# Africa and Globalization: An Overview

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## Abstract

*The development of science and technology has increasingly brought the whole world together than any other time in the past. The consequences of technological advances and innovations are no longer confined to the already developed world but also reached out, influenced and negatively or positively affected all the developing countries of the world in general and those of Africa in particular. Most African countries which gained only political independence from colonialism in the 1960s and after have continued to be economically dependent on the developed world. To this day, Africa has remained the supplier of primary products to the developed countries and the net importer of manufactured goods from outside providing lucrative markets for the industrialized nations. Therefore, the rapid growth of information technology and modern transportation systems which has made production, distribution, trade and investment more integrated and interlinked has gripped Africa by surprise. This integration and interdependence of different nations with widely varied social, economic, political and cultural developments brought about a phenomenon known as Globalization which has caught Africa more or less unprepared. The term became quite fashionable in the 1990s in the wake of fast international economic growth following the collapse of the Cold War. Different writers define the concept differently but most scholars agree that globalization is the accelerated growth of economic activity across national, regional and international boundaries expressed by the increased movement of tangible and intangible goods and services, including ownership rights, through trade and investment and often through migration of people. It is often facilitated by lifting government impediments to that movement and/or by technological process. Globalization represents a stage in international economic interactions with an intensive increase in networking through telecommunications and large-scale use of computers, the dominance of big international corporations that deploy investments, production and other activities relatively freely to all corners of the globe. It is apparently clear from the definition of globalization that generally developing countries in the world including Ethiopia could not stop the influence of deepening globalization because it even involves the erosion of the autonomy of the sovereign state (Patman, 2006: 9). It is therefore quite impossible for any country anywhere to lock up its doors to globalization. With a brief introduction and concluding remarks, this paper attempts to highlight the essence and the consequences of globalization as well as analyze the position of African countries in relation to some important strategies they could employ to cope with the phenomenon*

**Keywords:** globalization, global dynamics, information technology, economic growth, International trade

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## Introduction

Africa is an ancient and the second largest continent in the world. According to the recent archaeological research and discoveries in the rift valley floor from Eritrea down to southern Africa, ample evidences indicate that it has been the cradle of humanity. Historical studies also reveal that the continent was the place where one of the earliest civilizations known as the Nile Valley Civilization and/or Egyptian Civilization had originated and influenced the rest of the world. In fact European Civilization is the derivation of African achievement (Cheikh Anta Diop, 1974: XIV-XV). It was also a region where Agricultural Revolution made a breakthrough with the domestication of plant and animal species which took place particularly in the Nile Valley and the Ethiopian highlands (Ehret, 2002).

Like all human history, African history is the product of its environment. The geography, geology, topography, disease, climate, soil, flora and fauna of Africa have all created a unique environment that confronted women and men with specific opportunities and challenges. Africa poses a myriad of distinctive cultures which makes it unique among the continents (Collins and Burns, 2010).

African environment did not encourage the development of densely populated, literate and urban society, but it "…shaped African societies to value human relationships, in all their complexity, over material wealth and more participatory governance over autocracy." African history has been shaped by its unique environment and made by its people (Collins and Burns, 2010). When one considers Africa's relations to the rest of the world, technologies, ideas, commodities and peoples all crossed the deserts of North Africa and the sea routes of the Atlantic and the Indian oceans in both directions (Collins and Burns, 2010). Particularly, concerning its relation with Europe although the Portuguese had settled in some coastal areas of the continent in the fifteenth century, 1500-1800 were years of equilibrium between Europe and Africa. Nevertheless, in the years between 1878 and 1898, in a matter of twenty years, the European states (Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain) partitioned and virtually conquered the entire continent with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia. Consequently, the two political economies became one and the horizontal relationship between Europe and Africa was dramatically changed into a vertical relationship. The Europeans became dominant colonial powers both politically and economically while Africans were subjugated and marginalized. Africa became the supplier of primary products at cheap price rates and provided markets for European manufactured goods at very high prices. This exploitative trend has continued to the present into the "era of globalization."

## The Essence of Globalization

With the development of science and technology, the whole world has increasingly come together. The rapid development of information technology and modern transportation systems has made production, distribution, trade and investment more integrated and interlinked. This integration and interdependence of the different nations with different social, economic and cultural developments brought about a phenomenon known as globalization. The term became quite fashionable in the 1990s in the wake of rapid international economic growth following the collapse of the Cold War.

