

TELECOM AFRICA INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION

222 Forest Avenue
New Rochelle, N.Y. 10804
Tel: (914) 636-6498
Fax: (914) 813-2503
Email: Okpaku@aol.com

**From Poverty Management to World-Class Competitive Self-Development:
Mobilising Africa's Global Intellect, Knowledge and Expertise to Build a
Smart Modern 21st Century Society**

by

Dr. Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Telecom Africa International Corporation

An Address to the

**Conference of Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities
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Your Excellencies,
Our Gracious Hosts,
Honourable Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities,
Eminent Scholars, Academicians and Intellectuals
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like first and foremost to thank the Association of African Universities, especially its Secretary General, Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, for the invitation to address this distinguished gathering of Africa's intellectual elite and their global friends, counterparts and partners. I am greatly honoured. I would also like to thank our Libyan friends, our brothers and sisters, especially the academic and intellectual leadership, in particular, the President of the 7th April University, for hosting this event and for their warmth and courtesies. I welcome this opportunity to share some ideas with all of you this afternoon, with the singular purpose of engaging you in our common search for the best set of paradigms for crafting Africa's future. There are those not in this room, not with us today, who will nonetheless encounter the results of our deliberations here and engage them with vigour, as we seek to mobilise and energize our common march forward to Tomorrow's Africa, deploying the best of Africa's intellect, knowledge, expertise and experience to build an Africa of eminent possibilities more truly worthy of our collective genius.

The African Challenge

The 20th Century was not kind to Africa, not really fair either. We survived it, as some of our ancestors survived their own untold brutality and inhumanity as they were uprooted from their homes and families, and taken forcefully across vast lands and oceans to build the comfort and heritage of other peoples. They were the founding fathers and mothers of the African Diaspora. That was the first substantive brain drain, if you will, the first intellectual, human and human resource, emotional and cultural drain of strategic proportions, from this continent. Africa paid a very high price for that travesty, with very little to show for it except for survival, itself a tribute to Africa's resilience, and our vast contributions to building and enriching other societies with literally African blood and

sweat. We continue to pay that price, with strategic, psychological, emotional and material ramifications and consequences that remain with us and that we must define, master and overcome once and for all, so that we can begin the process of building a new world-class globally competitive, smart and enlightened Africa at home and throughout the Diaspora. This compelling accomplishment would allow our children to approach life and the pursuit of their dreams with confidence, greater leisure and relaxation, focusing on innovation and creativity, not survival and the struggle for the opportunity to be someone. This is important not just for those of us on the continent, but also for all Africans abroad and in the Diaspora.

The good news, the highest credit to the strength, resilience, tenacity and fortitude of Africans, especially of those who came before us, our ancestors, is that we as a people, survived this unparalleled assault on a people and society, not only standing on our two feet, but with our culture, that indomitable soul of Africa that no tragedy or toil can undermine, very much intact. Compared to the legacy of other peoples who virtually got wiped out or nearly so, we prevailed. Hence we need from time to time to honour our ancestors, especially those who crossed over to the New World and their survivors and successors, for keeping Africa alive when others barely managed to make it through.

But the lesson of a retrospective on this extraordinary experience of a people, made more relevant and appropriate by the commemoration of the history of slavery these last few months, is that this should never happen again, not in any incarnation, not socio-economically, not politically, not intellectually, certainly not culturally, and not strategically. The 21st Century is still in its puberty. The challenges that assaulted the African society and permitted its wholesale undermining were then, as they are today, global geopolitical interests, as well as our own internal and intra-African political and strategic shortcomings and failures. Those exist today, in essentially the same configuration, just dressed in more contemporary clothing and fashion. If we allow Africa, at home and throughout the world, to be undermined and scattered again, if we allow ourselves to be sidelined unto the sidewalks of the global history of development and accomplishments, mired in low-level, low-energy preoccupations with minimalist goals while others continue to rocket into space with unlimited dreams, goals and efforts with the promise of exponential gains, it will be entirely our fault, whatever the machinations of others.

The Clarion Call

I have said in the past, that there does come a time in the life of a people when, no matter how embattled, they must find the courage to take their destiny in their own hands, and armed with their own resources, no matter how minuscule, strike out with relentless courage and unflinching resolve to build a future of their own design, crafted to achieve their own highest dreams and potential, with the help of friends, if possible, alone, if inevitable. That time has come for Africa. The African train into an eminent and proud future must leave the station now. We are either on it, to make a difference once and for all, or we are not, in which case we must be prepared to endure to perpetuity, the endless tirades and castigations that have become common fare and have proven more

incapacitating than even the toughest tangible challenges our ancestors faced. The pain and discomfort of Africa's present and seemingly persistent low standing in the global dispensation should serve as the most compelling catalyst for our committing to the deployment of the best and brightest of Africa's genius to transform our society and economy to global competitive standards, determined to excel at all levels.

This is my clarion call. This is the challenge before us as Africa's intellectuals and experts. This is my challenge to all of us this afternoon. This is the agenda I wish to address today, and to compel you, by whatever means fair or maybe even foul, if necessary, to embrace and commit to. There is no more time to waste, no room for more prevarication, no patience on the part of the masses of our people who continue to suffer, unnecessarily, the scourge and anxiety of poverty, deprivation, marginalisation and its attendant insecurity, when we are so endowed with every attribute and resource needed to create, sustain and grow a smart modern society with unparalleled possibilities.

Adopting any other development strategy whatever its source, including acquiescing to platitudes and offers which in real terms merely serve to postpone Africa's day of final reckoning with tragic irreversible consequences, would be a travesty on common sense. We shall have wasted more time while waiting for others to develop Africa and mastermind our own life and future. Contentment in the face of so much unfulfilled dreams, by creating and sustaining inertia, can only lead to recalcitrance, and the excuses and incapacitations that accompany it. Such a dynamic only yields a never-ending stream of excuses and self-debilitating justifications that only undermine our resolve and turn our best minds and hands into pitiful shadows of what once promised to be ordained drivers of a continent's dream. The challenge of development lies most strategically in the realm of the intangible. This happens also to be the workplace of intellectuals and specialists. This is our job. And to the extent that everyone else but us has controlled this process of masterminding Africa's future while our leaders outsource Africa's development to them, to that extent, I am afraid, we have not begun the process of Africa's strategic development.

It is my deepest belief that all the years of crisis, conflict, doubt and disillusionment notwithstanding, most of us, perhaps all of us, still hold dearly, the dream of an eminently superior Africa, one more worthy of the stuff we are made of than what we have had to endure, justify or excuse to date, whatever the reasons. Invoking that dream, resurrecting that deep commitment, and joining forces to restore the African promise, is something we all yearn for. Sounding that clarion call for all of us, scholars, intellectuals, experts and specialists, men and women, young and not quite so young, to rise together to meet the compelling challenge of world-class competitive self-development, deploying the best we know and have, is the quintessential purpose of this address today.

That we can do it, and enjoy doing it, while erasing the nightmare of a poverty that has overstayed its welcome in Africa, this is our mission, our responsibility and our obligation as Africa's best and brightest. The current status quo is diminishing our ability to dream by creating wealth, equitably distributed to wipe out poverty and the disease and other debilitations that come with it. It is our role as teachers, scholars, intellectuals and experts

to correct this by radically changing our mindset and our development paradigm. This is the traditional and quintessential role of universities and other institutions of higher learning in all societies. And we can do so, and bring Africa to its legitimate position amongst other societies speeding towards the top of global excellence, if we have the courage to develop and if our political leadership can muster the courage and the perspicacity to partner with Africa's best and brightest as the continent's first-line offensive team. We have more than the critical mass of world-class African experts all over the world, at home and abroad, who can drive this continent's transformation into a smart modern 21st Century society and who can hold their own against the best in the world.

