

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: TOWARDS A NEW STRATEGY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the end of the Second World War, official development assistance (ODA) has played important part in the process of development and the alleviation of poverty in many developing countries, including those in Africa. The rationale for ODA to developing countries was encapsulated in several theories, notably the donor-oriented theory or international relations theory and supplemental theories of foreign aid. At the Earth Summit of 1992, it was noted that the implementation of Agenda 21 would entail huge sums of money that could, in the short run, be out of the reach of many developing countries given their weak economic conditions. Thus, in the spirit of international partnership for development, the international community acquiesced on the need for increased ODA flows to developing countries, most of which are in Africa.

However, while the need for ODA has increased it is common knowledge that the flow has declined and is characteristically unpredictable. The decline has had far-reaching adverse consequences for the promotion of realistic sustainable development in developing countries, including those in Africa. Hence, the fundamental questions are what went wrong and what must be done to arrest and reverse the decline in foreign aid flows, particularly, those to Africa?

Thus far, although the level of implementation varies from one country to another in the continent, some common areas of implementation in the Agenda may be identified. At the national level, these include the integration of Agenda 21 measures into national economic policies, strengthening of environmental laws and creating them where they do not exist. There have been actions in the consolidation or creation of environment institutions. Other actions relate to environment impact assessments and capacity building. In regional actions, intergovernmental organisations have begun to take a leading role in the co-ordination of regional environment programmes. On the substantive issues, the questions relating to natural resources management, poverty, population, human settlements and health, and waste and hazardous materials are currently receiving attention. At the international level, co-operation between the United Nations' organisations and the World Bank has increased for the implementation of freshwater and food security measures in developing countries. The Global Environmental Facility has made some contributions in the financing of biodiversity, climate change, international waters and ozone layer depletion. And more importantly, the United Nations Development Programme's Capacity 21 Programme is intended to promote capacity building in developing countries.

Progress in sustainable development in Africa has not been substantial because of the enormous difficulties encountered at all levels of implementation. The forces emanating from the weak socio-economic structures of African countries and the international economic environment have acted as powerful friction in the wheels of progress. At the national level, progress in sustainable development is hindered by the shortage of skilled staff, paucity of training facilities, lack of integration and co-operation among institutions, inadequate information, incomplete integration of all stakeholders into sustainable development programmes and counter-productive government programmes. At the regional level, sustainable development has experienced difficulties as a result of duplication of efforts and waste of scarce resources. There is lack of commitment by countries to full participation in regional initiatives. Also, the lack of financial resources poses serious difficulties to the implementation of programmes. At the international level, the major difficulties include inadequate and unpredictable funding of programmes in African countries. Also, the disadvantages of African countries in the international economy have massively militated against sustainable development in Africa.

The decline in bilateral and multilateral ODA flows to Africa was due to the unfavourable circumstances emanating from the world economy, the developed countries and African countries. The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the emergence of new states increased demand for ODA from the developed countries and shifted attention away from Africa. In the 1990s, most developed countries were confronted with the need to reduce budgetary deficits at home. Along with this, the European Union countries were concerned with the agreement to reduce fiscal deficits as a condition to attain monetary integration during the decade. The 1990s was particularly a period of aid fatigue in the

developed countries owing to perceived poor results in the utility of aid in the continent. Aid utility has suffered from poor aid co-ordination and management. Furthermore, the political instability in some countries in the continent represented a serious setback to the advancement of sustainable development.

As it is today, African countries run the risk of losing the gains made in sustainable development because of the stated difficulties. ODA is critical to the implementation of sustainable development in Africa. It is important that new and more innovative methods are found to ensure increased flows to priority issues in sustainable development in the continent. In addressing these, actions would need to be taken at all levels of implementation. At the national level, new methods of policy co-ordination are desirable to harmonise the interests of bilateral and multilateral donors. There is a need for more stringent laws and regulations to deter corruption and mismanagement of aid. The administrative, political and economic bottlenecks to full disbursement of allocated ODA should be identified and removed. African countries should get more involved in the creation of appropriate aid constituencies in the developed countries to lobby lawmakers to ensure increases in aid disbursements to Africa. Additionally, African countries should endeavour to improve their internal taxation systems to raise additional funds for sustainable development, especially for the creation of sustainable development institutions. At the regional level, regional development banks and intergovernmental organisations should assist in the generation of additional ODA to African countries.

