

Perspectives on Africa's Development

Selected Speeches by

K.Y. Amoako
Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Africa

May 2000

United Nations Publication
Sales No. E.00.II.K.3
ISBN 92-1-125078-1

***This book was edited and produced by the
Africa Recovery Section, Department of Public Information
Room S-931***

***United Nations, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 963-6857 Fax: (212) 963-4556
e-mail: africa_recovery@un.org Web: www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec***

***Editors: Peter Mwaura, Julie Thompson, Nii K. Bentsi-Enchill, Ernest Harsch, Jacqueline Irving, Lavanya Ghose.
Cover design: Allan Markman. Book design & production: Parvati McPheeters.***

Photographs by UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR and UN / John Isaac, Evan Schneider & Eskinder Debebe.

***Material from this book may be freely reprinted or reproduced with attribution to the
Economic Commission for Africa***

***United Nations
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telephone: (251-1) 51 72 00 Fax: (251-1) 51 03 65
e-mail: ecainfo@un.org Web: www.un.org/depts/eca***

DPI/2102 — 3M — May 2000

Table of contents

Foreword

By Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations iii

Introduction v

Part One — Meeting the Development Challenges of Africa

Introduction 3

Building Africa's Science and Technology Capacities 5

Challenges for Managers of Africa's Development 11

Accelerating Financial Sector Reforms and Debt Management 17

Promoting Trade and Investment 23

Industrialization for Enhanced Global Competitiveness. 28

Meeting Africa's Development Challenges 34

A Review of the Economic and Social Situation in Africa 40

The Economic Causes and Consequences of Civil Wars 45

Towards a Fairer WTO Framework for International Trade. 53

Part Two — Achieving Gender Equality in Africa

Introduction 61

Investing in Women for Sustainable Development 63

Reforming our Laws to Empower Women 72

Building a New Gender Partnership. 76

Empowering Women to Promote a Culture of Peace 82

Beijing + 5: Towards a Golden Era. 87

Part Three — The Challenge of the Information Age

Introduction 95

A Vision of the African Information Society 97

Towards an Inclusive Information Society. 103

Bringing the Information Age to Africa 108

Building Partnerships for the Information Age. 111

Harnessing Information Technology for Development. 115

Pursuing Policies for an Information Age 122

Seizing the Moment: Africa and the Knowledge Economy 126

Part Four — Governance for a Progressing Africa	
<i>Introduction</i>	135
Building Peace for the Future.	137
Improving Governance and Citizen Participation	143
Addressing Major Governance Challenges	149
Strengthening Governance Practices	155
Part Five — The Imperatives of Regional Cooperation and Integration	
<i>Introduction</i>	163
Pursuing Regional Cooperation for Development	165
Integrating Africa’s Economies	171
Promoting Trade Liberalization	175
Charting Progress Towards Integration	180
Positioning SADC in the Global Marketplace	186
Regionalism and Peace	193
Strengthening Mining and Energy	198
Improving Transport and Communications	204
Integrating into the World Economy.	211
Accelerating the Pace of Integration.	216
Developing Air Transport in Africa	224
Part Six — Partnerships, the United Nations, and Africa	
<i>Introduction</i>	231
Tackling Africa’s Challenges.	233
A Coalition for Good.	239
Towards a New Era	248
Building for the Long Term	256
Enhancing Partnership for the Twenty-First Century.	263
African Universities, the Private Sector, and Civil Society	268
List of Acronyms	275

foreword

By United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan

Speaking at a meeting of African finance ministers in 1997, K.Y. Amoako declared himself “an optimist for Africa”. That is a sentiment I endorse. But optimism should not be mistaken for romanticism; rather, it is tempered by realism even as we strive continuously for improvements in the human condition.

The speeches collected in this volume reflect the hope that Africans can justifiably feel, as painful economic and political reforms begin to pay off in higher rates of economic growth, improved living standards and more open and transparent government. Yet these texts also give voice to a tremendous backlog of deprivation: two out of five Africans live below the poverty line; half of Africa’s school-age children are not in school; debt hangs like an albatross around the necks of many countries trying to rehabilitate themselves; and one fifth of Africans are caught in the cross-fire of devastating wars.

There is much the international community can do to help Africans extricate themselves from this predicament, including meaningful debt relief, unfettered market access and more and better official development assistance. But in the end Africa’s destiny is in Africa’s hands. It is Africans who must end their wars, define for themselves what good governance means and position themselves to take advantage of the immense opportunities offered by globalization and information technology.

As the voice of the United Nations in Africa, rather than on Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa is Africa’s strong partner in facing these challenges. ECA today is home to a range of initiatives touching on key aspects of development — from governance to the advancement of women and the involvement of civil society. More broadly, ECA is working hard to forge a deeper global awareness of Africa’s development needs.

Finally the speeches in this publication illustrate the breadth and vibrancy of African thought and renewal at the dawn of a new millennium. For all who hope that Africa will soon gain a durable path to realizing its potential — and especially for those who want to join Africa in that vital quest — I heartily recommend them.



Kofi A. Annan

introduction

Since becoming Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in July 1995, K.Y. Amoako has spoken often on Africa's development challenges. This book contains 42 of his speeches organized in six clusters. The speeches were delivered in the four-year period from February 1996 to February 2000 to disparate audiences in venues around the world. Within the clusters, the speeches appear in chronological order. The first cluster deals with the dimensions of development and with the structural underpinnings of economic growth. The remaining five clusters focus on critical issues that cut across and are intertwined with all aspects of development, and that determine the success or failure of the efforts of nation-states to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their citizens.

