

FORMER PRESIDENT KGALEMA MOTLANTHE LECTURE AT LEIDEN UNIVERSITY IN THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS ON 7 JULY 2023.

TOPIC: “Africa’s Development: Transformation through Industrialization”

- Programme Director;
- Prof. Annetje Ottow, President of Leiden University;
- Representatives from various embassies and the diplomatic corps;
- Senior strategic policy advisors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- African Studies Centre Leiden / Leiden African Studies Assembly
- Students and Academia;
- The public at large;
- All Protocol Observed.

Thank you to the Leiden University African Studies Centre for inviting and offering me the honour to address this important and timely dialogue that looks to focus on the future of African prosperity.

It is my singular privilege to be in the presence of all gathered here today as we examine the threats and new vistas of opportunities in Africa.

Today’s topic of discussion, **“Africa’s Development: Transformation Through Industrialization”**, contains subjects that not only deal with facts, figures, theories and solutions, but the contents constitute the lived experiences of millions of children and women facing risk; refugees; survivors of conflict and those without resources to afford a loaf of bread for their families.

Such a monumental topic can pose a course for collision for those in the driving seat of governments and for leaders who represent the most vulnerable and voiceless in society.

Yet, it is in the very nature of social and political consciousness, especially at an academic level, to scrutinise the many actions that address global challenges and the disparate decisions of world leaders that often do not intersect at the crucial points of equity, inclusion, peace, justice, and a secure future for all humanity and the natural environment.

In saying this, we must also take stock of the aspirations that reflect the desires of Africans and in doing so, allow me to take heed of the words of Kwame Nkrumah --- the revered first post-colonial President of the Republic of Ghana -- - in his 1964 Speech at the Summit of the then Organisation for African Unity (now known as the African Union):

“We must unite for economic viability, first of all... so that our vast resources and capacity for development will bring prosperity for us and additional benefits for the rest of the world...”

There is always latitude in terms of what angle one can take and which aspects one chooses to highlight. In order to narrow the scope of the dialogue, allow me to consider the following elements that I will present for discussion today:

1. A Historical Context;
2. Agenda 2063: The African Union’s Answer to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals;
3. Finding Balance in Foreign policy: How European Union Decisions may Affect an Increase in Poverty in Africa;
4. Structural Transformation Through Industrialisation;
5. The Big “However” in Production Policy: Infrastructure versus Agriculture in Africa;
6. Africa’s Youth Bulge: Reimagining an Era of Sustainable Prosperity.
7. Conclusion

Programme Director,

The confounding coils and contorted complexities of the world are in plain sight for all of us to see. Whether we receive most of the facts and figures or only part of the agenda of a biased approach, either direction we look

towards, we always only get an approximation to the truth. Moreover, that truth becomes *those* truths in the Age of Big Data and a world of post-truth. Therefore the frail notion of 'knowing' and the even more intricate virtue of 'understanding' a single event, can be viewed and purported in a variety of ways due to the unreliability of multiple sources upon multiple motivations upon many more differing incentives.

RE-THINKING PAN-AFRICANISM: THE TRAPPINGS OF A CONTINENTAL APPROACH

And so, when tackling the topic of industrialisation in Africa, it must be remembered that we should consider avoiding blanket approaches, which, by their nature, rely on assumptions and fail to acknowledge why insight into uniqueness is a key to delivering a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable outcome.

Out of the 54 countries that make up Africa, it is hard to find two that are exactly the same!

However, in 2011, Martin Meredith made the following observation:

"Although Africa is a continent of great diversity, African states have much in common, not only their origins as colonial territories, but the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced.

*"Indeed, what is so striking about the fifty-year period since independence is the extent to which African states have suffered so many of the same misfortunes."*¹

Over time, Africa has been described in various ways, hence on the 13th of May 2000, the cover of the Economist painted Africa as "The Hopeless Continent"²; a decade later, the same publication changed its tune carrying the following headline: "Africa Rising" (3 December 2011)³.

