African Union, NEPAD, regional organisations and African countries.

The overarching goals of the Strategy are to **support Africa's efforts to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** and make Europe's partnership with Africa more efficient.

In my opinion, the theoretical framework on which this strategy rests is impeccable. The key principles of this strategy are partnership, ownership and dialogue. It rests on the fundamental assumption that partnership between Europe and Africa is possible. It also rejects the imposition of development ideas on an entire continent and seeks a more participatory approach towards achieving the millennium development goals.

The three pillars on which this strategy rests are identified as follows:

- (1) Peace, security and good governance on the African continent, as pre-requisites for development.
- (2) Economic growth, trade, regional integration, private sector development and global interconnectivity, including roads and other means of transport as well as energy infrastructure, water infrastructure and Information and Communication Technology.
- (3) Investment in areas directly connected to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, such as the health and education sectors, hygiene and employment conditions and environmental protection.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

We cannot fail to recognize the significant strides made by the European Union towards achieving a meaningful and viable partnership with the African continent. There are however important practical questions that need to be raised at gatherings such as this seminar since dialogues of this nature as are aimed at contributing towards the achievement tangible results. These questions point to the need for a critical assessment of the impact of the various Africa focused initiatives and efforts of the EU on the lives of Africa's disadvantaged teeming masses;

- 1) Have living standards of ordinary African men and women been significantly changed for the better by the European Union's programmes?

- 2) Do ordinary Africans see themselves as stakeholders in the activities of their governments, including collaborative initiatives between their governments and bodies such as the European Union?
- 3) Do ordinary Africans feel that they own their governments since in principle governments derive their mandate and powers from the people?
- 4) Is there sufficient and credible information about Africa in Europe?
- 5) Are there effective programs of cross cultural interaction between European youth and African youth?
- 6) Are there earnest and rigorous efforts aimed at contextualizing these new development and partnership strategies as it bears on the specific prevailing conditions within the host communities of such programmes?
- 7) What are the yard sticks for measuring the growth of democracy and human rights on the African Continent?
- 8) Are EU's programmes in aid of democracy in Africa directed at the appropriate target groups?

The essence of these questions is to emphasize the fact that Africa's greatest assets are not its raw materials but its peoples. Hence the imperative of capacitating the ordinary African through education, training and other effective measures including participation and active role playing in EU's Development initiatives and programmes on the Continent. EU's efforts should include organizing interaction and exchanges between ordinary African citizens and their European counterparts. Moreover, most Europeans may want to know what Africa has to offer besides the persistent stereotyping of Africa as a chronically precarious object of welfare.

It is the awareness of an emergent viable Africa by the ordinary man and woman in Europe that can lend credence to the efforts of European and African governments to chart a new path for a progressive and crises free Africa.

THE PROSPECTS OF AN EMERGENT VIABLE AFRICA

Africa can genuinely be described as an unfolding myriad of viable but challenging prospects. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that harnessing Africa's prospects requires genuine and enduring commitment to sustain the quest and the requisite attitudinal change

on the part of Africa's development partners. Africa requires us to think out of the box in order to evolve country specific and workable templates for achieving the set goals and objectives. On the other hand Africans themselves must show real commitment to return to their age-long traditional values and principles, which modern thinkers have now rehashed and identified as the essential difference in behaviour between people in rich developed countries and their counterparts in poor underdeveloped countries. These recipes for success in both public and private lives include;

Ethics, as a basic principle in dealing with others; Integrity; High sense of responsibility; respect for laws and rules; respect for the rights of other citizens; the love of honest work; strive for saving and investment; resilience and will to overcome the seemingly impossible and punctuality

I shall now briefly point to some key sectors that offer interesting prospects in Africa.

Education:

To develop the needed manpower for the future, Africa must build and equip the requisite institutions of learning. In this regard it should be noted that due to the availability of land and the low cost of labour, it takes far less to build a university complex in Africa than anywhere in Europe.

Among the African citizenry there is hunger and thirst for knowledge. The Information age has brought new possibilities to Africa. A whole generation of Africans would like to receive training in key aspects of information and communication technology including data processing and software engineering in institutions within Africa. European educationists can partner with Africans to establish such institutions. Africa's ITC skilled workforce can be employed in back-office processing operations (BPO) services for major European corporations.

Also noteworthy is the fact that within Africa, a class of highly skilled professionals is growing. Technocrats, and world class experts, who can compete with the best that the world has to offer, are emerging in many countries within the continent.

Business & Investment:

There is also a growing entrepreneurial class in Africa. These are people who over the years have done business honestly and successfully both nationally and internationally. With changing perceptions, European business corporations are forming lucrative partnerships with African entrepreneurs. Governments, on their part, are endeavouring to adopt policies that encourage investment, create the enabling environment and provide the necessary infrastructure for business to thrive. Other factors that contribute to an investment friendly climate include the comparatively low cost of land and labour in Africa as well as vibrant stock-markets that offer very high return on investments. There are indeed great prospects for investments in Africa.

Mineral, Agricultural & Natural Resources:

Africa is endowed with vast array of rich resources that can be effectively harnessed for development. With particular reference to oil and gas in a leading African country like Nigeria, we presently have over a dozen multinational exploration and production companies from all over the globe, including the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Far East operating in the country's oil and gas industry. The tremendous growth witnessed in exploration and production has equally impacted positively on the oil services and marine logistic support sectors. Leading industry services giants such as Schlumberger, Baker Hughes Inteq., M-I drilling fluids, Vetco gray, etc. have also emerged rendering various services. Capacities have been enhanced and today it could be said that about forty percent of these services are handled by Nigerian workforce.