Knowledge, Intellect, and Global Competitiveness in the 21st Century

Societies are built on their intellectual capacity. Societies will decline when that capacity is disconnected from the strategic development process, and the extent and duration of their decline are a direct factor of how much intellectual capacity was in place and actively engaged at the time the intellectual pipe was unplugged. At independence, each and every African country leaped forward with the enormous hope of finally having the opportunity to chart its own development course, and to take the controls of the nation's destiny to strike out to build the society they negotiated or fought for, depending on the path they took to independence. They had little anxiety or doubt that they would acquit themselves most eminently and honourably. The architects of that rapid development strategy would be the intellectuals and scholars, what some political leaders called "the leaders of thought".

But something went wrong, seriously wrong, and for some of us who come from that generation that would have, should have, could have, and indeed wanted so badly to transform Africa against the obstacle or opposition of any one or nation, we remain deeply unhappy, haunted as we are, by the legacy of what so far has remained an elusive and failed dream. For some of us, we have managed to convert that deep feeling of disappointment, perhaps with a touch (not a fatal dose) of disillusionment, into a new hope of resurrecting that dream. Inspired by outstanding examples of a number of developing countries once as challenged as us that have transformed themselves against all odds not much different from those we confront, we are determined that even if we do not ourselves build that Africa of our highest dreams that we so passionately sought, we must at least lay a solid and irremovable foundation for its creation. We must do so in order that the generations that will come after us, can build the structure of their own dreams on the platform and infrastructure that we will have thus put in place.

The Perpetual Relay Race of Self-Development

Development is a perpetual relay race from generation to generation, with no finishing line and no provision for dropping out or "checking out" as they used to say in Nigeria, that diamond of a nation that is my home and whose challenges in being cut and polished into a brilliant gem remains a strategic anxiety and handicap in Africa's prospects of achieving continental self-actualisation.. Each generation runs its best race, moving

society as far forward as it can, and hands over seamlessly and imperceptibly to the next. But for the race to have the best prospects of finishing ahead of the bunch, each generation must embrace, promote and mentor the generation behind it. Each must push, appreciate and support the generation in front of it, learning lessons and best practices as much from success as from failures and mistakes made. This is the only way to create sustainable development, not by aiming so low that any little effort can be calculated and proclaimed as a percentage improvement when the base line is itself miniscule and unacceptable. The next generations are already gathered behind us, pushing and pressing us to do what they know we can and are so eminently capable of doing for Africa so that they can pick up the baton and race to the next handover, totally fearless and undaunted by the distance to be covered.

For those who might feel a bit saddened by our present anxiety about a job unfinished, there are two quick consolations. One is that no one generation can accomplish all its dreams in its lifetime, because they include the dreams of the preceding generations and the prospective dreams of future generations. Life is a perpetual relay race. Each generation runs an excellent lap, and passes on the baton for the next to fly away with it while we sit back and cheer, ready at any moment to lend the benefit of our knowledge and experience if and when our successors seek our advise and input. In this regard, I am reminded of a special moment in my career when I had the opportunity to sit with Mwalimu President Julius Nyerere at a dinner in his honour in Buenos Aires by the then Nigerian Ambassador to Argentina, Professor Okon Uya, one of your own. In discussing the challenges of Africa and her future, the now late President of Tanzania said to me, "Africa belongs to your generation. We have done our part, rightly or wrongly. You must take over now. You can ask our advise from time to time, but the job is now yours."

His generation brought us political independence. And they did well. Ours was supposed to mastermind nation-building. Perhaps if they had handed over the baton to us on time as the script called for rather than take an extra lap or two by hanging onto power while we stood by, mesmerized by the breach of legitimate expectations, we might have better acquitted ourselves. But we have tried, and still have time to take control of our destiny and mastermind our nation-building. This way, the next generation can play its role of transforming what we build into a smart modern society that is truly globally competitive. The generation after that can take us right to the top. And what happens after that generation will be for our successors to determine. We would have played our part.

The second consolation is that at the present rate of invention and innovation in knowledge, science and technology, from nanotechnology to stem-cell research and related sciences and technologies that have a direct impact on our perpetual search for longevity or permanent life, there might be opportunities for securing such a long life that we might in fact, if the price is right and we can afford it, be able to live forever. In such an eventuality, we will be able to see the Africa of our dream come through in our renewed, enhanced and prolonged multi-century lifespan. But even then, as there will always be many yesterdays and many tomorrows, we will still be only able to accomplish only so much, serving our strategic role as the link between the past and the future for the well-being, health, wealth and security of our society's people, culture and continuity.

The African Condition

As we gather together here today, there is a simple truth that I am sure that we can reasonably agree on, give or take an errant opinion or two: All is not well with Africa, not well enough for us to feel satisfied and comfortable. Africa is not where she could have been and was presumed would be by today, even by the most skeptical analysts. We have not done our best. We have not gotten the best out of history. And we have not learned the best lessons from our common experience, not sufficiently to resolve, jointly and irrevocably, to commit to designing, crafting and building an Africa that is very strong, wholesome, vibrant, sustaining, exciting and fulfilling for all. We are yet to design an Africa that will enable the maximum pursuit of happiness and self-actualisation, one that we can lean back and look at as we occasionally appreciate a wholesome, beautiful and accomplished African woman, and say with satisfaction and gusto, “Yes, we have arrived. We did it.”

Fundamental Challenges to Prevalent Principles of African Development

How then do we accomplish this African nation-building, given in particular the length of the handicap we must overcome? How do we jumpstart the process? It will require strategic changes, some critical paradigm shifts in the fundamental principles of African development. Let us example a view.

Dependence, Assistance and Self-Development

By definition, “assistance” or “help” presupposes that the beneficiary is on a clear mission and path for the accomplishment of which it needs *supplementary* support. Invariably, those delivering such assistance walk behind, not alongside, and definitely not ahead of the beneficiary. When one looks at the numerous complex programmes of support, coordination, capacity building and advocacy for the implementation of Africa’s development, what jumps out immediately is that with such a totally encompassing external programme, there is little left for Africa and Africans to do on their own or for herself or for themselves.

Going it alone will be tough, especially given our short-term needs to urgently mitigate poverty and disease. But we will learn from the experience and build enduring capabilities and capacities. But chaperoned the way we are today, a process by which we are overwhelmed with assistance and assistance programmes for which we have no serious say or input, we will never learn, never get to craft our own strategies, and will remain forever dependent, frustrated and irrelevant to the masterminding of our own future. And if and when our present helpers and handlers become disaffected with us, as is always at least a 50/50 chance given the dynamics of geopolitics, we will be at their absolute mercy, with little or no recourse for bold and independent action. Such a scenario runs against the grain of all strategic thinking.

The result of this “Catch 22” situation is that on the one hand, Africa has grown in its dependence on external strategies and support, increasingly losing out on ownership, leadership, strategic capacity building and implementation focus, while on the other hand, though insisting that Africa must own the process and take leadership in implementing her own agenda, the partners already play such an overwhelming role that this is impossible. In the process, Africa’s best and brightest feel locked out of their legitimate space, rights and responsibilities by African leaders and their external partners, public declarations to the contrary notwithstanding. They feel that, even if albeit not by deliberate design, little room is left for African experts to mastermind Africa’s own agenda and to show initiative, innovation and courage in crafting a programme that they consider to be the best way to achieve Africa’s original or fundamental vision and mission, including, most especially, being globally competitive. The simple question is: How does Africa rely on the very people she wants to learn to compete against in a highly-competitive global economy to assist her to gain the strength and competence to do so?.

Put differently, the very enthusiasm and related institutional and psychological outgrowths of the intensely intimate relationship between Africa and its global partners is choking Africa out of any coherence, vision, strategic and policy leadership and prospects of enlightened independence. As a result, this just might in turn be diminishing the promise of a new vision for a socio-economically independent, globally competitive and robust 21st Century Africa, even as we continue to lose time and momentum.