However, the more enduring efforts would come from the international community. At this level, the way forward would include stronger political will in developed countries to commit more aid for sustainable development in the continent, the need to disburse aid on a timely basis, the reduction of aid tying and the channelling of aid to priority areas of sustainable development as identified by African countries. Above all, the international community should take appropriate steps to remove the obstacles to the external trade of African countries in order to enhance their autonomous base for the long term financing of sustainable development. The multilateral agencies, especially those of the United Nations, are currently engaged in restructuring for greater effectiveness because of changing global circumstances. The international community should effectively fund these agencies to enhance their capacity to effectively deliver on sustainable development issues in Africa.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Rio Earth Summit of 1992 was a turning point in the global approach to development. The Summit ended with a blueprint, Agenda 21, which globally addressed the question of sustainable development. The Agenda requires all countries to embark on a new development process that will preserve nature, the environment and resources for mankind and its future generations. At the same time, it was clear that these endeavours, which are critical to better the future of mankind, would entail huge sums of money for their implementation and could, in the short run, be out of reach for many developing countries given their weak economic conditions. Thus, it was immediately clear that, in the spirit of international partnership for development, official development assistance (ODA) would be needed in the case of the developing countries, most of which are in Africa. This was well noted in Chapter 2 section 2.3(c) of the Agenda, which called on the international community to provide adequate financial resources to developing countries in order to achieve global sustainable development.

Traditionally, ODA has played, since the end of the Second World War, an important part in the process of development in many developing countries, including those in Africa. The termination of colonial rule in many countries called for some forms of financial support to promote the process of economic growth and alleviate poverty. In this context, the flows of ODA to developing countries from the developed countries vary in volume over time to development targets essentially determined by the developed countries. Subsequently, the rationale for ODA to developing countries was encapsulated in several theories, notably the donor-oriented theory or the international relations theory and supplemental theories of foreign aid.

The main thrust of the donor-oriented theory stipulates that donors have other objectives besides the promotion of economic development in the developing countries. According to the theory, donors have political, strategic or economic interests in the disbursement of aid. The developing countries might be interested in long-term development and political stability with the hope of getting integrated into the world economy, on the principles of comparative advantage. But the developed countries do not perceive their own interests in these terms. For this reason, beginning with the 1960s foreign aid was thus generally directed at import substitution rather than export promotion. Along with this, there has been

reluctance in the opening up of developed country markets to the industrial products from the developing countries. However, there have been major developments in the political, strategic and economic interests of the developed countries during the last three decades. It has become increasingly obvious that these factors may not represent credible and acceptable determinants for the flow of ODA in the face of new global trends characterised by partnerships for international development.

In contrast, the distinguishing feature of supplemental theories consists of its tenacious link to certain factors in economic growth. In the 1950s, this was broadly taken to be savings. The shortage of savings was considered a critical limiting factor to economic growth. However, in the 1960s, attention shifted to other factors, especially the need for foreign exchange and skills. But this notwithstanding, the influence of savings remained strong. It was argued that foreign aid could supplement savings and thereby enable the country to maintain the level of investment desirable for economic growth. The theory maintains that as the economy grows and incomes grow, the country can afford to set aside an increasing proportion of its income in the form of savings. Eventually, the economy will reach the point at which savings are sufficient to finance the volume of investment needed to maintain the desired state of economic growth without further requirements for foreign aid. In this thinking, supplemental theories are directed at the attainment of "self-sustaining growth." Self-sustaining growth was held out as a device and promise that foreign aid would be of limited duration. In other words, at a future date there might not be a need for additional aid from the developed countries (White, 1974, 13-16). While this theory sounds realistic, it has been difficult to put into practice. For example, the ODA requirements for African countries to meet the development targets under the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s were calculated, but disbursements have never been adequate and have generally remained unpredictable. Thus, this brings to the fore the question of the "political will" necessary to effectively support the growth process in Africa. On the whole, the limitations of both theories should be perceived further in the context of their capacity to address the broader issues of sustainable development. It follows, therefore, that a useful general theory on foreign aid will need to take into full consideration the parameters of sustainable development and the new thinking of the international community in international co-operation for development.

