Findings reports on ongoing operational, economic and sector work carried out by the World Bank and its member governments in the Africa Region. It is published periodically by the Africa Technical Department on behalf of the Region.

Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) Meets in Cotonou, Benin June 9-11, 1993

The three-day meeting of the GCA was the occasion for discussion, debate and recommendations on such crucial topics as democratic governance, economic reforms, regional co-operation and integration, the population problem, HIV/AIDS and the environment. African Heads of State, Vice-Presidents, Ministers and representatives of all the GCA partners had the opportunity to exchange opinions and provide fresh impetus to strategies for political and economic reform.

Democratic governance

While there is a general feeling among African policymakers that implementing political and economic reform simultaneously will be a difficult task, there is near-unanimity that both these processes brook no delay. National and regional economic progress are seen as being intrinsically tied to democratic governance and conflict prevention/management - intra-and inter-state conflict can only retard the chances of substantive development. The sub-committee on governance and democracy came to the following conclusions on the above theme.

- The highest priority must be accorded to strengthening African capacity to prevent and manage conflict at both national and regional levels.
- Non-governmental actors and "wise persons" are valuable resources in this respect, particularly in preventing conflict.
- As most conflicts in Africa tend to be within rather than among states, political liberalization and the encouragement of democratic participation in the political process are vital to avoiding conflicts within states.
- Ensuring that defence and security spending were under civilian control and rendering military expenditures transparent and accountable are crucial both to the reduction of such expenditure as well as to the process of reallocation of public expenditure to the social and productive sectors.
- Given that several African countries were trying to demobilize their militaries, adequate funding for reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society is important - several such
programs are currently delayed due to the non-availability of funds.

- Improved governance can be measured, though more indicators need to be developed and measurements will inevitably be at least somewhat subjective. Accountability, transparency, rule of law, openness, participation and access to information are useful, if complex indicators, in this respect. However, it is important that traditional cultural values and structures be integrated into the process of developing better governance.

- Wide participation in policy-making can advance and lead to more substantive political and economic reform, and increase the ownership of these processes.

**Economic reform**

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have initiated reforms focusing on financial stabilization and structural adjustment. Performance has been mixed. In some countries these reforms have been fragmented and not sustained - and therefore ineffective. In several countries performance has been better, though still disappointing by standards achieved in some countries of Asia and Latin America. Over the period 1988-1991, only four countries - Ghana, The Gambia, Burundi and Malawi - experienced high-intensity sustained reform. These four were joined by five others in 1991 and 1992 - Mali, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania and Uganda (see table). Together, these nine countries account for 19 percent of SSA's population and 11 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

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**High-Intensity Reformers**

- Benin
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Mauritania
- Senegal
- Togo
- Central African Republic

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**Medium-Intensity Reformers**

**Low-Intensity Reformers**

A second set of sixteen countries did incorporate elements of the proposed reforms, but progress was fitful, with occasional regression. This set represents 30 percent of SSA's population and 25 percent of its GDP. The third set of countries is characterized by low-intensity reform - Zaire and Somalia are two examples of the sixteen countries in this set, which accounts for 3 percent of SSA's population and 3 percent of its GDP. The sub-committee on economic reform, while reviewing the state-of-play,
made the following comments.

- Rapidly-growing countries had increased their dependence on foreign aid, had not improved their domestic savings situation and had accumulated substantial arrears on debt service payments.
- Poverty had increased not only in conflict-ridden countries, accounting for a third of SSA's population, but also in many other countries engaged in economic and political reform.
- African countries would have to place more emphasis on increasing their domestic savings, improving public sector efficiency and making their economies more competitive in international markets.
- Existing human resources would have to be used more efficiently and effectively if economic reform and political liberalization were to be simultaneously attempted.
- While the co-ordination of adjustment assistance had improved considerably through the Special Program for Assistance (SPA) for Low-Income Debt Distressed African countries, there was need to simplify donors' aid administration procedures. Disbursement of projected aid had been delayed both for this reason and due to lags in the implementation of the reform program.
- Donors needed to consider clarifying conditionality, maintaining continuity of staff and increasing the flexibility of aid.
- Concessionality of debt relief under the Paris Club needed to be increased and imaginative ways devised to deal with the multilateral debt burden of African countries.