This view might also cast some light on the larger issue of assessing the value of so much resource that has been “invested” in Africa’s development over the years. For many, the ownership and architecture of the vision, mission, strategies and programmes lack authority and authenticity, because those Africans who should be the continent’s most critical strategic partners, expert Africans themselves, have not been allowed or seriously enabled to engage or deliver the massive level and quality of intellect and resource to mastermind and drive the process.

While assistance can accelerate the process of development (a position that itself is not always true), substituting external strategic response to the challenges of a people not only does not constitute development, it absolutely undermines it because it is those who tackle the problems and find solutions who are developing. The very process of the development of intellectual property, the kernel of contemporary global enterprise, is predicated precisely on this formula.¹ For example, if Africa invested strategically on the search for an HIV vaccine and cure all these two decades when the disease was known to threaten Africa more than any other society, especially given Africa’s many world-class research scientists spread around the globe, if a small part of the funds devoted to managing it had been deployed to support such a high-level scientific effort led by African scientists, there is a better than average chance that the outcome would be different. We might be closer to developing a vaccine and a cure, and the extremely

¹ See *Knowledge and the Translucency of Government* by Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr., Ph.D. A Presentation to the 6th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, Seoul, Republic of South Korea, May 24-27, 2005

valuable knowledge and intellectual property that come with both. Even discoveries on the way to a solution would themselves bestow new knowledge and innovation to Africa's development enterprise.

Ownership and Legitimacy: Sidelining Africa's Brightest and Best

The quintessential mission and mandate of Africa's political leadership, including the institutions they have set up to drive this process (most notably the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)) is to mobilise Africans to jointly evolve an accurate assessment of Africa's real challenge, their root cause, where Africans want to go, what resources they have or can muster to support their common dream and how to accomplish and sustain all of this. So if those who lead the institutional vehicles established for this purpose have not mobilised Africa's best minds and experts to craft the vision to respond to the yearnings of Africans and fulfill a dream that is shared by all, if Africa has not done this a priori as a prerequisite of self-determination before engaging in an international partnership of unequals, then the entire structure and mission of African development is flawed. Under such circumstances, no amount of institutional or resource commitment can make a difference. This, I am afraid, is why Africa's development remains patently elusive and intractable.

In the context of the implementation of a strategic vision for Africa, development partners can only manage the support process. They cannot create visions and strategies for Africa. The pre-eminent mandate of Africa's political leadership and their institutions such as NEPAD is to create a vision for Africa's development and the strategies for the implementation. Then, and only then, can they seek assistance. And even then, only after these African development institutions have crafted a strategic partnership with Africa, Africans and African public and private institutions, should they seek external support and partnership to make up for the deficit resource and capacity. African experts, at home and abroad, including Diaspora Africans, must be the first port of call for such expertise. It is the only basis on which we can call on them to engage in a passionate commitment to Africa's development. All social contracts entail reciprocity. And when Africa does seek such external partnership beyond African expertise, it must be predicated on the over-riding primacy of Africans as the senior partners to the vision and process. To ensure this, in all external partnership arrangements, provision must be made for an accelerated affirmative action plan to *invest* in building comparative, competitive African capacity so as not to have to seek the same assistance or expertise the next time around.

Passion, Bureaucracies and Strategic Transformation

Strategic self-development, especially of a continent still aware of its once great past and most eager to shed the burden of the last few centuries, is of necessity, of Renaissance proportions, and, *ipso facto*, passionate and romantic. Africa's development institutions must be passionate about change, romantic, inspired and inspiring in order to succeed, not bureaucratic---everyone can be that. Waiting for the global partners to be passionate and

romantic about transforming Africa is entirely another matter, one reminiscent of the genius of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

If there is one thing that bureaucracies are not designed for, and, therefore, cannot deliver on, it is strategic transformation based on bold visions the implementation of which requires extraordinary resolve, indefatigable effort and passion, and the willingness to take risks. It requires the willingness to risk ruffling some feathers from time to time, especially of those who stand to lose from the success of the undertaking. All of these attributes are antithetical to the modus operandi of the institutions that presently serve as Africa's development drivers or partners. As such, they cannot mastermind or be expected to mastermind, craft or deliver a vision and its implementation strategies for Africa. On its part, thanks both to its flawed pedigree in the haste of its creation and its early missteps, an African development institution such as NEPAD has also fast become a bureaucracy, thus reducing its own ability to craft and deliver on a strategic vision. This raises questions about its ability to effectively serve as the visionary agent for Africa's self-development (with emphasis on "self"), which is a strategic vision of the highest order and greatest importance. The issue here is the difference between vision and strategy on one hand, and the management of process, on the other.

*The Right, Role and Responsibility of Africa's **Self-Development***

Africa is so much loved by everyone, that we have become the favourite basket case of the world. Everyone who wants to study human problems runs to Africa. Research grants are given to institutions abroad to study African problems, while African universities that would be the most logical intellectual institutions to conduct such research, by virtue of both best familiarity and local competence and knowledge, do not feature. Even the overwhelming love of Africa deprives us of the room to address our own problems with utmost seriousness. We cannot even talk seriously amongst ourselves, or talk openly to each other as we must, without being self-conscious that we might bring discomfort and discomfiture to, or risk offending our external partners. The result is that, as for example with NEPAD, critical strategic issues go undiscussed until they fester, and then once major and forceful advocates such as President Abdoullaye Wade of Senegal, openly jump ship out of *intellectual* frustration, to the consternation of unsuspecting troopers. The issue of the possible threat of an excessive and excessively intimate and undifferentiated (and possibly uncritical) support for Africa to the legitimacy and ultimate long-term success of African self-development is important. This is a key strategic issue that we must find the courage, humility and perspicacity to address.

Two important issues are involved here. One is the issue of the right and responsibility of ownership of a people's vision for development, that is, the right and responsibility of Self-Development. The other is the issue of the nature of strong and irreversible competitive strategic capacity development, a process which requires that those who would develop, and develop significantly and strategically, must find the courage and wherewithal to struggle against inevitable odds to accomplish their dreams, in spite of, and against all such odds. Spoon-feeding is not development, nor is development by substitution. If Africa is to become globally competitive, it will not be because those

against whom it will have to compete, generously permit it and assist it to become more competitive. It will be because we fought for it, with our knowledge, intellect, expertise, experience and passion. There is a critical strategic, intellectual, and, importantly, psychological flaw in thinking otherwise.

Freedom and what one prefers to call “global competitive self-development” come with a price and that, so far, most of our contemporary political leaders have shown little sign of a willingness for Africa to pay her way, or at least lay the foundations for doing so. There is no such thing as development without pain. What may appear today to be the joy of others developing Africa for us while we sleepwalk through the history of our own future is nothing but a strategic disaster waiting to happen some years from now when we realise that we have lost so much more time waiting for others to build our own legacy. The question also arises as to why we should expect those who gain from our poverty to willingly act decisively to alter their advantage by making us become more competitive with them. Under the circumstances of these two issues, ownership and willingness to make sacrifices for a better and more competitive future, the critical need for a clarion call to Africans to jump onto the train moving Africa to a better future on a fast track is compelling.

From Subsistence to Self-Actualisation

Subsistence is the costliest and least rewarding mode of human existence. It taps all human energy, carries maximum burden with little prospect of relief, and provides little or no joy or hope that tomorrow will be better than today. It undermines the ability to dream while providing little or no compelling force to break out of its confines in search of a better life.

