GOOD GOVERNANCE: WHITHER AFRICA?

PRESENTATION OUTLINE BY:

PROF. PLO - LUMUMBA,

LL.D, CPS (K), MKIM

AT THE PAVA MEMORIAL FORUM, GHANA ON FRIDAY, 28TH AUGUST, 2015

28TH AUGUST, 2015
BRIEF PROFILE OF THE SPEAKER

Prof. PLO – Lumumba is the Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya School of Law. He is a Professor of Public Law and Founding Dean, Kabarak University School of Law. He has lectured law at the University of Nairobi, the United States International University (Africa), Widener University USA (Nairobi Summer School).

He is an Advocate of the High Courts of Kenya and Tanzania. He holds Bachelor of Laws and Master of Laws degrees from the University of Nairobi and a LL.D from the University of Ghent, Belgium. He is a Certified Public Secretary CPS (K) and a Member of the Kenya Institute of Management (MKIM).

He has been trained on Humans Rights at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies University of London in England, Humanitarian Law at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of the University of Lund in Sweden and on International Humanitarian Law in Geneva, Switzerland.

He is a renowned legal practitioner. He is a former Secretary of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission and former Director of the defunct Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission, (KACC).

He is also the Founder of the PLO - Lumumba Foundation (a Philanthropy Organization); founding Trustee of the African Institute for Leaders and Leadership (AILL) and founding Chairman of the Association of Citizens Against Corruption (ACAC).

He has been named and recognized by the International Commission of Jurists (Kenya Section) and the Law Society of Kenya for his exemplary contribution to the legal profession. He was recognized by the Kenya-USA Association for the Martin Luther King Jnr., Leadership Award in 1996 and was the recipient of the 2008 Martin Luther King Africa Salute to Greatness Award by the Martin Luther King Jr. Africa Foundation. He has also been included in the Marquis Who’s Who in the World and is the Distinguished Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Lecturer for 2014.
GOOD GOVERNANCE, WHITHER AFRICA?

Abstract

This continent is not distinguished for its good governance of the peoples of Africa. But without good governance, we cannot eradicate poverty; for no corrupt government is interested in the eradication of poverty; on the contrary, and as we have seen in many parts of Africa and elsewhere, widespread corruption in high places breed poverty.

-Mwalimu Julius Nyerere ‘Good Governance for Africa’ 1998

Introduction

Thank you very much for your generous introduction. I am greatly indebted to the organizers of this occasion for this opportunity to visit Ghana, the home of two Great Africans: James Emmans Kwegyir Aggrey and Kwame Nkurumah and where my eldest daughter named after my beloved mother is married.

I also greatly appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution to the evergreen debate of governance in Africa.

Many of you present in this Assembly will have been told of the events of the 6th day of March, 1957, here in Accra Ghana, where with unprecedented pomp and circumstance Kwame Nkrumah, his fellow freedom fighters and other Ghanaians witnessed the lowering of the ‘Union Jack’ and the hoisting of the ‘Black star’. On that day, while the bulk of African countries were still under the colonial yoke enslaved by the British, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Belgians, the events in Ghana heralded a new beginning.

In his inaugural speech Nkrumah did not disappoint. While he lauded Ghana’s Independence, he was emphatic that it meant little if the rest of Africa remained in servitude. In his view, Ghana would only be truly free from imperialist exploitation and oppression if the rest of Africa was free. In his words, “Our (Ghanaians) Independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa”.

Today, as I stand before you, I remember the opening words of Nkrumah’s Independence day speech with nostalgia: “AT LONG LAST, THE BATTLE HAS ENDED! AND NOW GHANA, Your beloved COUNTRY is free forever...”. I am nostalgic because the great Kwame was right.
The battle of liberation was over but the war against poverty, disease, ignorance and bad governance had just begun.

Once Ghana had attained Independence, Accra became the Political Mecca from where African liberation fighters sought political spiritual anointing. They all came here— from Guinea Ahmed Sekou Toure, from Tanganyika Julius Nyerere, from Algeria Ahmed Ben Bella, from Congo Patrice Emery Lumumba, from Gambia Dawda Jawara, from Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser, from Zambia Kenneth David Kaunda, from Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, from Kenya Jomo Kenyatta, from South Africa Nelson Mandela, from Namibia Sam Nujoma, from Mali Modibo Keita, from Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde Amilcar Cabral.