Regional co-operation and integration

There were contrasting views on this theme, with one school of thought expressing the opinion that the Abuja Treaty should be adhered to, which calls for coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of existing sub-regional groups as an intermediate step towards a continental community. The other school of thought was more inclined towards the concept of "variable geometry", which emphasized the idea of flexible approaches, with countries sharing common goals and interests moving faster and further along with integration, with the rest catching up later. The highlights of this particular sub-committee's submissions were as follows.

- Integration can be hastened through increased private sector activity and the creation of an enabling environment.
- The establishment and working of trading blocs elsewhere in the world should give impetus to African integration.
- Investment in infrastructure, particularly roads and transport, is crucial to effective integration.
- African countries should strive towards ensuring the free movement of goods, services and persons.
- Structural adjustment and the integration process have to be carefully coordinated as there are bound to be spill-overs from adjustment processes in individual countries.

Population issues

The African Population Advisory Committee serves as the GCA sub-committee on population issues. The Committee had prepared a report on the status of the population programs on Africa, a paper on the impact of HIV/AIDS on population growth and a paper on the reliability of population data and projections.
• Presently, seventeen African countries are implementing population programs. The question is not whether the fertility transition and decline will continue, but the pace at which it will move. If the fertility rate were to decline more rapidly than is currently projected (5.9 for the year 2000), there could be approximately thirty million fewer people in SSA at the end of the century.

• Important country breakthroughs that could point the way to achieving quicker fertility declines are exemplified by Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Comparison of surveys in these three countries indicate a fall in birth rates by at least 15-25 percent; these figures clearly surpass the conventional 10 percent reduction that is regarded as the trigger for an irreversible transition from high to low fertility rates.

• Key factors that have reduced fertility rates at the household level include collapsing rural economies; the increasing costs of raising children; the increasing number of female-headed households; and the increasing number of educated females.

However, in order to reach optimal levels of population, the conclusions were that:

• Population programs should be intensified and monitorable targets established.
• The Contraceptive Prevalence Rate had to increase to 78 percent by the year 2020.

This will require expanded family planning programs.

• Improvements in the process of data collection are vital, especially given the trend towards increased decentralization of political/economic decision-making in Africa.
• Strong political commitment, sufficient budgetary allocations, good quality health services and community participation are crucial to effective population programs.

Impact of HIV/AIDS on population growth

The conclusions in this regard were:

• While AIDS is likely to cause negative population growth in some sub-national regions in Africa and in a small number of major cities, it is unlikely to result in negative population growth in any entire country. Population growth projections adjusted for the impact of AIDS are still relatively high in most of Africa.
• Effective AIDS control programs need to be implemented, because the social and economic impact of AIDS is extremely negative.
• Effective family planning programs are needed both as a means to combat AIDS and to check excessively high total fertility rates.
• Further research needs to be done on the potential of indigenous African herbs in combating AIDS.
• The impact of AIDS-related mortality should be recognized and addressed by planners and policy-makers.

Environment

Reviewing the progress made since the Rio Summit in June 1992, the main conclusions/recommendations were as follows.
• Alternative energy sources to firewood need to be developed.
• Africa needs to build capacity to prepare and implement viable environmental projects and programs.
• Each African country should prepare its own national environmental program - these should not be donor driven.

In conclusion

The GCA representatives decided that the year ahead would focus on the long-term themes of:

• Developing indicators for measuring good governance.
• Effective management of the twin processes of political and economic reform.
• Mobilization of resources with emphasis on domestic resources.

In the short-term, the GCA will try to organize a World Conference on Women and a Social Summit. The general consensus at the end of the deliberations was that the GCA has perforce now to move from consensus-building to pragmatic action. The choice facing African policymakers is clear: to continue with the minimum possible internal initiatives and excessive dependence on aid or to mobilize domestic savings and investment to facilitate participatory economic reform, developed and owned by the African people.

Related documents available on request from: Tesfaye Dinka AFTGC, The World Bank, Rm. S-12-051 Phone: 202 458 4043, 701 18 Street, NW. Washington, D.C. 20433, USA