Globalization is a hotly contested concept and different scholars have defined it in different ways. Kaplinsky sees it as "... the pervasive decline in barriers to the global flow of information, ideas, factors (capital and labour), technology and goods" (Kaplinsky, 2001). Muggah defines globalization as "... a process of increasing economic, political and social interdependence and global integration where capital, traded goods, persons, concepts, images, ideas and values diffuse across state boundaries...." (Muggah, 2001). As Freund (2007) recently wrote:

> Globalization can work as a term if we posit that it represents a stage in international economic interactions. It has gone together with an intensive increase in networking through telecommunications and the large-scale use of computers, with the dominance of big multinational corporations that deploy investments, production and other activities relatively freely to desirable corners of the globe. Linked to globalization and given the end of the cold war, there has come an allied emphasis on international governance intended to ease the flow of goods and currencies amongst other forms of regulation.

Globalization is, therefore, the accelerated growth of economic activity across national and regional boundaries expressed by the increased movement of tangible and intangible goods and services, including ownership rights, through trade and investment, and often through migration of people trapping cheaper foreign labour markets. It may be, and often is, facilitated by lifting of government impediments to financial flows and information and to other movements and/or by technological process. The initiatives of individual economic actors, firms, banks, and people drive it usually in pursuit of profit often through competition (Oman, 1994).

It is important to note, however, that the concept of globalization is not new. In the past every religion and humanists always insisted on globalism or advocated that the entire world is one and regarded all human beings, cutting across every barrier, as one large family of human kind (Mishra, 2000). Moreover, for thousands of years, globalization has progressed through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences, and dissemination of knowledge (Sen, 2001). At least three distinct periods or waves of globalization were witnessed in the last hundred years. One occurred fifty years prior to the First World War. The second took place in the 1950s and 1960s and we are amidst the third one since about 1980s (Kaplinsky, 2001; Oman, 1994). Globalization is, therefore, a process, yet not necessarily fully realized, but an ongoing and probably inevitable process (Cooper, 2001).

The process of globalization which was accelerated from the mid 19$^{th}$ century to the First World War was slowed down from 1914 to 1991. This was owing to several historical factors: the two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the emergence of the socialist bloc, the end of colonialism leading to a number of former colonies like India trying to preserve their markets and resources for their home industries, and the Cold War hampered globalization. During that period, trade barriers, the monopolistic character of technology market, and restrictions on capital flow became the order of the day. International capital flows almost dried up as several countries clamped on restrictions (Mishra, 2000).

Today globalization is a development which increases internationalization of production and manufacturing, governing and financing processes (Homann, 2007). It is more or less totally different from earlier periods. Though it is not a new concept, essentially it has assumed new significance since the turn of the 1990s. The term has recently crept into the vocabulary of policy makers, politicians, business men, the media and academicians mainly because of the changed international balance of forces as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the disintegration of the world socialist system and the end of the Cold War (Homann, 2007; Jacobsen and Lawson, 1999).Currently, the movement of capital, finance, technology, the ownership and control of assets, has become the most prominent feature of globalization. Rapid and pervasive technological change, notably in the applications of microelectronics and transformation in government policies, notably market regulation, have visibly shaped and given impulse to new wave of globalization in the late 1970s (Oman, 1994; Willet, 2001). In this globalized economic relation the producers feel that they can exploit a vast planetary market, the consumers feel that they can choose from an abundance of goods offered to them at a competitive price. Wealthy people therefore feel that they can look for the highest profit through the opportunities offered to them by the international financial markets (Lioussis, 1998). This is because capital today is freer to move than in the past. If one tries to tax, it can go away and look for new home. It is no longer connected to a state (Lioussis, 1998).

The prevailing economic characteristics of globalization include free trade, free movement of capital through the international money markets, the concentration of production activity and its transfer to areas which guarantee the best returns. Essentially, "Globalization is a result of expansion, diversification and deepening of trade and financial links between countries" particularly in the last few years (Ouattara, 1997). This was mainly because of the success of the efforts of multilateral tariff reduction and trade liberalization. Open and outward economies are more successful than inward-looking and closed ones (Ouattara, 1997). Consequently the success of globalization is closely linked to a combination of appropriate polices with at least three main objectives: 1) achieving and preserving macro-economic stability, 2) promoting openness to trade and capital flows, and 3) limiting government intervention to areas of genuine market failure and to provision of the necessary social and economic infrastructure. In this connection the challenge facing African countries is to design appropriate public policies in order to maximize the potential benefits from globalization, and to minimize the downside risks of destabilization and/or marginalization (Ouattara, 1997).

