

2006 Norman E. Borlaug/World Food Prize International Symposium
The Green Revolution Redux:
Can We Replicate the Single Greatest Period of Food Production in All Human History?
October 19-20, 2006 - Des Moines, Iowa

SESSION TWO: Agriculture and International Development

October 19, 2006 - 10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Speaker: Ambassador Abdoulaye Diop – Mali

Panel: Ambassadors from Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania

Panel on Development and the Green Revolution in Africa

Hon. Peter McPherson

President, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
Founding Co-Chair, The Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa

Now, let me now go on to introduce our next speaker, and the format here is – the ambassador I will now introduce will speak for a bit, and then we have several ambassadors that I’m going to ask a bunch of questions to for a bit, and then we’ll have some questions from the audience. These ambassadors, all from countries that are deeply committed to development and who are personally so committed, reflect I think this new engagement that we have with the donor community and with Africans.

For the past several years the Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa has been part of bringing a group of ambassadors to this important forum. And up here with me are the ambassadors from Kenya, from Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania. And the ambassador who will speak to us is Ambassador Diop of Mali. I first met him when he was a diplomatic advisor to President Konaré and then became, continued as such with Ambassador Touré of Mali. He has been involved in very senior diplomatic and other matters for his country for some time and by any measure is one of the outstanding ambassadors from Africa and around the world in Washington. Ambassador? Thank you.

Ambassador Abdoulaye Diop
Mali

Thank you, Peter McPherson, for your kind words of introduction. (I think that there is no doubt that this podium has not been built for people like myself, but it's okay.) I want also to ask for your indulgence because of my poor English, but I have been assigned by the group of the African ambassadors to speak on their behalf, and I accepted the challenges. And I hope you will be able to understand what I will be saying to you today.

And I'm here with Ambassador Andrew Daraja from Tanzania, Ambassador Zac Nsenga from Rwanda, Ambassador Armando Panguene from Mozambique, and Ambassador Peter Ogego from Kenya. The ambassador of Senegal was here, but unfortunately he was obliged to leave this morning to head out for some other assignment.

It gives me a great pleasure to be here and to participate in the 2006 World Food Prize Symposium honoring Dr. Norman Borlaug and three distinguished World Food Prize laureates. They all deserve this noble recognition for their exemplary work, and I congratulate them.

Also, on behalf of my colleague African ambassadors here with me today, I would like to thank the World Food Prize Foundation and its president, Ambassador Kenneth Quinn for the excellent hosting of this event year after year and bringing attention to the most basic human needs, access to food, and the commitment to fight hunger and poverty worldwide.

This is the third year in a row that African ambassadors have come to Des Moines, Iowa. We enjoy being here every year to participate in this strategic symposium. Each time we have learned good technical ideas, meet great peoples, and share our concern and need for reducing hunger and poverty in Africa.

This year our core message is that Africa is making good progress and is open for business. Africa is a transformed terrain far different from the similar, familiar depiction we observed in the media – I'm sorry for my friend of *The Wall Street Journal*.

Many governments have embraced democratic principle and that have allowed greater participation of all people in public and resource allocation decision-making. The African Union, the new Partnership for African Development process, discussed yesterday at the BIFAD forum, are further strengthening Africa's commitment to good governance, political stability and economic growth.

As a result of prudent political and economic reforms, many African countries are now experiencing the fastest economic growth period in decades. We have GDP growth rate exceeding 5% per year, and in some countries reaching even 10%. With business investment and trade opportunities opening up everywhere, I believe that we stand at the threshold of a new era – an era of hope and hard work.

We understand now that peace, stability and economic growth are key to creating a better future for our people. With three-quarters of our population living in the rural areas and

depending on agriculture for their livelihood, the most viable strategy of cutting hunger and poverty in Africa is through sustained agriculture-led rural economic growth.

Today millions of smallholder farmers across Africa are waking up each day inspired to work harder and uplift their standards of living. The best thing we can do is to help them to become more productive and competitive by providing them with better technologies, more accessible input and output markets, and good policies that cause their business to thrive. Once they are able to produce more and more and earn more, they will invest in their children's health and education and improve their communities and environment, renewing hope for future generations.