Recent progress and successes are described with clarity and candour by Mr. Amoako, as are shortcomings and failures. While there has been progress and there have been successes recently, much remains to be done if Africa is to achieve the development goals it has set for itself. "What" and "how" are set out clearly by Mr. Amoako. His tone is at times upbeat and at others enormously worried, reflecting the great diversity of situations and development efforts on the continent. Africa's diversity weakens the significance of thinking and planning in terms of averages. Of the 53 countries in Africa, a few are doing well while many are falling further behind.

To think of Africa as uniformly having poor policy environments and few investment opportunities is simply wrong. There are areas of success. Yet complacency is also wrong. Even the countries with the best performance must enhance efforts to sustain growth and reduce poverty further. Countries with poor economic performance must improve their economic management dramatically if they are to break out of the poverty trap in the foreseeable future. This will certainly be difficult, but Mr. Amoako asserts that it can be done, and he sets out the key measures to be taken.

Mr. Amoako's vision of Africa's development issues and challenges emerges clearly from his speeches. Poverty eradication is the core objective, and sustainable economic growth is a necessary precondition. Gender equality is not only an issue of fairness and moral right, but also essential to mobilize the human skills needed for rapid economic growth. A key concern is worsening food and water security driven by the negative interaction of population growth, declining environmental conditions and increasing use of marginal land for agriculture.

He observes that those who ask whether Africa should participate in the information revolution pose a false question. Africa must join the information revolution. The only issues for debate are “when” and “how.” Significantly, he notes that the information revolution is not about computers and modems, but about people and how they live. He makes a strong case for science and technology as the key to accelerating development in Africa.

National governance, Mr. Amoako observes, requires that a capable nation-state have democratic institutions, an informed and involved civil society, and the capacity to maintain peace and civil order. Conflict exacts a terrible price on the people of warring countries, especially the poor and women and children, and is obviously incompatible with rapid, equitable, sustained growth. Post-conflict reconstruction poses significant challenges requiring new, innovative, holistic approaches. The process of creating capable States is more art than science, and Africa’s history, culture and traditions must be key features of any successful formula. Examples of success in other parts of the world are useful but cannot be transplanted in Africa without adaptation to the continent’s special conditions.

Africa’s development requires the assistance of its partners, but it needs to be African-led. This emphasizes the importance of African-based research programmes and centres of expertise. Mr. Amoako underlines the need and the justification for resource flows from the developed world, both increased aid funds and investment. This responsibility falls on the shoulders of Africa’s bilateral and multilateral partners. Concomitantly, it is Africa’s responsibility to utilize the aid in demonstrably effective ways.

Regional cooperation is essential for more rapid economic growth in Africa, and for Africa to integrate into the increasingly competitive global economy. This is not only an African problem. The benefits of larger, more efficient markets — notably, increased trade and investment, and improved competitiveness — are spurring regional cooperation in other parts of the globe. Nor has the need for regional cooperation only recently been recognized. It has been much discussed and is the basis of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, which sets a timetable for cooperation in Africa. The Abuja time frame is long — as much as 40 years — yet, alarmingly, the first step of the Abuja process, which is to strengthen the existing subregional economic groupings, is very much behind schedule. Mr. Amoako calls urgently for renewed, vigorous effort.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic threatens all social development gains made since independence and casts a pall over future development prospects. No sound development plan in Africa can ignore its implications. Advocating for the building

and strengthening of coalitions against HIV/AIDS, Mr. Amoako places particular emphasis on leadership at the highest levels, stressing that combating the pandemic represents perhaps the greatest challenge facing Africa's leaders.

The development challenges facing Africa demand a coordinated effort by all involved — the governments of the continent; regional and subregional agencies; the UN system and other multilateral organizations; the private, commercial and non-profit sectors; the academic community and research groups, both African and off-shore; national aid organizations of the wealthier countries; and local non-governmental organizations. A recurring theme in Mr. Amoako's presentations is the vital importance of coordinated partnership arrangements to take advantage of the differing comparative advantages of the groups supporting African economic development and to avoid wasteful and demoralizing duplication. As part of the UN system-wide improvement effort, ECA has reformed itself to build on its partnerships and access expertise available globally, to focus the work of the Commission by framing the key issues, convening relevant authorities and filling analytical gaps. The internal structure has been changed to mirror the challenges addressed in its work programme, and staff skills are being augmented to position the Commission to provide key expertise to its member States.

Mr. Amoako's message is that it is the sum of these factors that determines the pace of development. Structural underpinnings are essential but not enough. Women must be substantively involved. Governments must involve civil society and be accountable to their people. Political stability and legal predictability are needed. Corruption must be minimized. Armed conflict is incompatible with poverty alleviation. War has a triple penalty — it diverts resources from growth and income to arms, destroys physical infrastructure, and stunts future human capital by denying or delaying education and health care. All development partners need to be meaningfully involved and to cooperate actively. These are not separate strands but part of a development grid. They are intermeshed and interdependent and are vital for achieving sustainable economic growth and poverty eradication in Africa — the overriding objective of Africa's development efforts.