A combination of several factors have stimulated, facilitated and shaped the new wave of globalization which in turn shaped its public perception.

Some of the crucial factors include the internationalization of financial markets; the development and diffusion of new technologies in transportation and information; the massive shift by developing countries from inward to outward growth strategies; the globalization of corporate competition and cooperation; the end of bipolarity (Mueller and Akbar, 1997; Oman, 1994); and the opening and integration of the communist economies into the global economy (Willet, 2001).

In today's world, telephone, fax, communication satellite, cable television and the internet keep people in instant communication with any part of the world. The big impulse of these changes has been produced mainly by the innovations in two fields that could be considered fundamental: computers and the technologies of communication. The latter have eliminated the physical distance and have increased the knowledge that people have about each other. Now, it is impossible to live isolated because everything that happens in one part of the world is known immediately in every other corner of the world. Consequently, everything, every situation, every decision made by a person, a country, a region, organization or an institution rebounds all the remaining persons, countries, regions, organizations or institutions. Thus, the innovations promote the growth of worldwide information flows, as well as cheaper, faster and more reliable transportation of goods and people, opening wider global access to knowledge about new products and services by potential suppliers thereby further stimulating the globalization of markets and of competition (Oman, 2001). Computerized financial networks now allow investors to shift vast sum of money from one part of the globe to another, "... as quickly as electricity can move through a cable" (French, 1997). This also enables production to be structured in global factories, linking workers across the world.

Although it is very difficult to foresee the future it is enough to look around and verify that the world is taking a global shape very quickly, that people are each day more connected, that everything depends more on everything else, that everyday people live with more information about the others as if they are living in a hamlet: the world is now shrinking to a hamlet (Grand, 2000). The rapid development in science and technology to a great extent made border and other constraints disappear. National frontiers and political obstacles more or less gave way to global market and the international economy is today determined by globalization. "It is important to [note here ] that globalization is not a zero-sum game...it is not necessary for some countries to lose in order that others may gain" ( Ouattara, 1997). But to take advantage of the rapidly expanding globalization, countries should properly position themselves by formulating the right policies. Economies which mostly benefit from globalization are those which open themselves to free trade and attract international capital flow on free and fair basis.

The improved communication technology enabled firms to extend and relocate their production into more distant markets through the development of networks. This tendency has altered the structure of world trade patterns, for greater percentage of traded transaction of goods is taking place within transnational corporations than between firms and end-users (Akbra, 1997).

This shrinkage in time and space that the world has experienced as a consequence of the technological development in transport, communications and information processing did not, however, affect all countries or peoples uniformly. The world for a few has become a much smaller place. Actions and decisions in one part of the world have greater impact on other parts of humanity and do so with greater speed than was in the past. The behaviour of the world's interrelated twenty four hours a day financial markets show this trend. However, income and wealth imbalances have created totally unmatched information flows (Helleiner, 2001).

## The Consequences of Globalization

Both the positive and negative aspects of globalization have been noted by scholars. On the one hand, globalization seems to hold promise for the further development and strengthening of international norms, especially in terms of human rights standards, the encouragement of the establishment of democratic governments and enhancing economic and technological developments. On the other hand, analyses of certain manifestations of globalization have highlighted a number of negative effects linked to structural adjustment, free trade, competition, migration, criminal activities and ethnic conflicts (Cooper, 2001; Lawson, 1999).

It is claimed that the present surge of globalization will highly increase productivity and raise living standards in all parts of the world, because it is hoped that the globally integrated economy can lead to a better division of labour between countries, allowing low wage countries to specialize in labour intensive tasks while high wage countries use workers in more productive ways. With globalization, capital can be shifted to whatever country offers the most productive investment opportunities not trapped at home financing project with poor returns (Mishra, 2000).