In response to the symposium theme – can we replicate the single greatest period of food production in all human history? – my answer is yes, we can. The reason I say this is because we can learn from the Green Revolution in Asia five decades ago, that it took significant public and private investment in science and technology, sustained support for human and institutional capacity building and investment in infrastructure, communication, and market development to create the necessary conditions for agricultural success and poverty elevation. Local governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as private foundations played key roles in the process, and it took a long time to achieve success, while individual and government remain committed to that end.

When it comes to Africa, somehow people forget these lessons and desire a faster process and hence they focus on short-term goals. Development is a long-term process which requires sustained commitment and funding. This is what we must do if we desire success in Africa. The reason why Africa missed the Green Revolution has been made clear by numerous studies. In order to harness the process of science and technology and achieve a Green Revolution like Asia did, there are several things that need to happen.

First, we must increase investment in our institutions of high learning and agricultural research and extension. No country has ever developed without building a strong human resource base. U.S. universities have in the past played a critical role in training and the research and development in Africa and should continue partnering with Africa in this effort. Short learning and experience of U.S. land grant system can significantly benefit institutional development in Africa.

Second, we must enhance the capacity of our private sector to participate in agricultural development. We need strategic partnership between public and private institutions as well as the civil society to promote investment and business development in Africa.

Third, as we learned yesterday from Malawi NASFAM example, we must organization our farmers and develop their capacity to access local, regional and international markets. Organized farmers manage their resource better, access credit, and other input and bid for better products in the market and prices.

Fourth, we must find ways of making agriculture attractive to our youth. They're increasingly disinterested in farming but willing to consider new business opportunities in the rural areas. There is a critical issue that never receives much attention. We should explore

opportunities of creating complementary rural employment opportunities that will drive agricultural growth, for example, in agroprocessing and other value-added ventures.

Fifth, we need also to develop partnership synergies between Africans. At the regional level we are working through African Union, the new Partnership for African Development with the Southern African Development Community, COMESA – all these organizations we want to promote the regional cooperation, the regional market, common currency, to open up our regional space for also developing our people.

It is also becoming more evident to us that the greater wealth creation for our people will come from trade. I think that the Secretary Johanns talked extensively about the issues of right now, especially the agricultural trade. Most African countries are disappointing also by the suspension of Doha development round and are hopeful that somehow it will resume so that we can have fairer trade rules and reduce trade-distorting practices that limit the ability of our countries to participate more effectively in the regional and international trade.

We are also hopeful that Doha development obligation, particularly Ed. for Trade which is supposed to help poor countries elevate their supply side concerns and improve trade capacity, will not be held hostage by stale talks.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you all, and the development community, to increase your support for Africa agricultural development. We can either spend ten years discussing the plight of Africa, Africa's poor – or we can start investing to secure a better future for them. The time is right to forge appropriate public and private sector partnerships that take advantage of new opportunities to build strong human and institutional capacity and scale up successful agricultural stories.

Many promises for increased development support have been made in recent times. The time for action is now, and Africa is ready. On behalf of my colleagues present here, I appreciate your attention, and I am looking forward to working with you substantially. Thank you very much.

Hon. Peter McPherson

Well, as you can see, the ambassador is a man who thinks deeply and most substantively about this and reflects, I think, so much of what is happening in Africa.

Panel of Ambassadors – Question & Answer Session

Moderator: Peter McPherson

Ambassadors:

Abdoulaye Diop (Mali)

Andrew Daraja (Tanzania)

Peter Ogego (Kenya)

Armando Panguene (Mozambique)

Zac Nsenga (Rwanda)

Peter Let me ask all of you a question. I think you've all got a mic here available. You can share maybe that mic with the other table. What did you think of my comment that the Doha round hasn't focused much on regional trade? Should it? And is regional trade as important, or more important, than the Africa with the rest of the world? Anybody want to jump into this?

Ogego Thank you. It is disappointing to all of us that the rounds have not been completed, but I think, again, nobody thought they would be that easy. I come from Kenya, and for us, the issues are very clear. We put more emphasis on trade. We are a little bit uncomfortable with positions on subsidies. We are trying to reorganize our agriculture, and most African countries are at different stages. Agriculture has different emphases depending on each African country. I don't want to comment beyond that, but overall we are disappointed that much of the issues that are fairly clear cannot be agreed upon when stakes are on the table. But our stakes are as high as everybody else, and it's not going to be easy. It might take much longer than it has, but hopefully we will strike a balanced chord. Thank you.

