



As Part of the scheduled activities of Trans Africa Students' Initiative (A Pan African & Global Initiative). This is her first article for 2017; a monthly drive targeted towards taking challenges of our continent into cognizance, proffering solutions and tasking youth/students on positive contributions in a lieu to building a better Africa.

The article is themed

“NEW YEAR, NEW AFRICA”

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ABSTRACT

Africa over the years has been regarded as first, an under-developed continent. Later, another word 'developing' was coined to make allowance for the developmental progress made over time. However, Africa has remained stagnant in this second phase for many decades now.

This paper tends to create a new vision, a new perspective and another angle under the tag 'New year, New Africa' to help the continent take the necessary steps towards a 'developed' continent economically, geographically, politically, technologically and socio-culturally.

It also elucidates some of the challenges confronting the continent's development and proffers solutions and way forward to achieve the pinnacle dream of going from being tagged as the 'dark continent' to become the 'light of the globe.'



INTRODUCTION: *New Year, New Africa*

NEW YEAR

The new year is a symbol of new start and new beginning in the calendar. It is an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and have a fresh start irrespective of previous challenges encountered years before. In addition, it offers a great chance for goals to either be set, reshuffled or upgraded in the various circles of life. Time to let go of the past and to live in the present. A new year proposes an avenue for thinking and reflection upon what can be achieved and making preparations to achieve them. Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best: "What lies before us and what lies ahead of us are nothing compared to what lies within us."

NEW AFRICA

The phrase "New Africa" suggests that much more reforms needs to be done to take us to where we want to be. As futuristic optimists, we all look forward to seeing Africa move from a "dark continent" to become the "light of the globe". An Africa that is united by strength in diversity. A new Africa united by a common goal of greatness and success just like that of the father of Pan-Africanism, speaking of Kwame Nkrumah. And most importantly, a new Africa devoid of all forms of external aggressions and neocolonialism politically, economically and culturally. For Africa which is arguably the continent with the most untapped reservoir of talents/resources/natural endowments in the world, a new year (new beginning) is the time for these pool of unexplored potentials to be fully harnessed and put into use. Time for us to stop to talk about the past and start talking about the future. To do this, it is thus imperative that the following points highlighted below are put into cognizant in taking us to the promise land, perchance Utopia!

NEW BEGINNING: *A Resolute Blueprint*

Every dream begins with imagination and is actualized through action. The same can said of our dream of a new Africa. To see this manifest into reality, a well detailed plan, or strategy needs to be in place to as serve as a guide for what is intended to be achieved. A crystal clear and well-articulated blueprint of the aims and objectives of targeted goals must be unambiguously specified and the time lag they are expected to be achieved. Planning is a key variable that cannot be left out in forging new beginning. Just like the adage that says "Whosoever fails to plan has planned to fail", to achieve the New Africa as envisaged, relentless efforts must be put in place to draft a superb developmental blueprint brilliantly crafted to lay a solid foundation for other initiatives to be built upon.

NEW EDUCATION: *Conquering Illiteracy*

It was Nelson Mandela that said: "Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world". The importance of education as the bedrock to any meaningful development cannot be over emphasized. We visualize a new Africa where illiteracy will be eradicated from the continent. The fore runners of Pan-Africanism like Zik of Africa, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta amongst others could not have won the war against colonialism and imperialism but for their sound education that brought clarity and wisdom to them on how to fight for their independence in their various countries. This new year, our anticipation is to ensure that education is readily accessible and affordable if not free to the rural areas that are still left behind. This of course will have to be backed up with suitable and qualified human resources that will disseminate the knowledge to the recipients. Because a child miseducated is a child lost. Vocational skills and acquisition should be given a fair priority just like the theoretical knowledge. This will bring about creation of self-employed entrepreneurs that can stand on their feet with their acquired skills and reduce unemployment in the longrun.

A new Africa powered by education of the girl child that is just recently gaining awareness. What better way to educate a whole nation than to educate a girl child?

But thankfully enough, in this present generation, we have seen the youths take the bold steps in organizing and forming Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with wonderful aims and objectives that have in many ways impacted positively in their societies. Young writers from Africa are gradually springing up with exquisite and intelligent works that have gained international recognition. These are just to mention a few of the wonderful fruits of education we are witnessing. We have come a long way from where we were before but much more can still be done for a new Africa that we would be proud of.

NEW DEVELOPMENT: *A Pragmatic Approach*

A lot of policies and debates have been made as to what the ideal development plan would be suitable to African's development. Theories have been propounded and models have been adopted to achieve this goal.

However, despite all these developmental researches aforementioned, Africa is still yet to attain the dream feat.

We nevertheless, look forward to a new year when Africa will move from a developing stage to the developed level. Clearly Africa is in the developing stage coupled with the massive rate at which new methods and new dimensions explored have changed the fortunes of some countries and many more to come.

This new development will have to take a pragmatic approach if it is eventually going to be attainable. More action and less paper work will have to be the way to go about it. After all, action speaks louder than voice. The new developmental plan which encompasses areas like the geographic, economic, political, technological and socio-cultural areas are further buttressed and illuminated below:

Economic Areas

The economic areas in this context lays emphasis on pragmatic development as opposed to facts and figures using indices like Gross Domestic Product (GDP), money supply, external reserves, per capita income and so on. This is not to say they are not relevant but sometimes these figures which are in many cases not reliable in terms of accuracy could give wrong and misleading interpretation of the GDP itself and also the per capita income of the populace. Emphasis should be laid on practical development plans like massive industrialization to bring about creation of jobs to bring down unemployment rate and importantly process raw materials which are usually exported and eventually importing their finished product. This will create the multiplier effect increasing the national income and foreign exchange of the countries through direct exportation of locally produced goods of standardized quality that can compete with other ones in the international market. In the long run, local currencies will be strengthened and further gain value due to these pragmatic approaches.