Globalization which is so popular in western media has, however, been encountering strong opposition from a variety of groups and interests throughout the world. One may recall that the entire struggle against imperialism before and after independence of African countries has been building and protecting national markets and serving it for national goods. Now with this aim nullified by the idea of globalization, the real danger for Africa and other developing countries is their inability to compete in both product and financial markets in the wider field of competition in the global economy. Some African countries have made substantial progress toward macroeconomic stability and have also reduced their internal and external imbalances in the late 1990s (Ouatara, 1997). But there is a real danger of multinational corporations' domination of both economy and polity; because economic power is highly concentrated in the hands of the big economic groups and multinational corporations are king-pins of globalization. Many scholars agree that globalization may bring benefits and new opportunities to some sectors, nevertheless, they have pointed out its accompanying instability and negative consequences such as erosion of labour standards and growing social inequalities. Focusing on Africa, the continent's fragile economic structures, low educational level, lack of advanced technologies, weakened state institutions and other factors make it very difficult for African countries to compete internationally and keep them excluded from the globalized world economy. From this perspective, African countries are, by and large, bystanders in the globalization process (Harsch, 1999). The process of economic liberalization, management and decentralization pursued everywhere today also represents further centralization of the world economy. Indeed the emergence of global command economy where the conception, formulation, design and funding of development policy is increasingly controlled by a few international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and international Non-governmental Organizations (NGOS) may continue to be pervasive (Seddon, 1999).

Unemployment is also increasing with globalization. The new industries and activities require new kinds of skills. The demand for the unskilled, semi-skilled and those with traditional education will drastically decrease. This will mean that the lower segments of the society will suffer most. For instance, only a handful of African countries are benefiting from globalization getting access to greater trade, greater capital flows and greater migration of skilled labour (Todd Moss, *http://gn.som.yale.edu)*. New kinds of skills can be acquired mostly by the upper segments of the society who can afford to pay for them. Obviously, inequalities in the society will be increased and this, coupled with other problems, fuelled by the modern electronic media, will lead to crimes, anarchy and chaos. Thus, with governmental activities and public sector shrinking and the total number of jobs getting fast reduced, globalization is going to nullify another national objective, namely socio-economic homogenization (Chabal, 2001; Lioussis, 1998; Mishra, 2000) and in its present form globalization deepens the already existing serious inequalities (Bangura, 2001).

Moreover, globalization can also bring regional disparities in economic development. With the shifting from state directed to market propelled economic development, and reliance being placed on private investment, both indigenous and foreign, only areas which are already ahead in development and have infrastructure facilities will be receiving more investments (Mishra, 2000; Sen, 2001). With globalization the gap between the rich and the poor, between the developed and developing is, therefore, increasingly growing (French, 1997; Willett, 2110; Sen, 2001). The governments of the most developed countries are using the wealth accumulated throughout the years of colonialism based on unjust conditions of economic exchange, their monopoly over financial and technological resources, media or even military power as instruments to preserve their privileges and promote their economic development in the form of globalization on the basis of the so-called new world order. Those who are the richest are trying to protect their privileges and impose their interests on the financial power centres; they control all large markets and important geo-strategic regions. Like capitalism and colonialism before it, globalization at present means great prosperity for the few and continuing inequality and poverty for many (Urquhart, 2000).

Evidences suggest that globalization has resulted in increased economic volatility that undermines the basic economic security of many millions of people and contributes to severe relations between the winners and the losers in unfettered global market competition. The losers include about 1.3 billion people living in about 89 developing countries (many of them in Africa) who are in worse conditions now than they were ten to fifteen years ago (Wade, 2001; Willett, 2001).

The income divergence in the process of globalization also brings another kind of polarization in the world system: a zone of peace and a zone of turmoil. In the latter we find a lot of unemployed, hungry and angry young people, to whom new information technologies have given the means but threaten the stability of the society they live in and even threaten social stability in countries of the wealthy zone (Wade, 2001).

The speech delivered by President Fidel Castro of Cuba at the South Summit in April 2000, in a graphic metaphor captures the current reality of globalization for the world's vast majority. It explains the negative impact, the injustice and the widening gap between the rich and the poor owing to globalization. Shermain Mannah in his article on *The Impact of Globalization* ... has extensively quoted Fidel Castro's speech:

> ….Globalization is an objective reality underlying the fact that we are all passengers on the same vessel, that is this planet where we live, [But he argued] the passengers are travelling in very different conditions. Small minorities are travelling in luxurious cabins furnished with the internet, cell phones and access to global communication abundant and balanced diet as well as clean water supplies. They have access to the sophisticated medical care and to culture. [In contrast to this, he said], overwhelming and hurting majorities are travelling in conditions that resemble the terrible slave trade from Africa to America in our colonial past. [He Went on to state that, 80 percent of the passengers on this ship are crowded together in its filthy hold suffering hunger, disease and helplessness. Obviously, the vessel is carrying too much injustice to remain afloat and it pursues such an irrational and senseless route that it cannot call on safe port.

