

Helen Clark: Opening Address to the International Conference on the Emergence of Africa

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It is a pleasure to join the President of Cote d'Ivoire, H.E. Alassane Ouattara, in welcoming you to this first *International Conference on the Emergence of Africa*.

Allow me to begin by sincerely thanking the President and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire for organizing this important conference in association with UNDP. This underlines Cote d'Ivoire's commitment to achieving what the African Union has titled "the Africa Africans want": "*an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its own citizens*". As well, I am happy to say that the holding of the conference exemplifies the strong partnership between Cote d'Ivoire and UNDP.

I also thank the African Development Bank and the World Bank for their support for the conference and all the countries represented for joining us today.

We gather as leaders, practitioners, experts, and advocates from every corner of Africa, from the BRICS and other rapidly emerging and developing countries, and from every region of the world.

There is much we can learn from each other about emergence. Through this Conference, we look to build and consolidate lasting partnerships and boost South-South co-operation. All present can be partners in translating the long-term vision of "emergence" shared by many African countries into the specific policies and initiatives which will make it happen.

According to scenarios developed by the African Development Bank, an "emergent Africa" would be able to catch up to the living standards and competitiveness of other regions. It would be able to ensure that all Africans have the opportunities they need to improve their lives. It projected that by 2050, an "emergent Africa" would have tripled Africa's share of global GDP, enabled 1.4 billion Africans to join the middle class, and reduced tenfold the number of people living in extreme poverty. These are exciting prospects.

Emergence: opportunities and constraints

African countries face both opportunities and constraints as they embark on translating the goal of emergence into concrete action.

There are many reasons to be optimistic: the region's solid economic growth rates and youthful population provide windows of opportunity which can bring countries closer to emergence. As

well, since 1999, many African countries have strengthened their social services and reduced extreme poverty. A number of countries are rapidly reducing their under-five mortality rates. Many more children are in school. There are lower rates of HIV prevalence, and many more people living with HIV have access to life-saving antiretroviral drugs.

Steadily increasing revenues generated by economic growth have created more opportunities to transform economies and societies, and set in motion the changes which will eradicate extreme poverty from the continent and clear the way for an emergent Africa.

This is in line with the conclusions of UNDP's 2013 Human Development Report, "Rise of the South". It noted that fourteen of the twenty countries which were making the fastest rise in the Human Development Index since 2000 are located in Africa. With average annual GDP growth of eight per cent or higher for the last three years, Cote d'Ivoire is a good example of Africa's potential to climb the Human Development Index rapidly.

Agenda 2063, adopted by the African Union last year, provides a pathway to emergence. Around thirty African countries have included their aim of reaching "emerging" or "emerging country" status in their national development strategies. Côte d'Ivoire has gone even further in its national development strategy, elaborating the measures and reforms it is taking now with the aim of reaching emergent country status by 2020.

The track record of emergence in other regions suggests that Côte d'Ivoire's approach is sound. Achieving emergence calls for leadership, vision, good analysis, planning, and action. None of this is made easier by global volatility – which appears to be the new normal. We see it in our changing climate, in geopolitics, in economies, and societies. We see a rash of new conflicts adding to the old ones which had never entirely gone away.

To consolidate emergence in this often unpredictable context, countries can strengthen their resilience to shocks through:

- economic diversification
- investment in social protection and in social cohesion
- reducing disaster risk, including through adaptation to climate change, and
- participatory approaches to governance and development.

Let me offer some further thoughts on key issues which need to be tackled on the route to emergence:

(1) *Addressing inequalities is essential.* The trajectory of human development over the last forty years has revealed that economic growth alone is not enough. To reach emergence, African countries will need to take specific actions to curb high inequalities in income, health, and education, and to empower people with the skills and opportunities they need to drive their economies. As well, the large disparities which often persist between those living in rural and urban areas, and between men and women, need to be addressed. Nearly half the population of Sub-Saharan Africa continues to live on less than US\$1.25 a day.

As well, the youth literacy rate in Africa is only 75 per cent for men and 65 per cent for women –

in all other developing regions it is at or close to parity. In 2010, six of the ten countries with the world's highest rates of income inequality were in Sub-Saharan Africa.

By reducing inequalities, African countries will lift human development and will harness the full potential of women and currently marginalized groups to contribute to development.

Gender equality in the agriculture sector, for example, would make a significant contribution to emergence. There are more women than men in the agricultural workforce of many African countries, and they are involved in every aspect of agricultural production. Yet these women farmers are estimated to be some thirty per cent less productive than their male counterparts – not because they work less hard, but because they lack equal access to capital and credit; insurance; tools, good seeds, fertilizer, and equipment; training; and land ownership, inheritance, and tenure rights.

The outcome is that women farmers produce and earn less. But by ensuring equal rights and access to resources, countries could increase their agricultural output and raise women's incomes – helping families and communities to break out of cycles of hunger, end chronic malnutrition, and generate inclusive growth.

This is why the joint programme for women's empowerment being undertaken by the African Union and UNDP is so important. The initiative, "Building an Enabling Environment for Women's Economic Empowerment & Political Participation in Africa", commits us both to helping countries address the barriers which are preventing women achieving their full potential.

UNDP's next Africa Human Development Report will focus on the political economy of gender inequality on the continent. We aim to explore further the drivers of women's economic exclusion, and to provide strategic and policy options for the way forward.

(2) *Structural Transformation* will play a key role in realizing emergence. The African Union promotes the structural transformation of African economies so that they are more inclusive and diverse, and can add more value to commodities. Employment and output will need to be built up in a wider range of industries and services to achieve that. Nations will need to invest more in the health, education, and training of their people, develop their infrastructure, and strengthen their institutional capacities.