Then, in 2016 the New York Times carried the following article: 'Africa Rising? "Africa Reeling" May Be More Fitting Now.'⁴

Through this perceptive chronology, we are reminded of the many complex challenges of transformation in Africa that we have faced; and continue to face, today. Accumulated disabilities in Africa are therefore a function of historical and modern challenges that test the resilience and strength of our institutions and collective conviction.

Allow me to use the concept and experience of governance in Africa as a starting point to examine and assess certain problems of transformation in recent decades; and the lessons that lie within.

It is for the people that any government exists: and because of the people that value systems of governance should operate. Thus there is a moral imperative for a people-centred style of governance that includes the voices, thoughts, and participation of all people.

Without restraining the concept of **good** governance to a particular interpretation, it is through the lived experience of the people that the limitations and weaknesses of any government are laid bare. Simultaneously, we must be conscious of certain international value judgements on governance in Africa. These value judgements may be used as political instruments: deployed to impose an agenda of developed countries over under-developed and developing nations.

At the same time, democratic application of governance that places people at the centre of policy and practice, could be the basis for reducing social ills and economic disasters. However, it takes political will, stable institutions and ethical leadership to govern well. Creating meaningful and lasting change, can be considered only possible if the people are allowed to participate in their own cultural, political, social and economic development.

¹ Meredith, Martin, "The State of Africa: A history of the Continent since Independence." London: Simon & Schuster, 2011 p.14.

² The Economist May 13, 2000.

³ The Economist December 3, 2011.

⁴ Gettleman, Jeffrey, "'Africa Rising'? 'Africa Reeling' May Be More Fitting Now," The New York Times, Oct. 17, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/ydaq5ub>

Professor Adebayo Olukoshi has used the word “choice-less” to describe democracies in Africa because policy-making has become an externalised function in many of them, who are impelled to follow the prescripts of institutes such as: the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the World Bank; and Ratings Agencies.

The prescripts include Structural Adjustments Programmes (SAPs) and the expectation for all these African countries to take the same medicament for different ailments and respond in the same ways, all of the time.

It is for this reason that we may assert that African nations need to win the right to define their problems and to determine their own strategic goals. Otherwise, the continued dependence on aid from donor institutes will lead to home-grown progressive policies being punished by investors and Ratings Agencies, simply because they are deemed neither to conform nor to adhere to the prescripts.

The late Professor Adebayo Adedeji, in his paper entitled, *“Economic Progress: What Africa Needs”*⁵, states that unlike conventional adjustment programmes, which on the whole prescribe a set of policy measures that all African governments are supposed to follow, the **African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustments Programmes** (AAF-SAP), is a broad and flexible framework within which governments can design their own individual national adjustment with transformation programmes.

It is pertinent in this regard to remember that programmes to economic recovery and development can only be successful if governments, drawing on the broad support and democratic participation of all sectors of their people, actually assume the prime responsibility for facilitating and determining their country’s economic policies and unleashing national action plans to attain them.

In our brief examination of social and economic development we notice that the extractive economies of many African countries are based on a network of road and rail logistics designed to extract raw materials from *“pit to port”*.

These deep structural dynamics push countries to become merely exporters of raw materials and allow transnational firms the power to set prices and determine the share of revenue to be handed over to African states.

If we are to consider the future prospective of Africa within a framework that encourages and celebrates access to markets for all, then let us listen to the following words by Tanzania’s founding president, Julius Nyerere, during his speech in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, on 6 March 1997 on how he saw African unity in the 21st century⁶:

“Africa must unite! That was the title of one of Kwame Nkrumah’s books. That call is more urgent today than ever before. Together, we, the peoples of Africa will be incomparably stronger internationally than we are now with our multiplicity of unviable states.

“The needs of our separate countries can be, and are being, ignored by the rich and powerful. The result is that Africa is marginalised when international decisions affecting our vital interests are made.

“Unity will not make us rich, but it can make it difficult for Africa and the African peoples to be disregarded and humiliated. And it will, therefore, increase the effectiveness of the decisions we make and try to implement for our development. My generation led Africa to political freedom. The current generation of leaders and peoples of Africa must pick up the flickering torch of African freedom, refuel it with their enthusiasm and determination, and carry it forward.”