He concluded this description with cautionary note: "This vessel seems destined to crash into an iceberg. If that happened, we would all go down with it," (Mannah, 2002).

In Febraury 2000, a meeting of ninety-three political parties from about fifty-six countries was held in Belgrade. In its press release the meeting related globalization to fascism and highlighted its impact in the following words:

> The doctrine of globalization, as projected by the governments of the richest countries does not imply progress or make it possible to the entire humanity to take advantages of the technological and economic progress, but unfortunately represents new form of exploitation and colonization of those under-developed by those most developed countries. For those peoples who in the name of ideals of humanity, equality and justice, wish to achieve equality and live in life worth of man, have no place in the designs of the creators of the new world order based on the concepts of the so called globalization and modernization. The ideological basis of this new planetary dogmatism is [ in ] many ways similar to fascism, because its substance is –obey and live according to our rules, or you do not live at all (Review of International Affairs V. LI, No.1089-90; 2000:32).

Concerning especially Africa, the process of globalization has serious implications. When we look at what has been happening since the new economic policy began to be implemented which was hinged on privatization and deregulation, the situation is quite revealing. Privatization has been weakening the state–run enterprises, no matter whether loss-making or profit-yielding, are being privatized. In this process corruption has entered in big way. With no new state enterprises coming into existence and the existing ones being fully or partially privatized and with the reduction in the state expenditure the capacity of the state to intervene in and direct the economy is drastically curtailed (Mishra, 2000:44).

Faced with severe balance of payment problems African countries are left with no choice- they are obliged to implement IMF policies, even when they are ill-suited to their economic and social circumstances, or risk economic isolation. Most African governments are prepared to sacrifice their economic sovereignty rather than face isolation (Willett, 2001:39). Since 1993, many African countries have moved ahead with trade and exchange liberalization, eliminating multiple exchange rates and non-tariff barriers and also lowering the degree of tariff protection (Ouattara, 1997: 5-10). The globalization of the economy, by erasure of national economic boundaries through free trade, free capital mobility and free or at least uncontrolled migration and the legitimizing of the international pressures on states in the south to accept the hegemony of international capital within their borders also have certainly contributed to the weakening of the principle of African sovereignty (Nieuwkerk, 2001:16; Stephanie, 1999:203; French, 1997:12). Consequently, the restructuring of many African economies is gaining momentum. All over Africa government intervention in economic activity is on the decline. Administrative price controls are reduced and agricultural marketing has been widely liberalized. The process of restructuring and privatizing state enterprises has been underway for some time in most countries with varied speed and degree of success. Fiscal reform is also gaining ground- African countries are taking firm steps to rationalize their taxation systems, to reduce exemptions and to enhance administrative efficiency. They are also encouraging and improving public investment and spending on key social services like health and education (Ouattara, 1997: 10).

Although a few countries in Africa including Botswana, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, with better economic performances are said to be benefiting from globalization most African countries are still behind in many respects (Todd Moss, *http://gn.som.yale.educ)*. In order to speed up participation in globalization African countries need to achieve greater progress in the following five main areas:

- Maintenance of macroeconomic stability and acceleration of structural reform with the implementation of structural policies for more flexibility, diversification and reduction of vulnerability. Government must also avail and ensure public services, i.e., transportation networks, electricity, water, telecommunication, health care and education.
- Ensure economic security and the rule of law with the right framework for economic activity, avoiding sense of uncertainty. The direction and orientation of future policy must be clear beyond any shadow of doubt.
- Reform financial sectors with flexible financial structures, accelerating the development and liberalization of financial markets and institutions to respond to the changing international environment.
- Achieve good governance in which national authorities tackle all aspects of corruption and inefficiency and enhance transparency and accountability in government. This includes reducing the scope of distortions of rent-seeking activities, eliminating wasteful or unproductive uses of public funds, and providing the necessary

domestic security. Governments should create confidence in their role as valued and trusted partners of private economic agents.

- Partnership with civil society: African governments should actively encourage the participation of civil society in debate on economic policy, to see the broad support of the population for the adjustment efforts. To this end governments will need to pursue a more active information policy, explaining the objectives of policies and soliciting the input of those whom the policies intend to benefit (Ouattara, 1997: 5-10).