The anointing received energized the Freedom fighters to seek self governance, not as an end but as a means to achieving the defined goals of eliminating disease, poverty and ignorance.

History records that as the enthusiasm of the freedom fighters and the populace grew, the colonialists started to pack their 'bags' but their departure was always pregnant with intrigue and one man was always alive to it. That man was Kwame Nkrumah. He knew that the end of the colonial project heralded the beginning of the neo-colonial project— more subtle but more pernicious.

Alive to the dangers of the new colonial project, Nkrumah was at the forefront of forming the Organization of African Unity. In his eloquent and emotion laden speech on the 24th March, 1963 he was as emphatic as he was indubitable. He exhorted the leaders gathered in Addis Ababa Ethiopia to embrace African Unity as a bulwark against imperialism. He said:

"As a continent we have emerged into independence in a different age, with imperialists grown stronger, more ruthless and experienced, and more dangerous in its international association... our economic advancement demands the ends of colonialist and neocolonialist domination in Africa...

The unity of our continent, no less than our separate independence, will be delayed if, indeed, we do not lose it, by hobnobbing with colonialism.

African unity is, above all, a political kingdom which can only be gained by political means. The social and economic development of Africa will come only within the political kingdom, not the other way round."

Nkrumah's message to the leaders of Africa was that the continent needed to unite, and in his words he appealed and cajoled:
“The masses of the people of Africa are crying for unity. The people of Africa call for the breaking down of the boundaries that keep them apart. They demand an end to the border disputes between sister African states – disputes that arise out of the artificial barriers raised by colonialism. It was colonialism’s purpose that divided us. It was colonialism’s purpose that left us with our border irredentism that rejected our ethnic and cultural fusion.

Our people call for unity so that they may not lose their patrimony in the perpetual service of neo-colonialism. In their fervent push for unity, they understand that only its realization will give full meaning to their freedom and our African independence.”

A few years after Ghana attained her independence many African countries freed themselves from the colonial yoke.

The first generation leaders seized their new responsibilities with vim and verve. Although the bulk of their populace did not have formal education, efforts were made to ‘equip them with necessary skills’.

Africans took charge of their Railways, Postal services, Telephone services and other sectors of the economy, and the clarion call was africanization. The resolve of the day was that Africans had become of age and no longer needed to be superintended to achieve their desired goals.

Several years down the line however, Afro cynics, skeptics and afrophiles alike question whether Africa has realized her potential.

Many will remember that in many African countries, the torch of political independence was rudely extinguished when leaders were overthrown by militaries and people’s lives were disrupted. Indeed, many Africa countries have yet to recover from the violence visited upon them by these violent interventions. Countries such as Congo, Somalia, Chad, Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan are still caught up in the whirlpool of violence and confusion.

The question that many ask is: ‘what went wrong?’


It cannot be denied that African countries punch below their social, political and economic weight because those charged with managing the affairs of the continent have failed, refused and/ or neglected to discharge their functions.
Many African leaders have over the years used their public offices to enrich themselves at the expense of the populace.

The institutions we inherited have long collapsed. The currencies that we saw proudly adopted for each of our countries are no longer attractive. Ghana may have her Cedi, Nigeria her Naira, Kenya her Shilling, South Africa her Rand, Malawi and Zambia their Kwacha, Angola her Kwanza, Zimbabwe her Dollar, South Sudan her Dollar, Sudan her Pound, Ethiopia her Birr but we still pay homage at the altar of the almighty USA Dollar, ‘Euro’ and lately Chinese Yuan. Each of our African countries have their broadcasting corporations but we all pay homage at the altar of CNN, BBC, DeutscheWelle Radio France, CCTV of China, Aljazeera.

We have our telephone companies but the continent’s airwaves are dominated by companies such as Airtel, Orange, Vodafone.

We have our postal services but we have our faith in DHL, UPS and the like.

We have our football teams but we pay homage at the altar of the English Premier League, the Spanish Laliga, the French Ligue, the German Bundesliga and the Portuguese League.

We all started with our national airlines, but today most of them are collapsing.