Although the unity and economic integration of Africa was a dream for our forebears such as: Kwame Nkrumah; Julius Nyerere; Kenneth Kaunda; Abdel Nasser; Modibo Keita; and Sékou Touré, to name but a few, their **Future Prospective of Africa** has continued to inspire us all and live on in the African Union’s blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future, known as, **Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want**.

⁵ Adedeji, Adebayo, “Economic Progress: What Africa Needs”, TransAfrica Forum (Washington, D.C.), vol. 7, no. 2, summer 1990.

⁶ New African, July 26, 2012 <https://newafricanmagazine.com/3234/>

AGENDA 2063: THE AFRICAN UNION'S ANSWER TO THE UNITED NATION'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

On May 25, 2013, fifty years after the African Union (AU) was formed, the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union signed the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration⁷. This declaration recognized past accomplishments and difficulties while reaffirming the Union and its member states' commitment to the vision of "a united, prosperous, and peaceful Africa led by its own people, and serving as a vibrant force in the global arena".

During the 2014 and 2015 Summits, the AU approved Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want⁸ and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan. This move was aimed at reaffirming its dedication to the Pan-African agenda while also outlining Africa's aspirations and actions towards a shared, sustainable, united, and peaceful growth path over 50 years.

Africa's development blueprint, Agenda 2063, comprises of 7 aspirations, 20 goals, and 39 priority areas. The aspirations are focused on achieving a prosperous, integrated, and culturally-identified Africa, with good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights. The development of Africa is people-driven, particularly by women and youth, and prioritizes the well-being of children. Ultimately, Agenda 2063 envisioned Africa to be a strong and influential global player and partner, unified and resilient.

Agenda 2063 has identified flagship programmes and projects that are crucial for achieving the desired development. These include the creation of an Integrated High-Speed Train Network, an African Virtual and E-University, a commodities strategy, and an annual African forum that brings together political leaders, the private sector, academia, and civil society to discuss progress and challenges in realizing Agenda 2063's aspirations and goals.

Other projects include the establishment of a Continental Free Trade Area, the African Passport and free movement of people, the Grand Inga Dam Project, the Pan-African E-Network, the goal of silencing the guns by 2020, the Africa Outer Space Strategy, the establishment of a single African air transport market, and the creation of African financial institutions.

To ensure progress monitoring and implementation reporting of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan, the AU adopted a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation Framework with Core Indicators. This framework aims to address potential risks and facilitate country, regional, and continental reporting that is conducted biennially. The first continental report was submitted to the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union in February 2020.

In the interest of time and for the purposes of today's dialogue, allow me to focus on the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement⁹.

This agreement boosts intra-Africa trade through: trade policy; trade facilitation; productive capacity; trade related infrastructure; trade finance; trade information; and market integration.

Although a free trade agreement provides a platform, a more enabling environment and some lubricant for existing industries to find new markets, this need to expand trade, emerges from a process of developing domestic industrial sectors. Industrialisation is thus a key driving force behind free trade agreements.

Notwithstanding, relatively low-levels of industrial growth comparative to its Western counterparts, it may be viewed that most African countries do not have the degree of industrial production that is needed to take full advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) stated that while in 2019, four hundred and seventy eight million (478 million) people lived in extreme poverty in Africa, they estimated that in 2021, four

⁷ <https://au.int/en/newsevents/20130530/50th-anniversary-solemn-declaration>

⁸ <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

⁹ <https://au-afcfta.org/>

hundred and ninety million (490 million) people in Africa would live under the poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day, significantly higher than what was projected without the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰

With this outlook, it is likely that the continent will struggle to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) poverty target. In 2015 the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as its blueprint for world peace and prosperity. At its core are 17 SDGs with 169 targets for poverty, health, education, inequality, economic growth and climate actions that member countries agreed to achieve by 2030.