On the other hand, self-actualisation, the pursuit of one’s highest dreams with eminent hope of achieving it, unleashes the best in us, and empowers us to take on all challenges, to see all obstacles as merely temporary roadblocks to be side-stepped or overwhelmed, while we stay resolutely focused on our goal and ultimate destination. In the pursuit of self-actualisation, crises become nothing but opportunities for creativity and innovation, serving as fuel, as it were, to drive the engine of the genius in us to break new grounds.

Given the most basic shelter, food and clothing, neither subsistence nor the pursuit of self-actualisation has much to do with material wealth. They have to do with the spirit, the ability or lack of it to believe in infinite possibilities and the more than reasonable prospect of our achieving them. It has a lot to do with an enabling context and environment, a sense of a common purpose, a common dream and shared energy driven by a shared conviction that together, we and our society are heading somewhere significant where things will be infinitely better because we can make them better.

A quick journey down memory lane. A good number of us grew up living under thatch roofs. When it rained, sometimes the roof leaked and you had to use a bucket to capture the water. Some of us used kerosene lamps and remember when electricity first came to town. We remember the first radios. We learned to chase women by tipping the young

boys in the neighbourhood to serve as scouts and track them to where they lived because at the moment we first saw them we were not well dressed up enough to approach them. All of this because there were no telephones. We were taught in primary school by teachers who themselves had only two years of education beyond primary school. But we excelled. We went abroad to study the arts, science and technology and shared the classrooms with students who had played with technology all their lives. But despite the material and exposure handicap, we excelled. And, most importantly, we never felt poor. We were bright, smart, and unstoppable. We were quite arrogant, especially the Nigerians amongst us, and healthily and desirably so. The world belonged to us, and we were determined to conquer. We were driven by a shared dream. That is what we had. If we could do so much and excel with so little to work with then, why is it that today with so much more, we are poor, uninspired, listless and caught in a seemingly intractable malaise?

Those of you who are Nigerian or have shared close space with Nigerians, especially in the good old days, cannot forget the patently branding expression, “No Problem.” Nigerians never thought there was any problem in this world (and potentially beyond) that they could not solve. And that was *before* the oil wealth, which ironically, threatened the self-confidence that “no problem” symbolized. The spirit behind that “no problem” is what the pursuit of self-actualisation is all about.

The Burden of Minimalist Development Goals

When you appear to be embattled for an extended period of time, you attract countless experts on your problem who from the goodness of their hearts proffer all kinds of solutions, most of them without the benefit of insights, rigorous analysis or value. When you do not take ownership of your life and destiny, you create a vacuum which others rush in to fill with their own ideas and designs, and you cannot blame them for doing so. If we could monetize the countless solutions freely proffered to Africa’s problems and accepted with little critical reservations, we would be a rich continent. Perhaps the most disingenuous advise to Africa that is relevant to our discourse here is the one that cautions against ambition. It comes in a plethora of variations, including “you have to learn to crawl before you can walk”, all of which basically seek to get us to set for ourselves nothing but the most minimalist goals. Why crawl when you can fly? If you are down and out and very far behind, why would you want to crawl when others are rocketing to the moon and beyond? It does not make sense. It is frankly unintelligent. And yet, unfortunately, this is the global model that has been entrenched even in no less eminent a strategy than the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs established with the best of intentions by the United Nations Millennium Summit several years ago at the turn of the century.

From Poverty Management to World-Class Competitive Self-Development: A Compelling Paradigm Shift---Towards an Empowered African Renaissance

Poverty management, the intervention to make the reality and experience of poverty and deprivation less painful and a bit more tolerable, is not a sound development strategy. In

fact, it is not a development strategy at all. Poverty has the uncanny ability to manage itself. When you attempt to manage poverty, whatever the investment, the logical outcome is poverty, albeit perhaps better poverty. Poverty is an undesirable human condition, and subsistence, the quality of life that it supports, is unacceptable. The only answer to poverty is to eliminate it. You do so through the creation of wealth and the equitable distribution of it to guarantee a minimum quality of life that not only provides baseline acceptable conditions, but also ensures the ability of most of the people to pursue their dreams in a secure and healthy enabling environment. All of the details of desirable socio-political conditions are subsumed in this definition. Ironically, poverty management is a most expensive development model. It absorbs all investment of time, energy and resource without providing returns to replenish them. On the other hand, competitive self-development, the pursuit of self-actualisation at the most elevated heights of human genius, on the strength of the ownership of problems and the opportunity and compelling impetus to solve them, creating innovation and intellectual property in the process, is an eminently superior development model and one that is self-regenerating, given the nature of knowledge as a driver of the process.

This paradigm shift from poverty management to world-class competitive self-development that I call for this afternoon is what Africa most needs to adopt at this point in time, making the corresponding adjustments as to who leads the process, how and to what end. A knowledge and innovation-driven African development strategy will mobilise Africa's best and brightest, all Africans, at home, abroad and in the Diaspora, to enthusiastically engage in a common and exciting effort to build the Africa of all our dreams. This paradigm shift will trigger the African Renaissance we so much want and need, and expected to unleash at the turn of the New Millennium, when we began to craft innovative strategies for Africa's rebirth or reawakening, before the process was high-jacked into partnerships of still questionable significance or promise.

It is further my belief that somewhere in the mix of ideas that hold efficacy for Africa's transformation, are two key elements. The first is self-development, which invokes issues of responsibility, accountability, authority and authenticity of the development strategy. The second is a commitment to shifting Africa's development focus and direction from the management of poverty (itself seemingly relentless), to the creation of widely diffused well-being and opportunity. This paradigm shift requires that we boldly craft and implement an African-inspired and driven strategic self-development model and a corresponding programme that has a greater promise of substantial development across board. Only such a strategy will of necessity attract and compel the participation of Africa's best and brightest at home and abroad, unleashing the very pent-up and hamstrung genius that we all know to be very much in existence, and the absence of which from the theatre of Africa's development is significantly responsible for our present malaise.

Most of the initiatives and programmes so far proffered on Africa as development strategies, most of them of external authorship, are rather minimalist in target, with no credible or convincing guarantee that aiming low of necessity holds greater chances of accomplishment. In fact, one can argue that these goals and programmes are so

minimalist and in some cases, from the point of view of Africans, rather ill-advised, that they tend to fly well below the radar screen of Africa's best, hence they cannot engage or engage in them.

Building a Smart Modern 21st Century Society

The very attribute of education, knowledge and innovation is the ability to leap-frog over several stages of development, using new capabilities and tools to forge solutions at the cutting-edge, empowered and enabled by lessons learned and best practices. This is true clear across board for all knowledge, but most especially science and technology. This point should not for a moment be misinterpreted as advocating that just jumping foolishly ahead of your problems will get you somewhere and ahead of the game. You will simply land on your let us say, face, on the pile of problems, with the risk of being bruised. Rather, it is that the informed and enlightened deployment of knowledge, intellect and expertise in a coherent and concerted engagement of significant challenges, which is how I define "problem-solving", will catapult the society to the cutting-edge, making maximum use of its limited resources. Applying the highest level and quality of thoroughness and expertise to craft a strategic response to prevailing challenges with the best advantage of fore-going experience and practice, not only creates solutions and innovation, but stimulates the mind, individually and for society at large.

If the multiplication of intellectual resource (knowledge and innovation)(X) and material resource(Y) equals development output (Z), then the greater the component of knowledge, the more output is created with limited material resource. In its simplest formulation, if $Z=XY$, then we can increase Z by increasing X especially when Y, material resource, is limited. In the ideal contemporary 21st Century economy, we seek to increase the knowledge component in order to achieve exponential output. This is what we call a knowledge economy. This is where we must position and drive Africa's development. This is where African scholars, intellectuals and their university and other institutions of higher education come in to play the leading strategic role.