The idea of sustainable development emerged in 1972 out of the deep concern of the threat to the natural environment posed by economic growth and industrial pollution at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. Subsequently, in 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published its report *Our Common Future* which attempted to explain "sustainable development" as an integrated approach to policy and decision making in which environmental protection and long-term economic growth are seen as complementary and mutually dependent. It was noted that solving environmental problems requires resources that only economic growth can provide. But economic growth will falter if human health and natural resources are damaged by environmental degradation. Thus, the report provided for an action plan that was issue-oriented on the question of pollution and non-renewable resource depletion (United Nations, 1997, 2). In effect, the report set in motion the process that culminated in the convening of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992.

However, while the need for ODA has increased over the years it is clear that the flow has declined and has been disappointingly unpredictable with far-reaching adverse consequences for the promotion of realistic sustainable development. This development has apparently created frustrations in many developing countries in Africa, particularly in those countries that strongly felt that most of the conditions required for increases in the inflows of ODA and other forms of foreign capital have been meritoriously fulfilled. For example, in the implementation of political and economic reforms, the establishment of democracy, good governance, accountability, structural adjustment programs, etc., ODA has declined when these countries have needed it most. Hence, the fundamental questions are what went wrong and what must be done to arrest and reverse the decline in foreign aid flows to the continent? The answers and explanations to these questions would definitely be found in a host of reasons. Some of these could be external or internal to the recipient African countries. In the light of the critical situations of African countries and other developing countries, several studies have been carried out on the issue of aid flows from the international community. The attempt in this study therefore will be to build on the existing body of knowledge in this area.

Five essential assumptions underlie this study. Firstly, that in the present economic dispensation of many economically weak African countries, ODA is a *sine qua non* for the promotion of sustainable economic development and the realisation of the goals of Agenda 21. Secondly, that an increase in ODA

is possible in the future with improvements in aid utility; that is, with better results from existing assistance programs and projects. Thirdly, the flow of ODA to Africa could be conditioned less by adverse economic conditions in donor countries and more by other critical strategic and political world development issues that are of interest to the donor countries. Fourthly, that the flow of ODA could be conditioned by the dynamics of the world economy. Increased globalisation engendering greater integration could foster increased ODA support for developing countries to develop and increase the demand for the products from the developed countries. Fifthly, sustainable development is attainable in Africa, but this will hinge on full and effective internalisation of the measures of the programme in national policies and the creation of an appropriate enabling environment to nourish the programmes. In this context, a six-point approach has been adopted for this study.

Section II will provide an overview of sustainable development in Africa. It will attempt to describe development in Africa before the Rio Agenda 21. At the same time, it will present an account of the implementation of the programme in Africa since its adoption in 1992, highlighting the main encountered difficulties. Section III will relate the theory of foreign aid to its practice. It will describe the trend of both bilateral and multilateral ODA flows to Africa, addressing the origin, volume and destination of flows from 1979-1999. This period is inclusive of the period of reforms, the early and mid-1980s, and the period after the adoption of Agenda 21. The section will seek to explain the flows in the context of influential developments, both political and economic, in Africa, donor countries, and the international economy. Section IV will further relate the theory of foreign aid to its practice through an in-depth critical analysis of some of the identified fundamental problems in the links between ODA and selected issues in sustainable development. The section will, inter alia, explore the rationale for aid decline, support for Africa's economic development, institutions, and capacity building. Section V will attempt to present a new road map to enhance ODA flows to Africa. In light of the observations from this study and the experience of ODA flows to other developing regions of the world, the chapter will seek to prescribe new and comprehensive policies and actions that will have to be undertaken by the recipient and donor countries and multilateral institutions to engender an increase in the inflow of ODA to Africa in the near future. In Section VI, efforts will be made to draw strong conclusions from the main issues observed in the main body of the study. It will summarise the essential dynamics of ODA and the required collective efforts by all stakeholders in the promotion of sustainable development in Africa.

II. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

The developments in Africa, both political and economic, in the course of this decade have been far-reaching in the on-going transformation of the continent. These have, to a large extent, assisted in the shaping of the character and direction of sustainable development in the continent. At the same time, the quality and quantity of support that Agenda 21 received from the international community have dictated the rate of progress in sustainable development. Sustainable development is a priority matter for African governments because of its intricate linkage to poverty eradication. For this reason, there has never been a shortage of desire to implement Agenda 21 in the continent. But the enthusiasm to implement could be turned to reality only if the internal and external environments are right. Thus far, these environments cannot be construed to be absolutely right. The drive towards the achievement of sustainable development in the continent has not been impressive because a host of constraints have unduly impeded the implementation of programmes and projects.

A. Background

It will be noted that beginning from the early 1980s, African countries have acknowledged the necessity of political and economic reforms. Both were perceived as prerequisites for governments to fulfil their primary obligations of provision of improved welfare and the eradication of poverty. The initial actions of most governments were in economic reforms; that is, varying forms of structural adjustment programs to address economic recession and promote economic growth. But it became increasingly obvious that some of the existing political regimes — authoritarian or military regimes and one party states — were considered less helpful towards the promotion of a durable economic and political system. Thus, there were sub-regional and regional declarations on the promotion of democracy, good governance, accountability, human rights and the eradication of corruption.

This understanding has led to the initiation of democratic processes in many African countries. Elections have been held in many African countries that hitherto were under military regimes or operated in the context of a one party arrangement. Political parties have been created in many countries to articulate political agendas for development. Along with this, the parliamentary process has been set in motion. Pressure groups, labour unions, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector now have more contributions and inputs into the process of governance. Furthermore, attempts have been made to create appropriate supportive administrative and legal institutions to buttress the democratic process.

The efforts of many African countries have been very significant in the promotion of democracy. However, it is clear that these arrangements are broadly in the embryonic stages. Democracy needs to be nurtured and sustained. The consolidation of democracy in the continent will continue to require more efforts from African governments to strengthen political structure, the political and administrative institutions as well as the legal environment. At the same time, increased technical and financial support of the international community would be needed to complement the efforts of African governments. While the democratic process has taken shape in varying forms in many countries, a few countries are, however, still confronted with critical internal political stresses and strains. For some of these countries, political stresses and strains have degenerated into civil war with far-reaching consequences for their development. Also, these crises have had negative impacts on the development processes in the neighbouring countries and sub-region. Civil wars have resulted in the elimination of democratic governments and disruption of economies, infrastructure, and social systems. They have created an unprecedented volume of displaced persons and refugees. As have been noted in several studies, the crises in these countries have their causes in several factors that include colonial administration, history, deficiencies in political development, unequal economic development, poverty and ethnic strife, to mention a few. For these group of countries it is important to see to the immediate termination of hostilities. Efforts must be made for adequate post-conflict development, rehabilitation and reconstruction. African governments and the international community, including sub-regional and regional institutions, should give sufficient support to the countries in conflict to terminate conflicts and assist in bringing them to the path of sustainable development.

At the same time, it is equally imperative that efforts should be made to tackle the critical impediments to economic growth. It has been noticed that since the mid-1990s the continent has experienced a rise in many economic indicators. Real GDP growth accelerated to 4.5 per cent between 1995 and 1997, compared to an average annual rate of 1.5 per cent between 1990 and 1994. Real average per capital GDP growth became positive, at 1.1 per cent annually over the same period, compared to about negative 1.9 per cent during 1990-94. Also, export growth doubled from an annual average of 3.9 per cent between 1990 and 1994 to 7.8 per cent between 1995 and 1997 (UNECA, 1999, 8). It has been further observed that these improvements in Africa's economic performance have essentially been due to the positive effects of implemented macroeconomic policies by many countries beginning from the mid-1980s and better weather conditions, which led to increased export earnings. While this growth is fragile, it is clear that most countries are yet to get out of the woods of poverty. Hence, there is a need to maintain the momentum of growth and to increase efforts to eradicate poverty by addressing the fundamental impediments to economic growth and development.