In 2022, a research paper published by The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), stated that Africa is not likely to meet SDG 1 – to end poverty in all its forms for 97% of the population.¹¹

And, based on Current Path assumptions, Africa will fail to reach the SDG target for extreme poverty, even by 2043.

However, with the right policy interventions and political backing, Africa can significantly reduce extreme poverty over the next two decades, with an integrated approach to tackle demographic transition, corruption, governance, infrastructure shortage, lack of regional trade integration and poor quality of education.

Since its colonial history to the postcolonial present, Africa has been pursued as a supplier of human power through slavery and raw materials, resulting in a power imbalance that not only subordinates the continent's labour, resources, natural habitats, governments, and leaders, but also aggravates and intensifies the unequal playing fields of production and the asymmetry of political and economic power.

Through this lens, we are offered a unique opportunity to examine the many interpretations of human experience and the expanse at which the timeline of civilization may present varying degrees of development.

We are also reminded that along our collective timeline of progress, we should not take context for granted.

The ways in which societies have coordinated productive and cultural activity; developed political institutions; and shared social contracts with their own set of rules and norms, is to a large extent a result of historical context --- further revealing the patterns of power and control.

As we mull over certain contradictions at the level of governance and trade across the globe, allow us to take this opportunity to examine but a few of the vast array of decrees and declarations, proclamations and promulgations published by centralized institutions built on the foundations of multilateral agreements which happen to represent the interests of the advanced nations. Without focusing on a seeming conundrum of compounding contradictions, it is no wonder why bilateral negotiations often exist to polarize the arguments and theories of economists, politicians, civil society and their critics, alike.

FINDING BALANCE IN FOREIGN POLICY: HOW EUROPEAN UNION DECISIONS MAY AFFECT AN INCREASE IN POVERTY IN AFRICA

An article by Jodi Littlefield published in The Yale Review of International Studies in March 2023, reveals how an arbitration council voted in favour of the European Union (EU) over the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with regards to the EU–SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)¹².

The council found that South African Customs Union's (SACU) increased import duties, were illegal. These tariffs, initially adopted in 2018 in the form of increased import duties, were implemented to protect the local South African poultry industry from being swamped by cheaper EU frozen chicken imports.

Two years following their adoption, the SADC increased import duties on frozen chicken to 62 percent and implemented anti-dumping levies (extra import duties to prohibit flooding of the market). Of grave concern, is that the arbitration panel's 2022 decision in favour of the EU sets a strong precedent for the ratification of similar rulings under the EU–SADC EPA in the future.

¹⁰ <https://unctad.org/press-material/facts-and-figures-7>

¹¹ Aikins, Enoch Randy, and McLachlan, Du Toit, The Institute for Security Studies, July 13, 2022, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-is-losing-the-battle-against-extreme-poverty>

¹² Littlefield, Jodi, "Are Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) beneficial to Africa?", The Yale Review, March 2023, <http://yris.yira.org/page/3>

Forcing SADC countries to open up their markets raises the issue of the imbalance in the terms of trade between the EU and the SADC, and whether EPAs are beneficial to Africa?

The EU–SADC EPA, consisting of Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini, is a development-focused trade agreement founded on the principles of the Cotonou Agreement, signed on 23 June 2000, as the legal framework for all EPAs and governs relations between African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries and the EU.

Under this partnership, the intended benefit for the SADC includes new access to markets and better trading terms in agriculture and fisheries. The EU–SADC agreement aims to improve sustainable development by identifying areas which can benefit from funding, emphasizing private sector development, creating more equitable access to resources, and increasing employment. The EU–SADC agreement proposes that these benefits can be achieved if SADC countries eliminate 86 percent of tariffs on imports from the EU. Simultaneously, the EU would remove 98.7 percent of the customs duties on imports coming from the SADC.

However, this reciprocal exchange has been undermined by the principle of originating products. The originating products principle refers to the trade rule which allows a specific product to qualify for a lower or zero preferential tariff. A product can be categorised as originating (from either the EU or SADC regions) if it is “wholly obtained” from that country or manufactured in that specific country using their own technologies.