This sad story has come about because Africans have failed to grow themselves. There is no single African country that does not have the formal structures of governance found in other countries. We have Presidents, Parliamentarians, Judiciaries complete with Judges, Constitutions, periodic elections but these institutions consistently fail to deliver.

Our national governments and parliamentarians prepare our national budgets covering all sectors of our economy: Health, Infrastructure, Education, Trade, Agriculture, etc. But few can deny that our continent cannot feed herself, treat or educate her people and build her infrastructure.

Today, the Chinese are present in the entire African continent, building roads that our civil engineers ought to build. United States of America and European companies are growing crops that our farmers ought to grow. In the words of Ali Mazrui, ‘we produce what we do not consume and consume what we do not produce’.

In his famous book, ‘Why Africa Is Poor’, Greg Mills states boldly:
“The main reason why Africans are poor is because their leaders have made their choice. The records show that countries can grow their economies and develop faster if leaders take first decisions in the national interest”.

The tragedy of Africa is that her leaders have taken the path of mis-governance. Many African leaders seek power to acquire wealth and once they do so, they do not want to leave it in order to protect their ill gotten wealth. Unfortunately, the African population is complicit because when called upon to vote they do so on the basis of their ethnic extraction and on the basis of bribes they receive from the contestants. In many African countries, elections are nothing but periodic rituals or census of ethnic alliances or auctions at which political power is sold to the highest bidder.

It is a tragedy that fifty (50) years after most African countries attained independence, most Africans are still saddled by inferiority complex without acknowledging it. Africans and their leaders behave as if they are inferior. It must not be lost on you that Africa remains the only continent referred to as Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, Arabophone to define its continued subservience to former colonising powers and other post-colonisation powers like USA, Russia and China. Perhaps we should take counsel from the words of Charles Brandon Boynton on November 17, 1867, at Miterwort Hall, Washington DC, when he exhorted Blacks and said:

“... Be not ashamed of your race... Dare to be a black man and accept the position God has assigned you. Do not believe it is an inferior one. It is honourable to be a black man as it is a white one. Aim to make yourself not a white man, but a perfect black man...”

Brandon saw the black man’s proclivity to assume he is inferior, thus lending ‘credence’ to white supremacists belief that they are superior.

The superiority complex is best captured in the words of former South African president PW Botha, who, in a secret speech delivered in 1985 to his cabinet, said inter alia

“...let us join hands to fight against this black devil... Surely God cannot forsake his own people whom we are... every one of us has seen... that blacks cannot rule themselves. Give them guns and they will kill each other. They are good in nothing else but making noise, dancing, marrying many wives and indulging in sex. Let us all accept that the black man is the symbol of poverty, mental inferiority, laziness and emotional incompetence...”

These painful words by one of the architects of the Apartheid regime in South Africa were as sharp as they are bitter. But let the evidence be assessed. Have we collectively demonstrated that we are
capable of running our affairs or we have lent credence to Afrophobes, who believe that Africans are hewers of wood and drawers of water?

Today, Latin America, Asia, most of the Arab world and most of Eastern Europe have acquainted themselves well in the manner in which they conduct their economic, social and political affairs. A few African countries also appear to be moving in the right direction, but as an exception the dominant rule of mediocrity.

While we claim to have embraced democracy, we need only read Ahmadou Kourouma’s ‘Waiting for Wild Beasts to Vote’ to appreciate how we have bastardised democracy. A number of African countries hold elections but there are never losers, only thieves of the vote and those who have been rigged out. When we are called upon to vote, we are not animated by the political programmes of our [mis]leaders but the primordial instincts of ethnicity. Kenya’s Koigi wa Wamwere captures this well in his book ‘Towards Genocide in Kenya: The curse of Negative Ethnicity’. To each community negative ethnicity is glorified as saviour and destroyer of enemies.

If Africa is to realize her potential, Africans must behave and believe as if they are not children of a lesser god. Today not a week passes before we read reports of young Africans fleeing the continent to seek ‘greener’ pastures in Europe, USA, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates where most of them are humiliated and subjected to slave labour.