Among other things, African countries need to mobilise domestic resources as a medium- to long-term goal. Savings rates in Africa have been low in the past. While savings performance varies between countries, African countries have lower savings and investments rates than other less developed countries. For example, in 1997 domestic savings as a percentage of GDP was 17.6 per cent, compared with 24 per cent for all developing countries in the same year. Also, investment was 18.3 per cent of GDP in contrast to the over 32 per cent required for the poverty reduction targets (UNECA, 1999, 21). As of 1994-96, the burden of external debt in the context of the ratio of total debt-service to export revenue of Sub-Saharan Africa was put at 30 per cent. Judged by the debt burden indicators and debt servicing capacity, it is clear that many African countries are still in serious debt problems notwithstanding previous debt relief extended by creditors. The burden of the external debt of African countries will need to be addressed further with an appropriate international debt strategy. Notwithstanding the notable efforts made by many African countries in the implementation of economic and financial reforms, FDI flows to most of them remain negligible. Africa trails other developing regions in attracting FDI. In 1994 it attracted 2.3 per cent of world FDI. This fell to 1.4 per cent in 1996 and to 1.2 per cent in 1997. During the same period, the flows to Latin America and the Caribbean rose from 11.8 per cent in 1994 to 14 per cent in 1997. Similarly, the flows to Central and Eastern Europe increased to 3.7 per cent in 1997 from 2.4 per cent in

1994 (UNCTAD, 1998, 9). Foreign direct investment will need to be increased in order to raise the level of productivity and facilitate economic growth and development.

The exports of African countries continue to remain insignificant in terms of total world exports. The impediments to Africa's external trade expansion continue to be manifested in both external and internal factors. In particular, the constraints in the market access for African products in the markets of the industrially developed countries should be removed to allow for a steady increase in exports. The implications of the on-going globalisation process should be considered and appropriate action taken to eliminate the marginalisation of African countries. African countries themselves need to continue to adopt appropriate macroeconomic policies to reduce inflation, create more jobs and increase productivity.

B. Sustainable Development

Since Rio there have been actions at all levels concerning the relevant programmes of Agenda 21, especially in some basic priority areas such as institutions, policies, environmental laws, land, wastes and hazardous materials, population, human settlements and health and international co-operation and trade.

1. Institutions

Following the adoption of the Rio Agenda, the first obvious concern of African countries was the National Environment Action Plans (NEAPs) to address institutional mechanisms and organisational structures. In this context, countries have been implementing institutional reforms: national environmental institutions (ministries, departments, commissions, etc.), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), advocacy groups, and private-sector institutions have been strengthened or established to take responsibility for the environment and to promote sustainable development policies and programmes (UNEP, 1997, Chap. 3). Consequently, there has been increased co-operation between national agencies responsible for economic planning and those in charge of environmental management. Albeit, these institutions are still weak and inadequately equipped in the continent to implement their functions. These limitations stem from many factors, notably a serious shortage of skilled staff, the absence of adequate training facilities, lack of integration and co-operation among major institutions, and counterproductive government policies and legislation.