Members of the SADC argue that this EPA breeds inequality and can be constituted as a “partnership between unequals” owing to their relatively weak bargaining power. This partnership demonstrates a colonial-type trade relationship, as the SADC region is often unable to qualify for lower customs duty and is forced into an unequal exchange of goods which is viewed as a perpetuation of colonial type trade relations.

Moreover, SADC countries have severe debt-servicing obligations which prohibits them from investing in their industrial base. Thus, countries in this region are forced to export mostly primary products and become net importers, undermining their pursuit for the beneficiation and value addition of raw materials.

The fact that SADC imports more in monetary terms, than it exports, has resulted in a negative trade balance with the EU. The loss of revenue from import duties (between ten and thirty percent) impacts socio-economic development and worsens the human development crises in African countries.

The **World-Systems Theory** states that this social structure of global inequality is a deliberate exercise wherein the “periphery,” systematically underdeveloped countries, are exploited of their raw materials by the “core,” dominant capitalist countries with higher skill and capital-intensive production.

It can be concluded that food security has been undermined as local agricultural sectors are unable to compete with subsidized agricultural products from Europe.

STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INDUSTRIALISATION

In the book by Carlos Lopes entitled, *“Africa In Transformation”*,¹³ we note how it highlights the need for Africans to measure whether their productive structures are changing or not. According to Lopes, the unfortunate reality is that many African economies do not have the strategies or the determination that is necessary for driving a successful economic structural transformation. As a result, limited change has rendered many African countries vulnerable to inherent fluctuations of the international commodity markets, leading to significant growth volatility.

This vulnerability to external shocks is due to several interacting factors linked to the ‘absence’ of a developmental state. Dependence on commodity trade in the face of natural resource abundance demands that more focus be given to value addition across all production processes and nodes. Africa must prioritise industrialisation to speed up the development of various value-addition activities.

¹³ Lopes, C, “Structural Transformation Through Industrialisation. In: *Africa in Transformation*”, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01291-5_5

If Africa industrialises, Lopes argues, embracing green technologies, manufacturing would take place in the continent averting the need for the transportation costs for exporting raw materials and the associated greenhouse gas emissions.

Given that the industrialised world is increasingly aware of the perils of climate change, Lopes offers hopeful inspiration for the establishment of green industries in the continent as part of an important global response to a multiplicity of impending climate crises.

Africa must engage in the blue economy, both in terms of sustainably exploiting the bountiful resources and being a custodian of the oceans that surround the continent.

Lopes' book, leaves us with eight challenges that are considered the most acute for Africa's structural transformation. For each one of them --- changing politics; respecting diversity; understanding policy space; industrialising; increasing agricultural productivity; building a new social contract; adjusting to climate change; and inserting agency in the relationship with its key partner, China --- we are equipped with the potential for meaningful change that can build on successful initiatives thus far.

So, when considering trade policy versus industrial policy in Africa, we may observe several major opportunities to help enable and fully realise the promise of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

“Made by Africa: CREATING VALUE THROUGH INTEGRATION” --- a recent diagnostic report published by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in partnership with the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU)¹⁴ --- examined value chains to identify high-potential sectors for sustainable development in Africa and the bottlenecks for firms. The value chain diagnostic suggests how governments and businesses can best develop sustainable value chains and contribute to Africa's regional integration agenda and pivotal elements of the Continental Free Trade Agreement.

From 415 possibilities, the data analysis identified 94 promising, feasible value chains at the continental level. It then drilled down further, based on trade patterns, supply, demand, market access and sustainable development indicators.

The diagnostic eventually settled on four pilot strategic sectors: cars, pharmaceuticals, cotton clothing and baby food.

Each of these value chains links at least five African countries from different regions and has the potential to add value, reduce imports, lift trade, diversify economies and open opportunities for women and youth.

Pharmaceuticals value chain: With only 3% of imported inputs being sourced from Africa, a large trade deficit, high and increasing import dependency, and a COVID-19-induced call for greater self-reliance, there is a massive policy push to strengthen Africa's pharmaceuticals sector.