Peter Anyone else?

Nsenga I agree with him. I come from Rwanda, but I think equally regional markets are very important, and we need to develop them internally through COMESA, SADC or even national relations, trade markets are very important. And so we need to develop them. But most important, of course, is to have that global market, otherwise developing the regional trade may not be sufficient. So I think we shouldn't forget our regional and national markets as well.

Daraja My name is Daraja from Tanzania. I want to agree with my colleagues. Regional markets have their own importance, but imagine a situation whereby Tanzania and Mozambique both produce cashew nuts. I don't know who is going to sell cashew nuts to who. So in addition to the regional markets, which we place so much importance, we need that global market so that both Mozambique and Tanzania can sell the cashew nuts they produce rather than selling to one another.

Peter Yeah. I think no one would say it's a question of one or the other. The question, I think, is both. As you look today versus twenty years ago – you were all young men

twenty years ago – but what do you see? How do Africans view their role, vis-à-vis the donors today as opposed to twenty years ago? Is it different? Has it changed?

- Ogego I think that's a good question, and I think that has been very much begging, because I think there are more scientists here than other disciplines to give the other aspect and to give a round understanding of what has been going on in Africa. I think there's a lot of hope now; the situation has changed. Twenty years ago we were gripped under the Cold War, and a lot of efforts by Africans were covered and were not seen. And some of the regimes that give Africa bad names, like in Uganda, parts of Kenyan post-independent history, were really supported by the developed countries. And so the best thing that ever happened to us was the collapse of the Berlin Wall. And so everybody, we're accountable to everybody else, and we expect accountability from our development partners. And so we look forward to very mutual partnership as we forge ahead. But the future is bright. We are going to be accountable for our own weaknesses. We still face huge challenges. But the best thing that ever happened to us was to openly discuss issues and discuss issues on the table.
- Panguene Can I add a voice to say that, apart from what my colleague here referred to, I think that our development partners should also appreciate our historic background – you know, we have started from a very low base. So my message is that our partners should not be reluctant to engage themselves to develop our infrastructure, because a country without infrastructure cannot do much. And secondly, most of the time, there's a big debate between us and our development partners – who would appreciate most to install their projects in our capitals. And that has a reason, because our capitals, their infrastructure is more or less developed. But we want emphasis in the rural areas. We should be the ones to tell our partners that, instead of Maputo, instead of Darussalam, please come to Tanga, please come to Rashinga in the countryside, so that our countries can develop equitably, and so that the conflicts that we have most of the time will be lessened. So these are the two issues that I should like to add.
- Nsenga Let me also add this, that our continent is now in the last twenty years, should realize that we have developed the capacity to know what is good for us and therefore to appreciate that we should make the blueprint and identify all priorities. In the case of Rwanda, for example, we are now engaging donors and telling them look– I am going to be responsible, but you also are going to be responsible and accountable. So let's discuss our blueprint, we'll agree on it, put resources around that blueprint, and then we'll get an external or an independent auditor to come to town and say, "Well, you brought in the money. We did the implementation, and things are good." And if we didn't do whatever we were supposed to do, then we will be asked to be accountable. So I think we are partners now. We are willing to put down our blueprint, and donors will be ask to come rally around that blueprint.
- Diop I don't know if we should still continue to answer the question, but I just want to jump in this debate because I think that we have more reason to today than maybe 20

to 30 years ago about the situation in Africa. I think there is hope in Africa, for maybe two to three reasons.

The first reason is, really, Africa is focusing on its regional integration, meaning that we want to build economies, we want to link up our countries, we want also to synergize to put our capacities together so that really we can be a partner in this global war. This is really a strong message, and the African Union is here to testify, and we have also all the original groupings that are working. It is very difficult, but we are working toward the African integration. And one of the major issues to integrate the African Continent would be the infrastructure, because even if we have the will, if we are not able to establish the infrastructure, like you did here in the U.S., you see all the critical road infrastructure, having the highways to link the state, how it impacts the development of your country. If we had the same system in Africa, we have port, airport, railroads and roads to link our countries, I think that the ingenuity of the African people will make what remains to be done.

