

**GROWING YOUR AFRICA STRATEGY THROUGH YOUR
PEOPLE
(One Million African Leadership Connect)
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The cardinal challenge that all Africans face is the challenge of being competitive in today's global arena. For centuries, our rich and fertile continent has been systematically plundered and the colonial powers grew rich on the resources they took from Africa, all the while ensuring that we, its people, were disempowered in the most brutal fashion, and being unable to pose a threat to their economic dominance.

Now, as we enter the second decade of the 21st Century, we are finally in a position to face the challenge of competing with those countries. As Africans, we must not underestimate the sheer size of this challenge. All of us are impatient to see success. We want to see the fruits of our labours. We want to see an end to the long wait we have endured and although we are in a hurry, we must never lose sight of the fact that the magnitude of this plan is immense. The restoring of Africa to its rightful place among the nations is a long-term programme that will inevitably span more than one generation.

History has taught us that empires come and go. At one time Italy, a small country, conquered the world, as it was thought to be at the time. It commanded a huge empire, one of many that have exercised huge influence, and then declined. So let no one say that Africa, whose people are filled with energy and determination, cannot rise. Africa will rise, and this will be the century of our ascendancy. In due course Africans will be leaders in the international community.

We have chosen this path of advancement and improvement, knowing well that much will be demanded of us before we succeed. In order to face and meet this challenge, there are several requirements that we must fulfil. At a personal level, we must all cultivate an appropriate attitude of commitment to the vision. Whatever we do, we must do with energy, focus and commitment, our attitude must be one of excellence, always striving for the best.

Enhance your productive skills. Enhance your value to your organisation and your country by becoming multi-skilled. Apply yourself with vigour. When we all do this, the net result will be a country that is dynamic, productive and successful, a net contributor to continental success.

COHESIVE THRUST

The next level of our attitude to the challenge must be national and that as a nation, we must be committed to act in ways that will lead to international competitiveness. Do not engage in acts that are inimical or destructive towards our national programmes; support your country and its leadership whilst at all times holding that leadership accountable, insisting on ethical behaviour and moral authority as its hallmark. Allow our efforts to gel into a cohesive thrust of economic growth. We must grow into a "knowledge" economy whose pervasiveness should defy boundaries.

Thirdly, we must be aware of a regional challenge. There are countries in Southern Africa that have an affinity to South Africa and regard themselves as being regionally affiliated to us. Success or failure in any of these neighbouring countries has an impact on the others, and on the whole region. We cannot distance ourselves from events in our region; we must be involved in finding solutions, and in creating stability and growth. This attitude must ultimately extend to the whole continent. This is critical.

At the international level, we must select our allies carefully. We must find those who have the welfare of Africa at heart and who recognise our deep-felt need to drive the reformation process and determine its outcome.

We must recruit to our cause those who acknowledge that Africans must have the overriding say in the future of Africa. We must define, or at least co-define, our destiny. It is too important to leave in the hands of disaffected strangers. There are various institutional forms or pillars that must be in place to underpin the competitiveness of Africa. One of these is the form of government. In many African countries forms of government are largely parliamentary. Parliament, not the constitution, is sovereign. This, in effect, is rule of man rather than rule of law. We have a constitution that has won international acclaim for its breadth, depth and focus on the rights of the individual. Let us seek to elevate this magnificent institution to the place where its provisions are the final arbiter of right and justice.

Another institutional pillar is the enshrinement of the concept of individual rights. Until now we have kept alive the notion of group hegemony. We have adopted the group, instead of the individual, as the basic unit of political analysis and expression. This means that differences between groups become entrenched and divisions grow deeper. We must move away from these divisions and become a single country and a single continent. We must become united in our desire to see Africa grow strong and wealthy, based on the inalienable rights of the individual.

REGRETTABLE

And then, there is another regrettable phenomenon that must be changed: Africa suffers from a victim mentality, a profound sense that we lack efficacy. We feel that we are victimised by events, by others, and by circumstances beyond our control. We are victims of nature and the environment around us. We prostrate ourselves before climatic conditions, droughts, floods and whatever else nature throws at us. We are unable even to mitigate the consequences of these natural disasters.