Our development malaise comes from a low intellectual or knowledge input (by faulty design and subterfuge), which then requires a much larger component of material input. In fact, the impact of knowledge and innovation on economic output and performance is exponential compared to material input. This would make the equation more like $Z=X^aY$ where a is an exponential factor. The economies of countries like Singapore that have so little material resources are excellent examples of this formulation. Ironically, with so much material resource, if we introduced the knowledge component as a critical factor of our rapid development strategy, our overall development formula would be exceptional, with palpable results in little time, with greater, durable and irreversible results over time.

The Underestimation of Africa's Global Expert Capacity

The irony is that since the language of assistance solicitation is closely tied into the mantra that Africa lacks the experts and expertise to undertake critical development engagements, some of our political leaders actually argue publicly, as they did at the last

World Economic Forum in Davos, that, Africa does not have the experts we need to develop our continent, the glaring facts to the contrary notwithstanding. And yet, nobody has bothered to invest in quantifying Africa's global expertise as a strategic database for planning and development. I am sure that everyone of you in this room knows of some chap you either taught or at least used to beat in school who has come to Africa as an expert. How often do consultants come to African universities to seek expert knowledge or assistance to do their work on Africa, or to pay a very small portion of their fees to engage lecturers and students to do the core work? Only Africa does this to its people. Nobody else does. And that is part of what I call *the strategic, philosophical and psychological obstacles to Africa's development*, itself the title of a work in progress.

Africa's World-Class Expert Knowledge Resource

Where do we get this knowledge component from? Where is this critical mass of Africa's world-class experts? This is where the story becomes painfully absurd. Africa has been educating its young men and women for decades, in the best institutions at home and abroad, even when under colonial rule. We also once had excellent educational institutions at home, from primary schools through secondary schools to universities and polytechnics. As now, education then was the pre-eminent priority of all Africans. Families spared no effort and sacrifice to educate their children. First the boys where resources were limited, and later the girls as well when the paradigm shifted to educating the most capable and most ambitious. Whole villages contributed money to educate anyone's child. Churches, enterprises and individuals gave scholarships. Education was the highest item on national budgets, that is until the distraction of external wars and internal civil strife caused a disastrous shift in focus. Despite their modest upbringing, these men and women have become amongst the best and brightest in the world, in virtually every conceivable field of expertise. Today, Africa has an incredible pool of world-class men and women who work or teach at leading corporate and academic institutions globally.

The problem is that we have not invested in identifying this vast pool, which is much more than the critical mass needed to jumpstart and effectively implement a knowledge-based African quantum development. For years, one tried to get the support of African governments to quantify this critical strategic human resource as a database for driving Africa's development, but ran into the two main obstacles: The resistance of those who seek to maintain their command and control of Africa's development model and process, and who need for Africa to continue to appear weak and helpless, and the recalcitrance of our people who, perhaps themselves not having an intimate knowledge of how excellent these Africans are, especially in any field of science and technology, undermine Africa's possibilities by imposing their own limited knowledge to obstruct the process. The former problem would be irrelevant if the second were not there. We cannot fault people for having the smarts to protect their interests even if others suffer. But we can fault ourselves for not having the foresight, perspicacity and self-confidence in our own people to mastermind our self- development. This we can do something about. And some of us have committed ourselves to doing just that.

From another angle, African countries began their domestic and global educational efforts at the same time as the other erstwhile colonized countries that have done well for themselves today. Africa has always had a strong representation amongst foreign students, faculty and researchers anywhere in the world, even in far-flung places that you would not expect to see an African, a black man or woman, survive. If these other countries like India have the critical mass of experts to successfully drive their quantum development, surely Africa does, and more.

Building Global Competitive Capacity in the 21st Century: The New Attributes

In the 21st Century, development and global competitiveness are predicated on knowledge and innovation, not on power, military might or material wealth. And in such a dispensation, the centre of gravity of global knowledge has been migrating east and south-east for quite a few years. I have said in the past that the demography of global knowledge is not the same as that of wealth or power. A number of countries in the rapidly changing developing world have known this for a long time, and have taken advantage of its facilitations to transform their economies and societies. They have moved almost stealthily into the arena of the global market in the shadow of distraction while those who might otherwise seek to prevent their emergence have been preoccupied with the pursuit of a 20th Century pastime, fighting wars.

Military might and economic power, and even the very notion of being a super power, are 20th century preoccupations that are rapidly becoming obsolete in the 21st Century. Knowledge, intellect, culture, creativity and innovation, and the quality of life that they enhance and advance, are the key parameters of 21st Century excellence. And in such a dispensation, the possibilities for Africa to excel are vast and unprecedented. This is why we must have the courage to take control of our own destiny, and craft our own strategies, in full knowledge that it is not up to others to mastermind our development. No country can outsource its own development. You cannot engage in development by substitution. You cannot bask in the seeming sunshine of perpetual development assistance because you will wake up one day to learn that you have been basking in a mirage.

The Right of Ownership of Problems as Intellectual Property

In strategic terms, in an address to the World Intellectual Properties Organisation (WIPO), in September 2001, a few days after the events of 9/11, I talked about what I called the right of ownership of problems as intellectual property. I postulated that creativity and innovation derive from problem-solving. Therefore, if you *steal* my problems, you cause me two new problems: You deprive me of the opportunity for creativity and innovation, and you leave me with the residual guilt of incompetence. And if you proffer your solutions on my problems and they fail, you blame or castigate me. This triple whammy (to use an American colloquialism that is most appropriate), is how I see Africa's development problem. Put simply, development is nothing but the very process of problem-solving. So as long as others continue to be Africa's preferred agents to solve our development problems, we cannot, and will not develop. As long as others

mastermind our development strategies, policies and programmes, our scholars, intellectuals and experts, or universities, will continue to be irrelevant to the strategic formulation of Africa's development process, a role for which they were trained or established, respectively, in the first place. So far, they continue to fail to achieve their critical *raison d'être*.

Knowledge, Science and Technology, and African Development

The new paradigm for Africa's strategic development must be knowledge-based, and given the material challenges of Africa's quality of life deficits, must also be significantly Science and Technology-based, driven by research and development. Taking ownership of our development challenges, therefore, requires applying the intellectual forte of Africans from all works of life (not just academicians) to craft a new African self-development model. It also requires deploying our world-class expert capacity at home and abroad with the singular objective of significantly transforming Africa within a tangible period of time.

Africa's Universities, Intellectuals and Expert

At the forefront of such a new concerted effort, must stand the African universities. They once were the powerhouses of ideas and innovation, and remain the only institutions suitable for, and capable of delivering the strategic expertise needed to do the job. We must place the prime right and principal responsibility to lead the march of Africa to a new future squarely on the shoulders of African universities, and on African scholars and experts at home and abroad, including African scientists and researchers who teach or work at research institutions worldwide.

In this dispensation, the Association of African Universities, as the umbrella institution for African universities, and especially the Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents of African universities and colleges, as their administrators, become key strategic players in a new comprehensive continental effort. They must lead the struggle to transform Africa from an embattled and impoverished social-economy, to a modern, respected and highly productive society, one that is globally competitive, and eminently committed (and able) to hold its own against any other society in the world, empowered by a knowledge-driven global competitive capacity.

The Place of African Scholars, Intellectuals and Experts in the African Strategic Self-Development Process---The Susceptibility of the Mind to Atrophy

If the global economy is driven by knowledge, creativity and innovation, it is fueled by problems and their demand for solutions. The process is masterminded by the best and brightest, and it is measured by the number, scope, quality and enduring value of the intellectual property and output that emerge from such a process. And who are these best and brightest? You and your colleagues, your students, bright men and women, your problem-solvers, your geniuses who might not even have seen the inside of an academic

institution, these are the people who create intellectual property by solving problems. Problem-solving is the quintessential role of scholars and academic institutions, most especially of universities and other institutions of higher learning. That, ladies and gentlemen, is your principal role, and the time has come to return to it, fully backed and empowered by all of us who share your upbringing, training and expertise. That is our role, and the time has come for us to play it. And not just for the good of our people, but for our own good. We are not living the exciting and thoroughly engaged life we spent so many years in college planning for. We owe it to ourselves, to Africa, to begin to do just that by creating and enjoying the power, energy and exhilaration of a new African Renaissance.