Current rates of economic growth; new discoveries of oil, gas, and other mineral resources; and growing levels of private and public investment are providing opportunities for structural transformation.

UNDP is committed to supporting countries to grow their economies in ways which will enable all people to benefit from and be participants in development. We help build capacities to boost trade and competitiveness, strengthen long-term planning, co-ordinate economic activity, and mobilise domestic resources. To this end, we seek to help countries make the best use of the significant strengths they have.

(3) *Harnessing the potential of youth*. One of those major strengths is Africa's youthful

population. Youth can power the transformations on which emergence depends – if countries invest in and create opportunities for them. The emergent countries of Asia harnessed a youthful population to expand their labour forces and to become more competitive and productive.

Africa today, has the same opportunity. Across the continent, we see young people empowered by information and communications technologies and their own creativity to set up their businesses and connect with global markets. They have the potential to connect to global value chains, and help their countries leap frog into the higher value-added service and industry sectors.

If young people are left with too few opportunities and too little chance to be heard, however, the potential for a demographic dividend can be squandered. Disillusioned youth, without access to education, livelihoods, or other means to improve their prospects, can fuel instability, violence, and conflict.

(4) *Improving jobs and livelihoods.* More than four in ten people at work on the continent live in extreme poverty. Eighty per cent of Africa's workers remain in low productivity jobs in agriculture, or in low-value service sector livelihoods which generate little or no income. According to ILO data, Africa is the region with the highest prevalence of vulnerable employment and of working poor. More decent work and livelihoods need to be generated through inclusive and sustainable growth.

(5) *Maintaining ecosystem integrity.* UNDP devoted its 2011 global Human Development Report to the links between sustainability and equity. Africa has contributed the least to climate change but is greatly affected by its impacts. Many Africans have suffered the consequences of more frequent and intense natural disasters and failing crops triggered by shifting weather patterns and more severe climate events. To help avoid catastrophic setbacks from climate change, UNDP supports African countries' to strengthen their resilience through scaled up adaptation and sustainable development.

The post-2015 global development agenda and the new Sustainable Development Goals will encourage countries to promote economic and social progress with a light environmental footprint. This is essential for all the world's regions if we are to preserve the global commons which secure our common future. UNDP supports African countries to pursue low-carbon paths to development, protect their forests and parks, and end illegal trafficking of wildlife. We seek to strengthen the capacities of all Africans to benefit from initiatives under the Global Environmental Facility and other sources of finance for tackling climate change and sustaining biodiversity.

(6) Internal conflict and instability, where they exist, are also a huge constraint on progress. *The underlying drivers of conflict and instability need to be addressed*, including through strengthening social cohesion, establishing the rule of law, and the capacity for peaceful dispute resolution, and making governance at all levels more responsive, inclusive, and effective.

Around the world, people are seeking a greater say in the decisions which impact on them, and greater accountability from those who govern. In the global conversation on post-2015, a desire

for honest and effective governance ranks as a top priority. People want their governments to deliver improved services, and to manage public and natural resources fairly and transparently.

Greater connectivity, and through it increased awareness of human rights, have enabled more people to engage in national dialogue and activism. Governments which welcome wider and deeper participation by citizens will build greater trust in governance and more sustainable political systems.

Where they are empowered by ICTs and informed with updated, reliable, and disaggregated data, citizens can monitor development progress in their countries and hold their governments accountable for results. The UN Secretary-General has called on all countries to achieve what he calls an “accountability revolution” to help drive sustainable development.

In the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, African leaders committed to “take a path of ownership, which engages all citizens and enables them to hold key development stakeholders mutually accountable” . UNDP will work with African countries to realize this objective, building on the momentum and engagement achieved in the post-2015 process to implement the new Sustainable Development Goals.

(7) *Strong partnerships* also play a critical role in emergence. At UNDP, we work to connect countries with others which have achieved emergence through their investments in infrastructure, health, education, and innovative social policy, and through their openness to engage with the global economy through trade, investment, and global value chains.

We also work with African countries to inform global decision-makers with evidence of what works, and to help advance coherent global policies related to the environment, climate change, trade, debt, migration, and other areas; all these policies need to point in the same direction, to advance human and sustainable development. To this end we work closely with the African Union and the NEPAD, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank. We also greatly value our relationship with the World Bank on MDG acceleration and building resilience to disaster risk.

(8) *Link to global agendas*. Africa’s emergence can be accelerated by implementation of successful outcomes to this year’s series of major UN summits – across disaster risk reduction, financing for development, sustainable development, and climate change. As well, this month, the UN Commission on the Status of Women is reaffirming the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

This year presents a once in a generation opportunity to drive global development agendas. The Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda makes it clear that African leaders are fully aware of the significance of the outcomes of these global processes for this continent.

Conclusion

We gather at this conference because we are passionate about Africa’s emergence. Africa has the leadership and it has the vision necessary for emergence. A number of countries are making

remarkable progress towards that goal. With a commitment to inclusive and sustainable growth and governance; with a commitment to arrest environmental degradation and build resilience to shocks; with a drive for greater equality and harnessing the full potential of women and youth - and indeed of all Africans, emergence will happen and human and sustainable development will be the winner.

For me, the goal of emergence is not GDP growth per se: it is the pursuit of greater human health and happiness so that each one of us can fulfil our potential and participate fully in our societies. In so doing we can contribute to building a more peaceful and prosperous continent and world.

I look forward to hearing about the outcome of your deliberations and wish you all a very successful conference.