Automotive value chain: This value chain has high potential for intraregional trade. A large and growing continental market, potential to connect with value chains such as leather and electrical machinery, and growing collaboration with foreign multinationals mean the sector presents a wealth of investment incentives.

Cotton apparel value chain: Africa accounts for 10% of the world trade in cotton and has a huge scope to add value in the middle steps of the value chain, such as for yarn and fabrics, make it a sector worthy of investment.

Infant foods value chain: African reliance on imports despite an abundance of locally available food sources makes this a strong choice for regional sourcing and production. It is also a good sector for small business and for job creation for women.

¹⁴ International Trade Centre, “Made by Africa: Creating Value through Integration” ITC, Geneva, 2022.

THE BIG “HOWEVER” IN PRODUCTION POLICY: INFRASTRUCTURE VERSUS AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA

Programme Director,

If we are to look at the actual appetite of international investors, we are presented with Africa’s infrastructure gap as **the** major driver of industrialisation, but for the continent to ease movement across its borders; achieve its trade goals; and truly commit to ending poverty, infrastructure investment must more than double and continue to grow into the next decade.

By investing in infrastructure that enables free movement of business persons, production, and market access, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement holds the potential to contribute significantly towards eliminating poverty, creating jobs, and improving food security.

This kind of economic empowerment has the turn-around capability to eliminate Africa’s trade vulnerabilities and acutely limited participation in the global market. That way, the suffocating traditional forms of trade that the continent is more commonly known for, will be drastically reduced.

However, a paper released in December 2022, by the **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace by Kenyan economist, Dr David Ndiij**,¹⁵ argues that the conventional wisdom of infrastructure development which has topped Africa’s economic policy agenda for the last few decades, should indeed be questioned. The research highlights how sub-Saharan Africa’s public debt burden, rose rapidly within a decade and that this rising debt burden of infrastructure development has somewhat wiped out much of the gains achieved.

Debt distress is once again stalking the region.

The research and evidence leaves us with more important questions we should be asking of ourselves and our institutions:

- **Is the infrastructure investment drive responsible for Africa’s debt crisis?**
- **Why has the massive push to invest in infrastructure failed to reinforce continued growth?**

The suggestion is that instead of fixating on infrastructure, African countries should look to the experience of Latin American countries with similar resource endowments: a greater relative abundance of land rather than low-cost labour. As this experience shows, countries can make far more durable, sustainable economic gains by focusing on improving agricultural productivity with relatively low-cost improvements targeted at smallholder farmers for whom a boost in productivity could have the largest impact.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) describes how Africa remains a net importer of food, although it is home to 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land¹⁶. The continent’s population has doubled overall, and tripled in urban areas, in the past 30 years yet:

- **agricultural production and food security have struggled to keep pace, and;**
- **Africa is the only continent where the absolute number of undernourished people has increased over the past 3 decades.**

According to the latest forecasts, Africa's total population would reach nearly 2.5 billion by 2050 and the facilitation of sustainable agriculture and access to markets will be central to the survival and feeding of all these communities.

¹⁵ Ndiij, David, “Africa’s Infrastructure-Led Growth Experiment Is Faltering. It Is Time to Focus on Agriculture”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 20, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/12/20/africa-s-infrastructure-led-growth-experiment-is-faltering.-it-is-time-to-focus-on-agriculture-pub-88662>

¹⁶ Plaizier, Wim, “2 truths about Africa's agriculture”, World Economic Forum, January 22, 2016, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/how-africa-can-feed-the-world/>

Agricultural transformation has the ability to build social cohesion; create beneficial continental trade; provide a platform for global export; and contribute to the creation of millions of jobs. All of this whilst pulling subsistence farmers out of poverty and further nurturing the ecology of our environment.

For inclusive progress to happen, the transformation of the agricultural value chain must take into account the need for micro-financing in order to boost the capacity of small to medium enterprises within their burgeoning businesses.

Smallholder farmers contribute up to 80% of sub-Saharan Africa's food supply, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, and Africa has an estimated 33 million and upward smallholder farms.

