

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I welcome you to another academic year (2003-04) in which The Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa (JSDA) will endeavor to publish thought provoking and relevant papers in order to highlight significant matters germane to the sustainable development of Africa.

It is most fascinating that during the past several months, as we entered the year 2003, African countries have been making small but important progress in areas of capacity building in the democratization of their political systems, economies and the management of natural resources. However, besides the civil unrests in some countries, there is one “nagging” problem which all the countries of Africa continue to face—poverty. Poverty cripples all aspects of development. African countries and all international development agencies, donor countries and non-governmental agencies must work together and independently in order to eradicate or reduce poverty in African countries.

A recent World Bank policy research report notes that: “Societies and economies around the world are becoming more integrated. Integration is the result of reduced costs of transport, lower trade barriers, faster communication ideas, rising capital flows, and intensifying pressure for migration (p.1).” The factors influencing poverty in Africa are both endogenous and exogenous in the sense that these factors are domestic and foreign. There is no question about the fact that integration of world economies has both positive and negative implications. One of the negative implications is the increase in poverty levels in some developing countries due to globalization. Hence the approach for eradicating poverty in Africa must seek both international and domestic assistance. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to recognize that the attention of the world leading economies has shifted from addressing Africa’s economic, socio-political and environmental matters to fighting terrorism and enabling the establishment of stable governments in the Middle East. Thus, it behooves African governments to carry a greater share of the burden of reducing poverty in Africa.

The challenge of nations and the international community is how to proceed with development in the new era of globalization. Tackling issues of security, technology, socio-economic development and environmental protection/conservation demands that there be a shared vision, needs assessment, and solidarity among nations of the world. Globalization has arrived or surfaced in a more pronounced way in the world community and it brings with it a certain amount of good and bad ramifications. How the world community of nations manages globalization is important if the present and future generations are to maximize the positive aspects of the phenomenon of globalization. Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, in his speech in London on July 11, 2003, to the gathering at the Progressive Governance Conference emphasized the possibilities of globalization and the opportunity

it presents nationally and internationally. However, he cautioned about the problem posed by protectionism, lack of global solidarity, lack of international cooperation, the inability to coordinate the activities of trade and the lack of understanding of globalization process. In the Barbara Ward lecture on Globalization and Economic Alternative, of the conference of the Society for International Development on the 22nd of May 1997, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former President of Haiti, argued that Third World countries have a different reality from the realities of the developed nations. As far as he is concerned, globalization as currently defined or operationalized, does not serve developing nations well. He contends that there are two sides to globalization – those who benefit enormously and those who are impoverished by globalization. Other writers have argued that integration of economies through trade liberalization would help the economies of nations. Other world leaders who are pro-globalization argue that global marketplace offers economic growth that will invariably promote reduction of poverty. The following excerpts from the Foreign Policy: Global Politics, Economics and Ideas. March/April 2001:37, provide the opinions of some world leaders who can be categorized as pro-globalization people. This indicates the degree to which globalization is being discussed worldwide. Given the continued growth in the debate on globalization, this issue of JSDA has devoted a lot of energy to expand the dialogue on the subject of globalization.

Spreading the Faith

“We have an enormous job to do to convince the science and well-motivated opponents of the WTO agenda that the WTO can be, indeed is, a friend of development, and that far from impoverishing the world’s poorer countries, trade liberalisation is the only sure route to the kind of economic growth needed to bring their prosperity closer to that of major developed economies.”

-British Prime Minister Tony Blair

January 18, 2000

“In every case where a poor nation has significantly overcome its poverty, this has been achieved while engaging in production for export markets and opening itself to the influx of foreign goods, investment and technology; that is by participating in globalization.”

-Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo

January 28,2000

“Any serious reflection on the future of the world economy and therefore the living standards of the billions who inhabit our world, will show that a strategic shift towards a significantly larger world economy can only be achieved as a

result of raising living standards in the countries of the South, and therefore the radical expansion of the world markets for capital, goods and services.”

-South African President Thabo Mbeki

April 4, 2000

“Korea will continue to strive toward fully integrating itself into the global economy and adapting to the digital revolution for truly sustainable growth in the coming decades.”

-South Korean Minister of Finance Lee Hun-Jai

May 11, 2000

“The economic case for NAFTA is strong and the moral case is just as powerful. As barriers fall and markets open, people in Mexico are finding good jobs in their own country. Thousands are able to start businesses for the first time. Standards for conducting businesses become more regular. Standards for education rise to meet the demands of the economy, and that economy demands literacy, skilled labor, expertise in accounting and engineering and technology. It’s a gradual change and not always easy but it can uplift a country and uplift lives.”

-U.S. presidential candidate George W. Bush

August 25, 2000

As mentioned earlier, although the globalization concept became common use in our everyday vocabulary in the last decade of the 20th century, the process of globalization has been with us for a very long time. The arrival of people from one continent to another began the process of globalization. The arrival of Europeans in Africa resulted in the globalization of Africa through slave trade, colonialism and trade on commodities. Today, television, radio, computers, and air-travel have brought people of Africa into the global economy and the economies of African countries are now linked with other countries of the world through trade, the operation of multinationals, mining explorations, and education. African countries are attempting to attract foreign investments while ensuring that domestic industries and companies are not displaced.

African people are occupying important niches (positions) in the global workplace through migration but African governments must ensure that their best minds and skilled workers remain at home to provide the professional skills needed to run the governments, companies, corporations, businesses, and organizations. Globalization can have some negative impacts and as such it should be managed so that Africa can maximize on the benefits that globalization brings. Globalization can certainly assist

in areas of appropriate technology, fight against tyrannical governments and in education. If managed properly, globalization can help Africa in its fight against deadly diseases such as AIDS, malaria fever, and tuberculosis. Research conducted collaboratively between Western and African scientists can provide answers to deadly disease. Negotiated agreements on trade can provide excellent markets for African products and commodities. As a matter of fact, the environment under which globalization will continue to benefit Africa is summed up in West Africa Magazine (2nd - 8th June 2003: 22):

Indeed, Africa can only harness globalization if it improves its infrastructure. The road and railway networks, ports, power suppliers, telecommunication networks need to be improved. Only when these are developed will the continent attract its fair share of investments. Globalization is a feature of modern life. Africa must live with it and harness the process to avoid being further marginalized.

There is no question that Africans and African governments must position themselves appropriately in order to take advantage of the globalization of world economies and be key players in the 21st century. Never again must the continent be left behind in global affairs. Hence JSDA is committed to bringing its readership cutting edge discussions on globalization as they pertain to the sustainability of the continent.

Articles in this issue address four major concerns: poverty, population, technology and Infrastructure. Three of the articles concentrate primarily on the poverty debacle while the other three focus on matters which impinge upon factors which exacerbate poverty. The success or failure in enabling an environment which encourages the inclusion of technology in agricultural development, or controlling population explosion, or building the capacity of transportation systems have dramatic impacts on poverty. Thus, these articles present our readers theoretical and applied perspectives on the subject of sustainable development in Africa.

Welcome to the first issue of JSDA in the 2003-2004 academic year. Please continue to send us your opinions and reactions to issues raised in our publication so that our effort to address development issues of Africa is informed and enhanced by your participation in the dialogue on Africa's development.

Thanks.

Valentine James
Editor-in-Chief