At present, there is little correlation between the turn out from our universities and their engagement in the strategic levels of our continental development. It is not just about even finding a job, if they can. It is about strategic engagement where their education and training can be of most critical value to Africa, and where in return, their intellect, knowledge and passion are so engaged that they remain excited and stimulated, the best state of mind for maximum innovation, creativity and productivity, and significantly, quality of life and longevity. The dilemma we have is that a mind, once trained, remains restless when it is not appropriately engaged in the search of higher knowledge. Disengaged from active duty, a fine mind atrophies, and there is nothing more deadly than a fine mind that goes on the shelf. We know this when we examine the lives of people who have retired prematurely without appropriate arrangements for continued intellectual engagement and stimulation. They tend to die young. Excellent minds left to lie fallow just when their knowledge has metamorphosed into wisdom and their genius is just primed to give exponential returns to Africa constitute a tragic waste of our costliest investment in human capacity development.

In Africa, we have not made provisions for engaging our best minds for as long as possible to continue to give us the best of their knowledge, experience and wisdom. We let them lie fallow, because of some alien bureaucratic tenet that when people advance in age, they must be shunted off to some never never land, not even retained to mentor those behind them, in a continuous continental march of self-development, creating a long line of relay runners bearing the torch of Africa into a greater, better, more competitive and more enjoyable tomorrow. And yet, it is such seamless capacity building through the generations that constitutes sustainability, not statistical formulations.

We must confront the fact, once and for all, that no one can or will develop Africa for us, not the way we need to develop it, not the way we can. The arguments are frankly self-evident. Why should anyone who has gotten Africa on the cheap, go out of his or her way to pay more, or worse still to help Africa learn to demand more? While we hold our best minds at bay, away from doing what Africa has invested so much to train them to do, we go out of our way to seek and yearn for others to come and develop Africa, as if to put us out of the misery of effort, in the false belief that by asking others, no, by paying others such enormous sums to replicate their societies and cultures on our land, we will become like them by contract or fiat. If others take the lead in solving Africa's problems, they, not us, are the ones acquiring knowledge. They are the ones developing. And sooner or

later, they will come to us to buy from them, the solutions to our problems, and we will, once again, go begging for money to buy, with little or no value-added to sell.

The Role of Science and Technology in World-Class Development

In a knowledge-driven economy, Science and Technology play a very important role. Besides being the basis of (and tools for) the formulation and implementation of systems and structures on which solutions and corresponding applications are positioned to deliver goods and services, they also constitute the enabling instruments for innovation. As such, Science and Technology are a critical part of the knowledge-driven strategy that one is advocating as the way to craft and implement Africa's self-development. In this regard, however, we must define Science and Technology in the broadest way possible, to embrace most aspects of intellectual effort, including, where relevant, those aspects of liberal arts, and the arts, that find value in, take advantage of, and can be enhanced by, the capabilities of science and technology. Whilst several years ago Science and Technology represented a distinct and remote preoccupation that was the purview of technical people, today, they have become routine aspects of daily life. The exponential growth of consumer electronics has made the products and services of science and technology a basic aspect of life and living in most modern societies, including, to a remarkable extent, in Africa.

The Place of Research and Development

The engine that drives Science and Technology is Research and Development, or R&D, as we commonly refer to it. Research and Development is nothing but a systematic and scientific way or method of problem-solving. So, linking up with my earlier statement, postulation, if you will, that development is nothing but problem-solving, the promotion of African development through the ownership of Africa's problems translates into a paradigm of owning Africa's problems and applying science and technology through Research and Development to solve them, in the process creating intellectual property, the highest level of enterprise asset of our contemporary economy. If others continue to ascribe to themselves the right and ownership of our problems and to seek to find the solutions to them, aided and abetted by those of our political and institutional leadership who are yet to have confidence in our own abilities to engage our problems for the most informed and relevant solutions, then we will continue to lose out on the most important opportunity in economic development of modern times.

Africa's World-Class Expertise in Science and Technology, and Research and Development

And here again, as with expert capacity in general, Africa has much more than the critical mass of world-class experts in Science and Technology to mastermind the deployment of them through research and development, to build a globally competitive modern society, with some to spare. African male and female scientists can be found in practically any research, science and technology institution of note in the world. They are providing solutions as much to problems of immediate importance as well as pushing the envelop of

theoretical science and innovation to new boundaries, with the promise of creating new knowledge, products and services that will not only serve our world today, but anticipate what might be our challenges of tomorrow, positioning the solutions to await their arrival.

The Critical Role of African Women Experts: Smart, Sharp, Skilled and Feminine

In this pool of African experts that must rise to mastermind and effect Africa's transformation are a good number of first-class African women who can hold their own against the best in the world. Smart, sharp, highly educated in just about any field of knowledge from science and technology to economics, finance, medicine and the arts, these highly-skilled young women have a critical role to play alongside African men in this joint effort to build and sustain an African Renaissance.

Besides their knowledge and technical skills, they also bring cultural and historical assets and attributes that are of great importance to the global effort at Africa's self-development. For example, by nature and tradition, African women are good listeners and critical observers. In a bold effort such as we seek to embark on that is froth with both material and intangible challenges, these attributes are of strategic importance. They both help inform the analysis and the decision-making process, as well as enable us to take cognizance of evolving and often unusual circumstances and developments emanating from the dynamics of action in our march of progress. These, in turn, allow us to anticipate what we can, mitigate what is possible, and minimizing the threat or potential impact of what is inevitable.

Furthermore, our women, by virtue of being traditionally the "mothers" of the land, the keepers and protectors of the culture and homestead, have a profound sense and sensibility that keep in sight longer-term issues and evolving future consequences of what we might do right or wrong today. This makes their advice and caution particularly important. They carry the history of our common heritage and legacy in their mind, heart and instinct, like a massive server that processes the African experience, and can instantaneously pull from its depths critical lessons and options when we are confronted with experiences and situations that have even the slightest correspondence to our past. They also carry the passion of the tribe, that irrepressible force that compels us to dare to do the extraordinary, driven by the promise of a superior landing.

But in order to know and take strategic advantage of these special attributes, we must learn to listen to our women as a matter of deliberate strategy and commitment, and not seek to suppress their informed instincts and enlightened voices for any reason of ego, power or similar disposition that can only undermine the seriousness and focus of our massive undertaking. For what it is worth, perhaps as a compensation or incentive, it is my belief that smart women deeply respond more profoundly to a man's intellect than to his biceps. I mean smart women. So as smart men who want to be so recognised and admired as such, and who want the women in their midst, besides, in front and behind them to be smart, strong and fulfilled, we must meticulously avoid undermining that smartness in our women which enables them to admire and cherish us. We must find the

time, courage and delicacy to admire our smart women, and embrace and encourage them, as pioneers in the creation of our pool of world-class African women who must take on their global counterparts (both men and women), and excel for our common good.

We must also understand that as our young women go out there to acquire and deploy their cutting-edge expertise for our common good, they take chances and are uniquely vulnerable. Many, if not all, of them are exposed to challenges and uncertainties as they seek their rightful place and fair share at the pinnacle of a global context in which they, as we African men, have been shut out for so long. We must play our part to encourage and mentor them, and enable and empower them to master and manage their dual need to be at one and the same time, smart yet beautiful, accomplished yet feminine, competitive yet delicate, global yet every bit African and special. It is a strategic issue. They need us to do this, even if sometimes they seem not to. But if we try, and we succeed in having their back, so to speak, they will not only make the best companions in our joint effort to build the modern 21st Century Africa of our dreams, but they will also find the reserve and resolve to also protect us and our common dream, interest and homestead, the well-being of which is quintessential for the well-being and self-actualisation of the African, man or woman, and our society.