The National oil company, Nigerian National Oil Company (NNOC) later transformed to what we know today as Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) with over nine subsidiaries, some of which include: DPR, NAPIMS, ETCO, IDSL, PPMC, LNG, NPDC, PHPRC, etc. representing investment arm, regulatory body, engineering, data acquisition, petroleum products pricing agency, exploration & production, refinery, etc. respectively. At the moment, Nigeria's production average is in excess of 2.5 million barrels of oil a day.

A greater part of these oil activities are concentrated in the Niger delta areas located in the South-South region of the country, although there are strong indications for increased activities in the Benue Trough, Anambra and Chad Basins by the multinationals in the last two years.

Nigeria's Oil & Gas industry has witnessed tremendous expansion in recent years. These advances in the industry have brought into reckoning such new areas as:

- (a) Gas Exploration and Production
- (b) Gas to Liquid Technology
- (c) Bio-Organic Fuel
- (d) Liquefied Natural Gas,
- (e) Independent Power Plants, etc.

In recent times, the activities of restive militants in the Niger Delta region have assumed significant proportions with the attendant implications for national security. However, government is focussed on effectively addressing important security concern. Moreover, it is expected that with the incoming new administration on May 29, 2007 the activities of militants would be greatly diminished.

Politics:

Perceptions persist about the inability of Africans to effectively govern themselves. As a result of the prevalence of such notions, some European countries do not expect strict compliance with democratic norms and values by African governments. To some African governments therefore, it may just be enough to conduct elections. Once a government conducts elections, irrespective of the quality of the exercise, they expect to be welcomed with open arms by the international community. These perceptions do not take into consideration the flawed nature of these elections and the efforts that are being made within Africa by human rights activists and pro-democracy groups to redress the situation. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for military strongmen, sit-tight rulers or fraudulent political leaders to continue to prevail. With increasing level education and political awareness there are great prospects for democracy and political stability in Africa. **(POINT TO THE NIGERIAN EXAMPLE and emphasize the fact that political/voter education should be targeted at the electorate. The MDA example: the 10 Point Citizen Action Guide)**

OBSTACLES TO NEW STRIDES

In addition to the crises of leadership, democracy and good governance, another major obstacle to a new perception of Africa is the persistence of myths about Africa.

Perceptions are yet to change. In spite of the great strides taken, Africa is still considered the “Dark and uncertain Continent” by the uninformed and the ill-informed.

1) Negative coverage of Africa by western media.

Europeans are fed daily with images of war, poverty, hunger, disease and coups. Western media ignore the bold development initiatives undertaken by real Africans in their various communities. These negative perceptions do not recognize that most of Africa is not at war. Many outside Africa perhaps cannot imagine that most African families share the concerns of family life and work hard to sustain their families.

2) Presumptions of a monolithic Africa: There is a tendency to think that Africa is a single country with same language and culture.

3) Presumptions of an uneducated, ignorant Africa. Human History will attest the fact that from the on-set of civilization Africans have always been knowledgeable and educated.

THE WAY FORWARD

For the present efforts to yield qualitative results, old stereotypes must give way. The idea that Africa is a chronically dependent and ignorant problem child in need of assistance, special handling and guidance must give way to a new vision of Africa as a viable partner in an interdependent world order; a vision that encourages a fusion of horizons. By fusion of horizons, I am referring to a process of interaction by which ideas from the various cultures merge in their various colorations and dynamism to provide answers to common problems.

A new Euro-African vision is therefore recommended as the way forward. The premise of this vision is that Europe will seek ways to dialogue with Africa through greater interaction among their citizens and institutions at all levels. This vision will be a truly global vision and the benefits for all will be immense.

According to Louis Michel, a Commissioner for Development at the EU, the EU is already the world’s largest donor in Africa and is the continent’s most important economic and trade partner. The development policy of the EU is based on the principles of sustainable, equitable development, which also involves a social and human aspect. The defence and promotion of democracy, of human rights, of the principles of good governance are central themes. With respect to emergency aid, EU’s approach is based on

fulfilment of basic needs. Close attention is paid to forgotten crises, to the children and access to water.

Indeed Africans and their development partners are increasingly coming to the dawning realisation that it is possible to enthrone and institutionalise democratic values. It is possible to stem the tide of corruption and ultimately eradicate it from both the public and private sectors and by that process ensure good governance and accountability in our public and private institutions. It is possible to eradicate poverty in a generation. It is possible to improve substantially the level of access to basic social services. It is possible to stop the spread of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases that threaten to cripple the continent. It is possible to reverse deforestation and desertification. It is possible to revolutionise our agriculture and ensure that the continent grows more than enough food to feed itself as well as for export.

Will Africa realise her vision to deliver on these and other seemingly ambitious expectations? The answer is that, given the right attitude on the part of Africans and their development partners, Africa will deliver on the promises of its potentials.

The EU needs a viable Africa. The world needs a viable Africa. A viable Africa is indeed essential to a viable world order. Africa must be integrated into the new world order as a viable entity.

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* COM(96)570 final of 20 November 1996 "Green Paper on relations between the European union and the ACP countries on the eve of the 21st century - challenges and options for a new partnership".

** COM(97)537 final of 29 October 1997 "Guidelines for the negotiation of new cooperation agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries".