This must change. We must become masters of our own destinies; we must see the problem in ourselves, accept it, understand it and rid ourselves of it. Above all, we must find the resolute will to do something about it. We must invest in education, and in conflict resolution. We must work on our ethics and morality, our self-image and our vision. As a source of inspiration and guidance for this formidable project, our political leaders have compiled what can rightfully be called a grand continental design. This is the NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD) which analyses the fundamental ills that beset our continent, identifying them and formulating strategies to address them.

NEPAD is well founded and comprehensive. Despite this, however, NEPAD cannot work

unless all the various sectors of society align themselves with the programme and give it their wholehearted support. In particular, big business must swing its considerable resources behind this imaginative design and ensure that it does not fail for lack of resources. This element of support is critical.

When the whole of African society, governments, civil society, big business and every community sees NEPAD as a clarion call to action, then we will have begun our journey to self-realisation. When we see infrastructural development and significant job-creation, Africa-wide; when the regional economic blocs pull together with a common vision; when SADC and Ecowas and the Mahreb and East Africa bury their differences and see themselves as part of one big African family, then our victory will have begun.

As a continent with virtually no development history, we have a tremendous advantage that we must implement. We arrive at this point in time with no technological baggage; no “heritage systems” representing major investments that we must first discard before we can embark on our future. We are brilliantly positioned to leapfrog the digital divide into the 21st century without burdens to hamper us. A myriad of African initiatives are beginning, many of which will come to fruition as we give them our wholehearted, unconditional support. And there is a singular opportunity waiting for us, as we move out across Africa. This is to play the role of integrators, people who promote synergies between different programmes. We must make the streams flow together, to make the projects “gel”.

WORK TOGETHER, CONSISTENTLY AND WITH PERSEVERANCE

Starting off in the right direction is one thing, but it is equally important to sustain the momentum. As far back as 1957, Kwame Nkrumah said that as Africans, we must learn sustainability. We start things but don’t sustain them. We need the wise and insightful programmes, but we also need the stamina to keep them going. Long before Nkrumah, many centuries ago, Plato said that excellence is not an event; it is a habit. Let us acquire this habit and make it a part of us, for the glorious future of Africa.

AFRICA’S 21st CENTURY LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

To ensure there is no repeat of the 19th Century Scramble for Africa and its deleterious outcome.

To deal effectively with the phenomenon of globality and globalisation.

To fully grasp the symbiotic relationship between politics and economics, and to tackle the continents political economy accordingly.

To rise up to Africa’s continental imperative in geopolitics and global competitiveness.

To redefine the term “emergent” from a notion of condescension and derision to a concept of economic, political, and cultural vibrancy, and technological prowess.

To train and develop leaders who are equipped and able to deal with ever-

increasing complexity.

THE ONE MILLION AFRICAN LEADERS CONNECT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IS DESIGNED FOR

Those not content to follow but to shake off the victim mentality.

Those who believe the best way to win is to rewrite rules.

Those who are not afraid to challenge orthodoxy.

Those who are more inclined to build than obstruct.

Those more concerned with making a difference than making a career.

Those who are absolutely dedicated to shaping the future for Africa.

To paraphrase Gary Hamel & CK Prahalad

Every nation/continent is in the process of becoming - of becoming an anachronism irrelevant to the future, or becoming the harbinger of the future.

For the NBF and the CCL the choice is crystal clear.

May I conclude with what might come across as an idealistic note on ethics:

“We understand that there is no distinction between private and public morality, no distinction between private and public behaviour; that even our innermost thoughts are acts of leadership. We understand that each waking moment for each one of us, is an act of leadership. We understand that even our most private actions and thoughts are therefore based on principles and morality instead of expediency...”

“The leadership to which I refer, is not mythical, it does exist in Africa and is epitomised by our own icon, the living embodiment of African leadership: Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela who is an example of what Warren Bennis, the noted leadership expert, might refer to as servant leadership, where the true leader is the servant of all.

Such a quality of leadership is not unique nor is it the result of pre-ordination. It is the result of choice, discipline and application. Mandela does not have these leadership qualities because he is great Mandela is great because he has these leadership qualities.”

The African in my Dream

Reuel J Khoza

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