Africans Abroad and the Question of the Brain Drain

In identifying and defining the material and expert human resources that will be needed to jump start and sustain the knowledge, intellect and expertise-driven strategic African globally competitive self-development model that I propose here, we will need to mobilise Africans at home and abroad. This brings us to the so-called “brain drain” issue. There are several possible takes on this issue, including whether or not it is a problem in the first place. The fact is that in a global socio-economy, where our experts are is of strategic importance. It can be argued that we need a good number of the Africans who hold strategic positions in the global economy to stay put for Africa’s sake, because, they can best deliver critical capacity for Africa from such strategic positions of knowledge, access and authority. If they leave such strategic posts, Africa will lose out as they may not be replaced by other Africans. Being shut out of strategic positions deep inside the global system, positions attained after so much sweat and sacrifice, and against the relentless forces of nationalism, race and prejudice, would be reckless suicide and a strategic disservice to Africa, all the cacophony to the contrary on the subject notwithstanding.

Furthermore, with contemporary global communications, physical location is far less important than expertise and its mobility. Above all, what is most important is the disposition and commitment of Africa’s global experts, and here, there is no doubt that all of them, smart men and women, young and no longer quite so young, are passionate about contributing their expert and material resources to make a difference at home.

Brain Drain or Global Strategic Presence and Opportunity?

If we combine Africans at home and abroad, and Diaspora Africans, we together constitute an incredible group of knowledge experts willing and able to take this Africa of ours, energize her and transform her to a reasonable facsimile of our highest dreams.

Much has been spoken and written about this elusive phenomenon called “the brain drain”. Much of this conference is devoted to this subject, in its various configurations. I will simply attempt to raise some highlights on the subject, fully aware that I might trigger vigorous debate, which is appropriate and desirable in this environment in which enlightenment comes from free and hearty disputation.

- The notion of a brain drain has become of so much common parlance that it has lost meaning through a loss of specificity. The fact that Africans go abroad to acquire knowledge and expertise, and sometimes stay to work, earn a living and even build or extend their families, does not *per se* constitute a disability or brain drain.
- Besides the fact that their commitment and loyalty to home is always uppermost in their hearts and minds, in a world in which global diffusion and presence is a measure of the opportunity to lay claim to a fair share of the global dispensation, Africa needs to have Africans in as many strategic positions in the world as possible. The strategic value of such presence, from political to economic and scientific, is incalculable.
- If you accept my postulation that knowledge is the critical driver of the economies of modern society, then the ability of Africans to possess and deploy cutting-edge knowledge acquired from the best institutions and critical positions in the world should be viewed as a strategic asset of the highest order for Africa.
- Knowledge, experience and expertise are intangible assets that can be and are deployed out of body, so to speak, for delivery anywhere in the world where it is most needed, without the intellect of its origin being necessary transported out of station. So what is important is not where Africans are, but what they know, and are willing and able to deploy strategically in support of Africa’s quantum development.
- In today’s wired and connected world, virtually all critical knowledge and expertise is transmitted across the world in micro-seconds on the platform of the Internet. This is the case even between two people sitting a foot or two apart in the same room or office space.
- Most people spend much of their lives and careers getting to the cutting-edge of their field of expertise. In such a position, they become most valuable to society, and the corporate enterprises that they work for or own. In the increasingly more restrictive global environment, especially more restricted to Africans and peoples of colour, Africa cannot afford to lose any one such position at the cutting-edge presently occupied by an African. If he or she goes, the chances of another African getting there are very slim. On the other hand, if he or she stays put, the chances of getting other young and up and coming Africans there or close-by are much greater. So the choice is obvious. Africa does not need to pull back its successful experts from their strategic global positions. She simply needs to engage them to mastermind Africa’s own development. If this approach is well

developed and put in place, the details of who comes and goes will be easy to negotiate, including what appropriate arrangements need to be crafted in order to ensure that other Africans move up, in a seamless cycle of generations, in our perpetual relay race of strategic self-development.

Mobilizing the Diaspora for Continental Development: A Global Partnership for Africa's Future

The challenge of implementing the paradigm shift in Africa's development strategy from poverty management to world-class competitive self-development, will be best and most easily accomplished if we can mobilise Africa's global intellect, knowledge and expertise as constituted in the capacities of continental Africans, Africans abroad and Diaspora Africans, to build a smart 21st Century society.

From a political level, there are problems which have little to do with Africans abroad. Rather, they have to do with the failure so far, of Africa's political leadership to develop a coherent strategy with genuine commitment to embrace and engage Africa's best and brightest wherever they are, to give of their best, in return for the opportunity to create an enduring legacy. If we turn to Africans abroad only when we need to do things that we are not willing to pay for, but will turn to non-Africans when we have money to pay, if we turn to Africans abroad to do things after others have laid the strategies which prevent us from doing so in the first place, it becomes exploitation, not patriotism.

Whenever an African government has genuinely sought to engage Africans abroad, (not necessarily from their own countries), to mastermind critical strategies for development, rarely have they been turned down. In fact, the stories of the numbers of African men and women who through the years have risked all they had to try to deliver their world-class expertise to Africa at great cost, such as, for example, bidding to build infrastructure, manufacture goods, and provide services, only to find things suddenly effervesce before their eyes, is countless. Trying to replicate at home what they have learned abroad only to be frustrated to the point of being compelled to retreat just to save their families, makes an interesting case study. And yet, whenever an African country, has reached out or created a conducive environment for active participation by their citizens abroad in its core development strategies, the response has been overwhelming. The trouble most Africans abroad run into when they try to deliver their expertise to Africa is that they most often discover that expatriates are preferred to them. Whatever the true situation in this regard, it is something that African governments and officials must address fully and transparently if the Diaspora is to engage strategically in Africa's quantum development.

The commitment of Africans abroad to Africa's development and well-being is most dramatically demonstrated in the amount of money remittances they make everyday. Such remittances account for over 25% of all foreign assistance from industrial nations, and half of all direct foreign investments. In Nigeria alone, this figure is estimated variously at approximately US\$35 billion in 2006. With so much direct investment in Africa, if Africans abroad got attention and consideration proportionate to such investment, Africa would be well ahead of the game.

It is, therefore, a matter of faith and genuine interest, not one of reluctance and greater concern for personal gain, as is often disingenuously claimed. And even at that, why is it that those officials who castigate Africans for wanting to ensure fair and enforceable arrangements, have no difficulty making precisely such guarantees available to non-Africans of comparable or lesser proven competence?

There are issues like these which need to be openly discussed in the context of a shared common interest and a set of comprehensive understandings arrived at. In such a dispensation, we should seek to create a tripartite commonality, consisting of Africans at home, African abroad and Diaspora Africans, all committed to a common dream of seeing a modern world-class African society built in the shortest time possible. In this regard too, African universities and the scholars and intellectuals that drive them, should take the lead to promote this dialogue just as it has initiated through the very subject of this conference. The Association of African Universities deserves praise for this most relevant and opportune convocation on a subject at the core of Africa's prospects for a better and more worthy future.

The Role of Foreign Development Partners, Investors, Scholars, Intellectuals and Experts

It is important to emphasize that nothing in this address suggests or seeks to suggest that Africa isolate herself from the world while trying to get her act together, even though this is an idea the debate of which holds the promise of valuable insights. There is, and will always be, a role for development partners (whether bilateral or multi-lateral). This is also true of foreign scholars, intellectuals and experts who themselves do not pose the level of strategic threat that the governments and international organisations pose in the context of this address. But they simply cannot (and should not) be the primary masterminds of Africa's development. This is not really their problem. It is the problem of Africa's political leaders who need to understand the strategic issues underlying self-reliance and the critical and strategic value of placing their own experts at the frontlines of masterminding and implementing Africa's self-development. Additionally, African governments should use their strategic relationships in the global context to provide opportunity, advocacy, support and protection for African experts and entrepreneurs seeking to enter those markets, as a matter of the utmost strategic importance to Africa.