In Education, while over the years many Africans have built many universities, the African elite have no faith in their education systems. Depending on who colonized them; they will send their children to London, Paris, Lisbon, Brussels and the United States of America, never to Accra, Lagos, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam or Kinshasa.

In Health, we have built hospitals but when we are sick, those who can afford seek treatment in the land of the erstwhile colonizers or lately in India, or Dubai. These include Ministers in charge of medical services in their countries.

In Sports, we still marvel at Europe and America. We celebrate foreign victories and deride our own.

In Agriculture, we still produce less than we consume and have to depend on support from Europe and America. We have failed to subdue the Earth. Instead the Earth has subdued us.
In performing arts, our heroes are Tom Cruise, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and not Jackie Apiah or Nadia Buari or Majid Michel or John Dumelo or Olu Jacobs among others. Kenya’s Lupita Nyong’o only acquired value when the white movie industry recognized her talent. If that talent had been recognized by Nollywood’s famous director Ugezu J. Ugezu, she would not be celebrated. When we have our own awards, we are happy when they are called ‘African Oscars’; Originality is not our forte.

African leaders and people must now ask themselves fundamental questions if Africa is to realize her potential.

On May 24, 1963, in Addis Ababa, Kwame Nkrumah spoke passionately and eloquently, but few listened to him. He said,

‘On this continent, it has taken us long to discover that the struggle against colonialism does not end with the attainment of national independence. Independence is only the prelude to a new and more informed struggle for the right to conduct our own economic and social affairs; to construct our society according to our aspirations unhampered by crushing and humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference.’

These words must now be the guiding principle of Africa’s declared Vision 2063.

Speaking in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on January 30, 2014, the President of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma echoed the words of Kwame Nkrumah through an imaginary letter to Kwame Nkrumah. She foresees a united Africa, whose economy has grown to be the third largest in the world; whose politics has stabilized, whose infrastructure has improved dramatically and whose people are happy and have self-belief having liberated themselves from the perpetual complaint mode.

While I embrace Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma’s vision and enthusiasm, I am of the view that lofty declarations in and of themselves will not liberate Africa. Africans must have a monumental mental shift.

Africans must believe that they can achieve social, political and economic growth by exploiting their rivers.

Africa’s mineral wealth must be exploited for her benefit.

Africa must trade with herself.
African must exploit her rivers, gas, sun and wind to produce energy.

It is sad that in the 21st Century we still talk of ‘Dumsor Dumsor’ and power black outs.

Africa must boldly interrogate her governance models and ask the uncomfortable question whether “Democracy” as ‘franchised’ by Europe and America is suitable for her long term health or whether she can draw lessons from traditional models and customize them for the future.

**Conclusion**

The perennial African argument and excuse that we have only been independent for a short time is without merit. In our lifetime, we have seen war torn countries emerge from the fires of destruction to be leaders in the economic sphere. Japan, Germany, South Korea, United Arab Emirates have all embraced the fundamental tenets of democracy and laced them with their specificity and catapulted their people to the higher plains of development.

One must therefore agree with Chinua Achebe that the problem with Africa is simply one of leadership which unfortunately is fertilized by poor ‘followships’ governed by primordial instincts of ethnicity.

So today, I am happy to join with you because we have had an opportunity to say that after everything is said, we ought to agree, and here I agree with many Afro-optimists, that Africa has the potential to be a prosperous continent but that it behoves us to recognize that we cannot enjoy the fruits of efforts without first making effort. Indeed, even amid the gloom that envelops Africa, a number of African countries are beginning to demonstrate that with good leaders, development can be realized. A number of African countries are beginning to grow in manner that inspires hope. We must loud the efforts being made by Ethiopia, Botswana, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Africans at all levels must exorcise the ghost of low self-esteem and embrace self-respect. It is inexcusable that a continent of nearly a billion people with mind and intellect should still be a basket case of the world dependent on Europe and America and lately China.

Africa must rise from her deep slumber, otherwise she will continue to be a scar on the conscience of humanity, merely tolerated by other civilizations but never respected. It can be done; it must be done because if it is not done, another colonizer and enslaver will take us back to ‘Egypt’.
So in conclusion, we must say with Kwame Nkrumah that Africa must not look East or West, Africa must look forward. The future, as things stand today will be determined by creativity, innovation and self-belief.