In order to increase their capabilities; make it easier for businesses to invest; and contribute to sustainability, we must make concerted efforts to reduce barriers to trade, and this means democratising access to technology and information.

For only when we reinforce our multilateral responses to the lack of access to the benefits of the Digital World, will we pave a durable pathway that encourages innovation for all African people.

Closing the technology gap has the power to propel trade agreements and make use of the dynamic energy of a new, younger generation of traders.

AFRICA'S YOUTH BULGE: REIMAGINING AN ERA OF SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

Indeed, this is a bright and fresh generation as Africa is home to the largest youth population in the world, boasting the privilege of a largely untapped resource: that is, the electric energy that young people infuse into the evolution of their future.

Listening to the voices of young people; harnessing *their* innovations and inventions; empowering them with education; and offering financial assistance to start-up entrepreneurs, is key to reimagining an era of prosperity for Africa.

In 2001, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (now the African Union (AU)) endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) for economic regeneration of Africa, with the goal of eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable growth and development, integrating Africa into the global economy, and accelerating the empowerment of women and youth.

As leaders, in our approach, perhaps, we should be guided by history and explore the learning process of our youth to participate in the industries that we so desperately need in working condition.

Giving a voice to our youth is one action, but, taking the time to mentor; listen; and take heed of what those voices are articulating, is a steep learning curve that leaders in Africa would be well-positioned to acknowledge, sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

As we consider the impact of the decisions of leaders on the future of youth tomorrow, we should factor in the implications of a world where: climate change is a lived reality; where natural resources are depleted; where human encroachment on wildlife habitats strike a deeper imbalance in the ecosystem; and where the lack of equilibrium manifests in the transmission of more pandemics.

Investing in a future with a climate-conscious mind set is a major step toward lowering carbon dependence and securing the sustainability of development programmes.

Innovative and integrated strategies that improve peace, health, education, food security, justice, economic growth, and climate change, are the key elements in strengthening the insulation needed for young people to fight future pandemics and thrive for successive generations.

For instance, **the floral kingdom of the FYNBOS**, in the Western Cape of South Africa, is itself, under serious threat from increasing urban expansion, and plays host to the KING PROTEA the National Flower of South Africa.

This extraordinary species uses its robust resilience as an opportunity to clear out the old and create space for fresh growth in the ecosystem. Resisting the harshest of conditions, the Protea can survive blazing fires: rebounding back to life after being totally burnt by releasing new seeds of life and reproduction, to continue its survival amidst most challenging conditions.

We see these qualities of agility and vigour also in the characteristics of Palm trees, which are able to survive in the most arid of deserts and at the same time withstand the onslaught of violent gale force winds, floods, and storms.

In order to achieve the ideals we dream of for Africa we must, like the Protea and Palm, focus on the continent's strengths and optimism in the face of any crisis. We must ensure that our sustainable survival is based on robust and resilient policy choices that place future generations in the centre of growth and investment.

How we better manage the world's resources for the good of all humanity in the years to come, is the next step in overcoming Africa's and the world's development challenges. And, taking ownership in the manner in which **Africa's Development** is shaped, is how we enable the seedlings of the proverbial Proteas and Palms of Africa, to nourish an ecosystem of inclusive and equitable growth.

In conclusion I leave you with the following sentiments.

It is said by the author of a biography of Zbigniew Brzezinski¹⁷, that "The ignorance of geopolitical minds about economics is matched only by the economics profession's ignorance about foreign policy".

The vision and foresight of the founding fathers of the African Union, as expressed by Kwame Nkrumah, still serve as a lodestar for today:

"We must unite for economic viability, first of all... so that our vast resources and capacity for development will bring prosperity for the African Continent and its people, and additional benefits for the rest of the world..."

Let this dialogue at Leiden University point us in all the right directions to explore and discover the interconnected nature of Africa and allow us to reflect on the many lessons that our shared history has to offer.

I thank you.

END.

¹⁷ Vaïsse, Justin, "Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist", Harvard University Press, March 26, 2018.