The second thing, element of hope is really today the majority of African countries are living in democracy. This is really very important. It's encouraging. It's not perfect. I think of even countries that have spent two centuries in democracy, we understand that is not a destination, it's a process. So we need to work it out. And it's also that we are having in Africa an environment friendly to business. We are more and more open to business, and major multinational companies come here to witness what is going on in Africa. You have major companies that can tell you that they are making more profit today in Africa than anywhere in the world.

The other is really also that we are focusing more in our relation with the donors. We are leaving the system and going toward a partnership. It's very critical to speak about partnership, not in terms of the rhetoric but to apply the rule of the partnership. It means that the countries should sit in the seat of the pilot, where it should define the priorities. And the donors should be here really to assist us with the financial resources but also to define the rules under which we want the resources to be spent. I think that this has some element that I think gives us more hope for what needs to be done.

Peter Those are good remarks. I do think that the democracy... When I sat down with President Konare there in Bamako a few years ago, he had a different view, having been elected a couple times, as opposed to other years. I think we're going to run out of time here in a few moments, but tell us – I made a few remarks about cell phones and supermarkets and financial institutions, and those issues. Do you see the private sector continuing to grow the way it has the last three or four years in your countries? I mean, it will vary by country. And what could you help to do to further stimulate that, since that is creating jobs and growth?

Ogego Well, it always starts with Kenya – that's okay. We have a slightly larger economy in the region. Our middle class is slightly bigger. Recently there was an issue with regards to the capital that would come, you know, the underground capital. I'm sure

you are aware of it. This does not mean to cut out the middle class. We decided to do our own and await the debates. That tells you how vibrant the middle class is. And our economic growth now is 5.8% – since the last three years, agriculture has been stimulated. So the entire economy is very vibrant. We are reaching out within the region, within the COMESA region, and I can only emphasize that with the proposed East African community coming back, we can only look towards the greater future. But there is good business, too, in the region. And there is an uprising, I mean, an upward trend of the middle class that is related to business and partnership with multinationals. Thank you.

Panguene The growth of the current sector is a very, very important issue, but it should be appreciated that the level of growth, it's lower because of the economic base that we possess. So the road that should be strengthened by the private sector is a slightly different; because that private sector is in the recipient stage, it needs to be stimulated in order to grow. That's why I think that the symposium and other events here, we talked about this partnership. Without the partnership with the government and the public sector, then we cannot manage to stimulate the private sector itself. So we are growing.

But let me jump to the first question that you also made the reference. You mentioned democracy, because I think democracy is, how do you call, a myriad animal which has different faces in different countries. But in our continent we are very clear, if you talk in the period of the last 20 years. We did not have in different countries, African countries, a normal birth. Some of us have Cesarean, others in different ways but all painful. But we have developed, and we believe that democracy is not a one-day action. It's a process, it's a long, painful, patient process. And we're clear on that, and that's why we have started differently. We had one-party states, but gradually we've been learning, because we are good students, and today we have full swing multi-party democracy, and all players have a role, and we believe all those players are at different stages of understanding politics. And we try to give an input so that we can grow together as a process.

Nsenga Yeah, I agree with all that, but let me add one thing – that the infrastructure for business, for democracy has been set; and it's growing and continues. But I think one of the negative aspects that we see is the kind of perception that many people in the north or in the west still perceive of Africa a country with programs, hunger and everything. So usually when you are looking for the bad things, you will get them everywhere. But the fact that we don't hide all those good things that are coming, and so they can be seen by people, also hinders private sector development in Africa. For example, we have AGOA. This allows us to bring in products from our country to the United States, your market. But this is also an opportunity for people to like you to invest in our countries, and then satisfy this market. But because of the perceptual issues that still hang around, it's not easy for people to go there and invest. So the message you have here is that everything's being done. It's a process, but the business is there and it's booming, and especially among you, among people from Europe and

America are going there. So it is a time now to avoid being confused by the perceptions that you see. I know there is business.

Peter I'm told that — did somebody have a last comment? Right here they say, “We don't have any last comments.” I would like to have you give these ambassadors a hand, and thank you all.