



Commission on Effective Development Cooperation with Africa

Chairman's conclusions from the first meeting of the Africa Commission

Copenhagen 16 April 2008

Introduction

1. The Africa Commission constituted itself at the first meeting in Copenhagen on 16 April 2008.
2. The Commission identified and discussed a number of areas where more action is required. Three main challenges were identified: The first is to give the youth in Africa better opportunities for education and employment. The second challenge is to ensure that Africa is able to adapt to climate change and exploit opportunities created by mitigation. The third challenge is to empower women economically to foster gender equality and welfare. Increased and sustained growth that benefits all is a necessary condition to meet these challenges. But it is not a sufficient condition. Specific policy actions, tailored to country and sub-region specific conditions, are required that address each of the challenges.
3. The Commission seeks to strengthen enterprise-led efforts at development as well as donor-led practices.
4. The work of the Commission is within the overall context of the UN Millennium Development Goals and the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership agreed in Lisbon in December 2007 and should contribute to implementing these objectives and partnerships.

Objectives

5. The aim is for the recommendations of the Africa Commission to be detailed yet clear, concrete and implementable. They should make a difference to the people affected by the challenges identified.
6. The Commission agreed on its primary objectives, which are:
 - To be a Commission *with* Africa that seeks *international partnerships to support African solutions to African problems*.
 - To enhance the focus of the international community on job opportunities for young Africans.
 - To assist in creating ways to improve the impact of international development assistance.
 - To renew thinking on how long-term programmable international development assistance can strengthen African economic performance.
 - To leave a permanent mark on the way in which international development assistance programmes are structured in order to achieve the greatest possible employment effect.

Scope of work

7. The Commissioners decided to meet two more times before submitting their recommendations. A second meeting will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 20/21 November 2008. The third and final meeting will take place in Copenhagen in April/May 2009.
8. The Commission agreed to organize a series of thematic conferences in Africa between the first and the second meeting of the Commission. The Commission emphasized that conferences will include broad participation of relevant stakeholders from regional organizations, youth organizations, government, civil society, private sector, academia and international resource persons.
9. Where possible, Commissioners will co-chair conferences. The Secretariat of the Africa Commission will assist in organizing events. The Commission agreed that conference papers will be commissioned for each conference based on the thematic focus.
10. The Commission agreed to use its website (www.africacommission.um.dk) actively as a forum for debate and discussions on the issues at hand. It tasked the Secretariat of the Africa Commission with facilitating public involvement and to ensure that inputs will form part of the further process.

Outcome

11. The Commission agreed that the outcome of its work should be a report that will scrutinize the key issues and make recommendations for more effective development cooperation with Africa.
12. The recommendations should carefully delineate what Africa can do, and what the international community's role can be while recognizing that African solutions must take into account specific conditions and differences between regions, countries and sectors. No one-size-policy can fit all and therefore must be avoided.

Thematic Work

13. The Commission decided that the analytical work would as a starting point, inter alia address the following issues with respect to the overall themes:

Youth, Employment and Education

14. The Commission highlighted that Africa has a young population that is still increasing fast. In Africa there are two persons for each person in the labour force, a high dependency ratio. Youth unemployment is already very high, estimated at 20 per cent, three times that of adults. Huge progress has been made in primary school enrolment and completion, but there is still 70 to 80 per cent of an age group who do not have access to further education. A third of the university educated Africans work outside Africa. Youth represents a huge potential for growth. Girls and women have less access to education and good jobs. However, idle youth with little prospect for a better future are at risk, potentially causing instability.
15. The Commission underlined that identifying innovative means of getting more young Africans, women and men, into value-creating employment is crucial. The Commission will focus attention, inter alia, on the need to assist in developing a sustainable model for employment-generating, skills-creating strategies involving the private sector.
16. The Commission emphasized that there is a need for more assistance to secondary education, agricultural, technical and vocational education and training and higher education for both women and men, at the same time as expansion of education for all at primary level is supported. The challenge is how to do this in a sustainable manner and in line with strategies for economic growth. Growth will help finance higher investments in education and the costs of maintenance. Growth will also increase demand for labour, including youth.