For the champions of globalization, however, Africa cannot qualify to be on the map of the civilized world. They reason that Africa has poor infrastructure with chaotic politics, frequent episodes of natural disasters causing havoc and its continued dependence on primary products for export which has essentially marginalized it in the networked world (Freund, 2007). Therefore, globalization has not yet achieved the economic convergence that was anticipated by many supporters of economic liberalization and privatization in the early 1990s. Many countries in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, East and Central Europe have gained little benefit from globalization, rather they have experienced an increase in poverty, mass unemployment, social fragmentation and political instability (Willett, 2001). As a result, globalization is nowadays a major topic in the media, and it is already arousing anxiety, suspicion and opposition, especially in the developing world. In the 1999 general debate in the UN General Assembly, preoccupation with the political, economic and social effects of globalization was a major theme. The demonstrations in Seatle (USA) against the World Trade Organization (WTO) were partly an expression of this mood. In some places, young people were beginning to see the global economy as new enemy- faceless, enormously powerful, not accountable and non-transparent (Urquhart, 2000). In the year 2000, about 250,000 students of the Autonomous National University in Mexico went on strikes partly in protest against the global free trade economy. (Urquhart, 2000; Helleiner, 2001).

The exclusion of the large section of the global population has been recognized as one of the major challenges of the 21st century. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in his report to the Millennium Assembly once stated: ".... The central challenge we face is to ensure that globalization becomes positive force for all world's people, instead of leaving millions of them behind in squalor" (Willett, 2001).

To sum up our discussion, globalization is a complex and contradictory process. One of its sides is desirable and creates prosperity and its other side is undesirable. For an increasing number of countries and business concerns in the richer world it symbolizes the ever expanding frontiers of human endeavours in the fields of education, technology, finance and the provisions of better services strengthened by shared knowledge and rapid communication. It is seen as the basis for the eventual eradication of poverty and inequality of income and unequal opportunity. In the poorer regions of the world globalization is seen, by many, as yet another obstacle for progress (Mugerwa, 2002).

According to Freund, "Current world economic trends, bunched together in many accounts as 'globalization', marginalize Africa and with it, make the management of cities that work effectively for their inhabitants in Africa impossible to support financially in particularly bleak scenarios" (Feund, 2007). The African countries task quite clearly must be to counteract the negative effects of globalization and use its positive aspects. In order to do this, African governments have to employ alternative strategies, among which good governance and wining the trust of their citizens must play a central role. But in doing so they must not make globalization a scapegoat for their own shortcomings as governments, parties and nations. They must find national and international instruments that enable them to utilize the positive forces of globalization- growth and prosperity- in a new way. If they can do that they may have the best opportunity ever to achieve national and international progress towards peace, democracy and justice. This, however, calls for vigorous united action within Africa as well as between Africa and the rest of the world. The cardinal issue in the future should, therefore, be how North and South, rich and poor would be able to meet the challenges of global inequalities.

## Concluding Remarks

Handicapped by the weakness of its infrastructure, lack of qualified human resources and low level of industrial development, Africa is clearly not sufficiently integrated into the global economy. However, it is also clear that the continent cannot afford to remain on the sidelines of globalization for much longer. To facilitate its inclusion into the world economy, Africa must begin to make significant institutional reforms- in particular by refocusing the functions of the state towards its essential mission of delivering needed public services, within liberalized and transparent framework and strengthening the role of the society, which is critical for many social and economic changes. Regional economic integration is also a necessary element for securing Africa's active participation in the global world economy.

All the reforms necessary for African transformation will incur extremely high financial and social costs that by far exceed the continent's current resources. Africa should, therefore, count on international cooperation to support its economic development efforts and effectively manage its own resources. Particular attention must also be paid to manage, the external debt that weights heavily on public finance. The various debt reductions undertaken by the international financial community are very encouraging and should be explored more intensively.

Africa has also an enormous need for new financial resources to encourage investment, and it is hoped that Africa's partners can help orient more direct foreign investment to the continent. Financial aid from international agencies tends to be subject to numerous conditions and payment procedures of debt are often unwieldy. Flexibility in the delivery of aid and financing might help speed up African economic growth.

Finally, Africa must be able to count on the technical assistance of its external partners to strengthen its human resource capabilities. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to training in the use of new information and communication technologies, in order to minimize the risks and the challenges in order to benefit from globalization.

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