Again with respect to non-African scholars and intellectuals, the acquisition and sharing of knowledge is a seamless global exercise. Promoting global intellectual collaboration, as much in the arts and humanities as in science and technology, is a *sine qua non* if all of us are going to extend the boundaries of human knowledge and expertise to their farthest reaches in a common effort to continuously enhance human possibilities and the quality of life for all of us. This is entrenched in our strategic project, Project R&D, that I will briefly mention shortly.

The Challenges and Opportunities for African Universities

In order for African universities to play their proper leadership role in this paradigm shift from poverty management to knowledge, intellect and expertise-driven smart modern African society, they must be reconfigured to become strategic knowledge institutions, not just a place where young people go to acquire credentials to qualify for employment. This will require that we revisit their *raison d'être* and their repositioning as global institutions empowered to lead the thinking process of African nations and the continent as a whole. The rules of engagement, including the protocols of evaluating good scholarship and teaching, and their corresponding rewards, will need to be redefined. This issue of appropriate incentive, reward and remuneration must be addressed as an important item. Using arguments of patriotism to seek to avoid providing proper compensation for African scholars and experts is nothing but blackmail. This is itself not strategic, but rather counterproductive, for people blackmailed often do not turn out the best performance.

African universities will also need to be repositioned as a top priority of national investment, and be given the world-class environment and facilities that they need to be the agents for driving Africa's global competitive agenda. This should not be as much of a challenge as it may seem. At independence, education took the highest portion of the national budget. That was for good reasons. If that had remained true to this day, and we had kept the defense budgets to a more manageable level, chances are that we would have had less wars, internal and external, while proliferating the enlightenment of education promoted and bequeathed as the desirable attributes of dialogue, accommodation, fair competition, and the pursuit of higher goals that together constitute the conducive environment that sustains modern society.

I am sure that you know better than I would, the specific shopping list of what our reconfigured universities need. But they include the following:

1. Modern campuses, safe, secure, wholesome, and inspiring.
2. Sufficient and reliable infrastructure, including round-the-clock power supply, clean water supply, and communications access, especially broadband Internet access. To meet some of these requirements, the appropriate university departments should themselves participate in deploying innovative technologies.
3. Funding at the level of strategic investment. Innovation in this regard would go a long way.
4. Cutting-edger instructional and research facilities manned by very well trained technical personnel, supported by supplementary funds from industry, including through undertaking sponsored research and development projects beneficial to them, in an R&D partnership.
5. Access to knowledge, information, data and research papers and reports, using information and communications, and related technologies and innovations to have maximum access at minimum cost. Online and virtual libraries would be ideal in aid of this objective.
6. Access to opportunities for publishing their own research outputs, which is important to scholars, especially as part of the global sharing of knowledge and scholarship, and peer recognition.

7. Feeding the body that feeds the mind. The notion of a poor professor, though romantic, is a lousy oxymoron. The critical asset of a lecturer is the fact of a sound mind in a healthy body. Hungry minds do not function properly. We cannot begrudge people who are responsible for making our society smart and competent the facilities and perquisites they need to do so. They should, in fact, be pampered, as used to be the case.
8. Restoring a leadership role for universities in Africa's development strategy formulation as strategic partners to African governments and sub-regional and regional organisations, by deliberate policy, in preference to and ahead of external partnerships.

Creating a Seamless Academic Network in Six Dimensions

To take full advantage of the promise of this paradigm shift, and place our universities at the forefront of the process, we need to create and network the best and most appropriate expertise and capacity where it is most conducive, and deliver it wherever it is most needed, through an innovative set of coordinated networks as follows:

1. Horizontally through networking the programme and capacity of domestic universities.
2. Vertically through integrating primary, secondary and tertiary academic institutions to provide seamless inspiration, tutelage and mentorship from top down, and studious diligence, apprenticeship, enlightened inquisitiveness and intellectual excitement from bottom up.
3. Spatially through deliberate capacity-building within universities to provide specialist support in problem-solving for the private sector, including industry and the services sectors, government and the rest of the public sector, all of which will, in return, provide core or supplemental support to the universities.
4. Triangularly through the systematic coordination and networking of universities and tertiary institutions in the African sub-region and continentally to develop specialist expertise in areas of most appropriate resource and relevance for each country, or sub-region, and delivering same where most needed on the continent.
5. Globally through networking with global universities and research institutions to stay at the cutting-edge of knowledge, contributing as much as they derive from the partnership; and
6. Networking with African specialists and experts worldwide, at home and abroad, and including Diaspora Africans, utilising cutting-edge tools of communications and information, including a global virtual research. Laboratory as envisaged in our Telecom Africa Project R&D.

Telecom Africa's Project R&D

The paradigm shift that I have advocated in this presentation, namely from poverty management to world-class competitive self-development, is at once most compelling and eminently feasible. In addition, it is the model that will not fall below the radar screen of Africa's best mind, but instead excite them and unleash their genius to engage

in a common effort to build the Africa of our dreams, through a new African Renaissance.

In pursuit of this effort, one that I have been preoccupied with for many years, we at Telecom Africa International Corporation have crafted a bold strategic initiative that encompasses all of the elements that I have described here this afternoon. Telecom Africa, with the support of a leading global technology corporation, one of many we will be mobilising to implement it, has crafted a strategic African Science and Technology initiative code-named *Project R&D*. Project R&D is designed to promote Research and Development in Africa as a critical concrete innovations, intellectual property, products and services-oriented strategic enterprise. It will be accomplished through a global partnership that will include universities in Africa and abroad, the global knowledge, science and technology industry, the African public and private sectors, and individual African and non-Africa experts around the world.

Project R&D represents the quintessence of the strategic deployment of African science and technology expertise worldwide, mobilised and galvanized to jumpstart the shift from poverty management to a science and technology-based R&D-driven African self-development enterprise. It also represents the culmination of decades of passionate and dedicated response to Africa's hitherto seemingly intractable development challenge. It represents a commitment to seek to stem, at all cost, the elusive search for meaningful personal, national and continental self-actualisation and global competitiveness for Africa, a combination of the dreams of man and nation that is indivisible in our African essence, will and purpose. Project R&D is designed to operate on a multiple platform that combines a set of physical research laboratories with a global virtual research laboratory to take maximum advantage of Africa's global scientific and technological expertise and that of Africa-friendly experts, in close collaboration with researchers at home on the continent, in a truly seamless and coordinated process..

Project R&D has taken full cognizance of the deliberations and outcome of the *Frontiers of Knowledge in Science and Technology for Africa: University Leaders' Forum* held in Cape Town on November 18-21 last year. Details of Project R&D will be provided when we unveil this initiative for the first time ever, appropriately later at this Conference. It is an exciting project and we hope we can get the partnership and full support of Association of Africa Universities and especially of the Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents. Be sure to join us for the presentation.

I hope I have not saddled you with an enormous clarion call. I would not do so if I did not think that we are all, together, very capable of meeting the challenge.

I want to thank you immensely for listening to me. Listening is one of the most strategic attributes of contemporary society. It is also a very rare one.

Thanks you for your indulgence.

God Bless.

*Dr. Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Telecom Africa International Corporation
222 Forest Avenue
New Rochelle, N. Y. 10804 USA
Telephone: +1 914 636 6498
Fax: +1 914 813 2503
Email: Okpaku@aol.com*