Climate Change

17. The Commission underlined that Africans are likely to be hardest hit by climate change, although they contribute least to the problem. Africa has very few resources to invest in adaptation and in sustainable sources of energy and other technologies. Limited access to energy remains an obstacle for development for many African countries.
18. Africa therefore has a special need for increased and additional support to adapt to climate change. Africa also has a special need to take advantage of the direct and indirect opportunities that arises from mitigation efforts that would significantly increase access to sustainable energy sources, including access to energy technology, for example through the Clean Development Mechanism. The challenge is to raise additional funds, and gear them to effectively address adaptation and mitigation needs. High and sustained economic growth is necessary for Africa to take advantage of the many challenges of climate change.
19. The Commission found that the role of private-public partnerships should be further explored.

Women's Economic Empowerment

20. The Commission underscored that women are likely to invest more in the welfare of families and communities than men. Yet, women have less access to good jobs, receive lower pay and work in poorer conditions than men. Increasing women's employment and income is good economics and good for poverty reduction. Gender equality is part of most policies and strategies, but concrete actions that would increase gender equality are not receiving sufficient attention. Better opportunities and capabilities for women must reach the top of the agenda, including in agriculture where African women have proven the backbone of that sector.
21. The Commission found that increasing and sustaining economic growth is important, but would not be sufficient to ensure gender equality. Special initiatives would be necessary to enhance women's entitlements and capabilities, in areas such as access to land, access to finance, access to education, participation in development of policies, and strategies. The Commission also found that including concrete actions and benchmarks on gender equality into national policies and national budgets would enhance accountability and transparency.

Economic Growth

22. The Commission welcomed the increased and relatively high economic growth in Africa reaching more than 6 per cent in 2007, above world average. Focus should be on how to increase growth further and sustain it in a way that creates employment, reduces poverty

and fosters sustainable development. Growth is necessary to reach the Millennium Development Goals and more ambitious targets after 2015. Annual growth rates of 7 per cent and more are achievable and will be crucial.

23. The Commission agreed that high and sustained economic growth is necessary to create significant employment for all, including youth and women and to make progress on the Millennium Development Goals. African countries need to improve their competitiveness. Productivity is low and lack of infrastructure remains a constraint.
24. The Commission underlined the right of each country to develop its own strategies, but also to take into account the need for regional integration to create bigger and more effective markets.
25. The Commission discussed the importance of involving stakeholders such as the business community in the economy; labor market organizations etc. in the formulation and implementation of private sector strategies. This will improve accountability, predictability of the business environment and transparency. South-South cooperation could play an important role in these areas.
26. The Commission underlined that agriculture plays a critical role for growth, employment and poverty reduction in many countries. Improving productivity in food production is an urgent need to ensure adequate food availability and adaptation to climate change. Focusing on women's access to resources is important in this regard.
27. The Commission agreed that there is a need to increase aid for productive sectors in a more effective way. This could include investing in infrastructure, agriculture, promoting good governance, reducing bureaucracy, ensuring access to finance, combating corruption, and expanding education, including technical and vocational education and training. There is a need to look into modalities for effective development cooperation for private sector development.
28. The Commission stressed the importance of free trade, and the need to urgently secure an agreement at the WTO negotiations which would be beneficial to Africa and provide African countries with better access to markets.
29. The Commission discussed the key role that free trade plays for fostering economic growth, employment, peace and prosperity. The Commission found that more efforts should be put into supporting pro-development liberalization of trade at global and regional levels. This could include enhancing trade between African countries by e.g. phasing out duties on imports from countries outside Africa more slowly than duties between African countries; considering more liberal and development-friendly rules of

origin; and the possibility of assistance to reduce the trade taxes' share of the total state revenues by developing other financing methods for the state budget.

Next Steps

30. Based on the thematic areas identified above, the Commission tasked the Secretariat of the Africa Commission to ensure that analyses would be carried out involving African and international resources. Within each area the analyses should:
 - a. Identify the needs;
 - b. Survey existing good practices;
 - c. Identify adequate, relevant, feasible and effective policy actions that would meet the needs;
 - d. Provide initial recommendations to be discussed and further refined at the thematic conferences.

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