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A Well-Endowed Continent and its Challenges

Muhammed Haron (Editor-in-Chief)

Despite our vast continent being rich in resources ranging from a variety of valuable metals in its enormous belly, luscious grasslands, impenetrable forests, spread-out deserts, long coastal areas, and countless different types of marine biome and sea animals, Africa continues to respond inadequately to challenges on diverse fronts. On these fronts, there are positive dimensions that are outweighed by the negatives.

Several questions may be posed in trying to find answers to why the continent has had to deal with these challenges even though it possesses rich resources that are (also and for obvious reasons) under the watchful eyes of many influential western nations. It seems, these resources should be able to rescue the continent from its frustrating and exasperating socio-economic circumstances yet, so far, this has not been the case. Additionally, though African governments enjoy multiple benefits from these assets, they fail to employ their funds effectively for their citizens.

Reflecting on the past, the continent's developments have overwhelmingly been disastrous instead of encouraging and healthy. When we ponder, for example, over the performance of the continent's economic power houses such as South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, and Kenya, we become deeply concerned about the future. By 2030, Africa aims to show tangible change, yet we face many challenges that will likely negatively impact this progression.

Diverse Challenges: From Climate Change to Poor Performing Economies

Over the past decades, Africa has faced excessive deforestation of over 4 million hectares each year in swatches of the continent. It has had to respond to the needs of drought-stricken countries like Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya where over 13 million were affected by rapid climate change and other key factors; and it has had to firmly confront the escalation of poverty in different African countries.

Alongside these damaging developments, African countries have poorly observed their economies contract and shrink rapidly, forcing them to dig into their financial reserves. As a result of weak and poor-performing economies and appalling overall circumstances, many African countries have been forced to seek financial aid elsewhere.

As the many governments in Africa have done in the past, they turned to the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for relief. Without competent political leaders and governments, many countries have fallen further into debt—especially those which rely heavily on international financial institutions. While we do not put all the fault on these governments for their conditions, they should take some responsibility.

Instead, guilt should be shared between these African countries and the filthy-rich conglomerates that have only their interest at heart and invest solely for materialistic reasons and not for the nation states. Often, these companies invest in Africa purely for resource gain—as seen with the WB and IMF's past. These global institutions have constructed a disabling environment for these nation-states, deliberately constructing a scenario using structural adjustment and other scheming policies to halt many African countries from forging ahead.

Instead of choosing sincere partners dedicated to improving Africa's future, the deals between foreign investment and African countries are often to the detriment of the countries' citizens and push the countries deeper in debt. For example, foreign investment often comes with stipulations like growing genetically modified organic (GMO) crops that harm local communities. They have found themselves in a bind from which they cannot untie and dislodge themselves; so, these situations have caused them to not only retrogress but become economically impotent.

We too should add that these international institutions cannot endlessly bail out poor-performing countries, but there should be alternative methods of aiding them. Although, the setting for these African countries continues to be uncertain, efforts should be made by the African Union (AU) and sister bodies such as COMESA to strategize a new plan to change conditions nationally, regionally, and continentally for the better.

But amidst arguing that the AU should be proactive in supporting its members, we – in this global village - encountered another crisis across the world: an unexpected pandemic that forced all nation-states to shift gear. This disease outbreak has caused most countries to shift how they would deal with internal and external affairs while simultaneously devastating many economies and their populations' psyche.

Coronavirus Pandemic: An Invisible Health Threat

During the past three years, the world has combated the coronavirus disease popularly known as Covid-19. Socially, medically, and economically, this epidemic has wreaked havoc in all African countries. In some cases, the nation-states' reserves have had to be used for this unexpected global contagion. While the whole world was unprepared for Covid-19, many African countries were badly hit and are still suffering the consequences from the pandemic.

Unlike other pandemics that were confined and restricted to certain areas, Covid-19 engulfed every nation on the planet. Its reach and spread across continents within a short time-period demonstrated that it afflicted many communities and the challenge to combat it was huge from a health perspective and, of course, a financial angle.

Africa: Taking the Turn, Leaving a Legacy

As the African continent nears the end of 2022, no countries can say with certainty that they have overcome Covid-19. African countries should not adopt a lax approach towards an epidemic that is still around; nay, they should be on the alert and not assume that everything is back to 'normal.'

Now that the pandemic has subsided, our governments continentally should remain wary of Covid-19's to resurface and create further unsettlement. They should remain vigilant by keeping health protocols minimalistically in place to prevent further hardships and adversity. It is also necessary for the AU and the continent's regional organizations to work together and be prepared to tackle any future disease. As a collective, African countries should prepare to combat health and other challenges meaningfully in the future.

If African governments continue to function individually, the continent is bound to suffer despite all its resources. It is destined to remain in the socio-economic doldrums if it doesn't demonstrate the spirit of *ubuntu*, they need to cooperate by helping one another. In doing so, African countries should be able to construct better pathways for their respective nations; and via these, they should undertake cooperative collaborative efforts. Employing *ubuntu* as a guiding principle would offer a healthy future for the current and future generations of Africans.

To protect the future generations, current African governments should therefore avoid being blamed for having short-changed the future generations at all costs and should steer clear of mismanaging the rich resources that are stored in our continent's belly. As we inch towards 2030, our governments should realize solid, healthy foundations must be laid so future generations thank their ancestors for the edifice that was set up and the legacy that was left behind. Let us remain optimistic about the future of our continent and permit us to work as a collective so that we can make the turn together and leave a wholesome legacy for those to come.

Research Africa

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