We look forward to seeing a new Africa with increased economic integrations among regional members and also at the macro level between the various regional bodies to stimulate mutual cooperation. This can be done by recapitalizing and funding a continental apex bank that will serve as a lender of last resort to member countries in terms of economic recession or depression as the case may be, instead of approaching the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank that could subject a country to some unpalatable terms and conditions in addition to the gross interest rate attached to the loans.

Geographical Areas

It is our dream to see a new Africa where the Eco systems in our environment are protected from deforestational activities like felling of trees without replacement, bush burning, emission of harmful chemical substances in the atmosphere, water pollutions in rivers and seas and other inadvertent man made activities that gradually affects our Eco system. The ozone layer has been depleted with these poisonous emissions to the atmosphere. This has resulted in direct sun rays passing through the ozone layer that has been punctured and allowing for some poisonous contents of the sun's splendour into our

sublunary region.

Our hope is seeing a new Africa with policies to promote afforestation and planting of gardens to keep the environment green and alive. As well as frowning at industrial wastes mostly be foreign companies which are poorly managed and disposed off. We see a new Africa going green again!

Technological Areas

Technology is gradually taking over everything. Its increase is almost by a geometric progression day by day. It has made time for work less and made it easier and faster. However, its has also rendered or is still rendering many people unemployed which seems to be a major issue in African countries. Also, it was John F. Kennedy (JFK) that once said "I believe if men have the power to create machines that put men out of their jobs, then they also have the power to create something that will put those men back to work."

Going by this saying above, Africa cannot afford to be left behind technologically. A new Africa would be a pipe dream if science and technology is not part of the plan. As time changes, so also we must change with time in a positive direction.

A new Africa that will move from using crude and rudimentary farm implements like hoes and cutlasses to heavy plants and machineries like tractors, sowers, planters and harvesters. This will help the continent achieve the goal of self sufficiency through massive production. This technology also boils down to the manufacturing sectors to create the balance between the two sectors. Jelani Aliyu, an Nigerian in the diaspora was the brain behind the manufacturing of the Chevrolet Volt electric automobile car. He is just one out of many Africans that have embraced technology into their practical fields of disciplines. This shows that with proper planning and full partnership with them, it is only a matter of time before we reach the pinnacle just like the Asian tigers.

Socio-cultural Areas

The continent is still trying to catch up with meeting some basic social amenities. The making of a new Africa would be incomplete if social goods like good road networks, provision of portable water (especially in the rural areas) and stable power supply are not incorporated into the plan. Optimism and work will enable that happen through collective and individual responsibilities. Once these amenities are in place, investors shall bring themselves without calling for them to come.

In the cultural areas like the habit of "African time" must be relegated to the background. A wise man once said, "I have never seen a successful man that is not conscious of time." For the new African dream to be achieved, time remains a key variable that must be managed. We need to change any other cultural factors that serve as a drawback towards our progressive movement.

Political Areas

It is good to see the continent of Africa breaking free from long and 'everlasting' reigns and regimes of government which are mostly dictatorial in nature. Dating back from the time of Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, to the recent Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia. This is a sign of political development in the right direction. It goes a long way that African countries can solve their political problems with the involvement of external forces. Also, successful elections have been conducted with little or no post election violence, and much more reforms are gradually in place. We saw how Nigeria introduced the card reader system of accreditation and to counter multiple voting. These are part of the new Africa we hope to see improve further.

NEW LEGISLATIONS: *Protecting Africa's Interest*

We look forward to see new laws enacted by African organizations like the African Union (AU) or other Pan-African institutions that will further secure and protect the interest of African countries at international level when it comes to economic, political, geographical, social and humanitarian areas so as not to be excluded from some benefits that comes along in the various areas mentioned. Legislations like protecting Africa from being a dumping ground to overused products from other countries. Protection from huge and unfair interest on foreign loans, protection from racial and ethnic discrimination in the diaspora, protection from any form of external aggression that threatens the sovereignty of nations among others. When the countries of the continent are covered by these legislations, then their independence will be solidified.

NEW APPRAISAL: *Self Evaluation*

After all is said and done, to measure the progress of our 'New African movement' there will be a need for a new appraisal and value judgment to evaluate the performance so far. Not the ones given to us by IMF or the United Nations Organization (UNO). We need to do a local appraisal and check our goals and objectives and how far we have gone and what needs to be done to make them attainable. Also, local and well-articulated indices and be

used to measure performances within the time frame stipulated for the various programs. This is quite similar to a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to have a better overview of how the going has been so far.



CONCLUSION

To finally draw the curtains to this beautiful vision of a 'New year, New Africa', it is noteworthy that it will take a lot of discipline and sacrifices coupled with relentless hard work for the best result to be achieved. Member countries will have to demonstrate a total commitment to this new initiative that is going to rebrand Africa from 'a dark continent' to 'the light of the globe'. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to ensure maximum cooperation irrespective of the the challenges to be encountered en route to the promise land.

I leave you with a word on marble from yet again Nelson Mandela who said "It always seems impossible until it is done." Long live Pan-Africanism and long live Africa. Thank you!



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BIO: Abdulrahman M. Abu-yaman is generally a Nigerian writer, a poet with works featured in national and international anthologies like the Kalahari Review (Botswana) and Tuck Magazine (Canada), a short story writer and an Essayist. His essay on Nigerian Recession was longlisted in the Center for International and Advanced Professional Studies (CIAPS) Essay Competition. He holds a major in Economics from IBB University, Lapai, Nigeria.

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