In the same vein, in order to support the implementation of the various General Assembly resolutions on Agenda 21 follow-up, the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Planning and Development adopted, at its nineteenth session, resolution 757(XVIII) through which it, inter alia, restructured the intergovernmental machinery of the Commission. Among the thematic Conferences of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment (CAMSDE), a committee of experts was also created to the Conference.¹

There were also, at the international level, new initiatives with consequential institutional requirements, notably: the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, particularly in Africa; the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks; and the Global Programme of Action on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (United Nations, 1992, 2). In addition, it will be noted that the Commission on Sustainable Development has initiated further institutional developments, characteristically the ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). It has also reaffirmed arrangements directly relevant to its mandate, such as the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), established in 1994 to develop and review strategies for implementation of chapter 19 of Agenda 21. All these should provide support for the effective implementation of the conventions. But the growing number of conventions in environmental and socio-economic fields subsequently increased awareness of the necessity for linkages between the intergovernmental and support arrangements of the United Nations system and those of other organisations. Thus, international financial technical support for the conventions has resulted in overall increased co-operation and new institutional arrangements between the United Nations system and international financial institutions.

¹ The mandate of CAMSDE is based on the interrelationship between agriculture, with an emphasis on food supply, rural development, water resources, population, the environment and human settlements.

2. Policies

The next important area of focus of most African countries has been the development of the relevant policies. Efforts were energetically directed at the integration of the environment into key policies, plans and decision-making. This has entailed co-operation amongst various Government agencies and NGOs. Development in this area has been both innovative and encouraging. Some countries made special efforts aimed at integrating environmental protection and improvement activities into key sectors and chapters of their post-UNCED national development plans by ensuring, through inter-ministerial arrangements, the shared understanding and commitment of other key ministries. The broader participation of representatives and experts from major groups in societies such as NGOs, women and youth was given a higher degree of attention which, in turn, led to public understanding and support. Several countries have established national youth bodies or held youth forums to improve consultation and programme delivery. Generally, typical programmes focus on leadership, environmental education, and community participation.

Thus NGOs now play a significant role in raising awareness and mobilising people at local, national, and international levels. Their interaction with government is regarded as helpful, and they are frequently included as members of national sustainable development bodies and international delegations. At the same time, governments are encouraging sustainable development at the community level by strengthening the role of local government in environmental, natural resource, and infrastructure planning and development. Several African countries also took action on the over 25 proposals for integrating the environment and development in policies, planning and management in line with chapter 8, section A of Agenda 21. This was particularly the case in countries where (i) Agenda 21 plans were adopted; (ii) Agenda 21 national/sub-regional workshops were organised; (iii) Capacity 21 programmes of the UNDP are being implemented. But the implementation of these policies will depend on the support of adequate environmental laws.

3. Environmental Laws

After UNCED, African countries proceeded with the consolidation or creation of environmental laws. This essentially consisted of a major review and strengthening of existing laws by some African countries. In the context of Agenda 21 (chapter 8), attempts were made to update and bring the laws in line with current scientific knowledge; reduce overlaps and conflicts; set much higher and tougher penalties to encourage compliance; clarify and harmonise the responsibilities of different ministries and levels of governments; and to identify and fill significant gaps. In this connection, some UN agencies assisted in this exercise, for example through the implementation of the Dutch Government Funded joint UNEP/UNDP (in co-operation with the World Bank, IUCN and FAO) project on capacity building in the areas of environmental legislation and institutions. Thus, almost every country has established legislation or regulation that requires environmental impact assessments, especially at the project and programme level, but increasingly at the level of policy-making as well. Attempts are made to ensure that legislation is more specific. For example, the constitution of Mali (1992) notes: "Every person has a right to a healthy environment. The protection and defence of the environment and the promotion of life are the duty of all and for the State." Some other countries whose constitutions also provide for environment, natural resources, and sustainable development are Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda. Additionally, the legal review by African countries also included relevant international conventions/agreements on the environment. In this regard, AMCEN took commendable steps to encourage African countries to fulfil their main obligations under those conventions that they are party to. A good example in this connection is the AMCEN convened ministerial consultations (for Eastern and Southern African countries) on the sub-regional, regional, international and global conventions that took place in Nairobi, March 1995. This meeting identified other conventions which African countries should consider ratifying as a matter of priority. It will also be noted that, in the case of the conventions on biological diversity and desertification, AMCEN, in co-operation with African governments, organisations, NGOs and relevant UN system partners, developed common perspectives and positions which guided and continue to inspire the region's participation in these conventions. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), in close collaboration with UNEP, ECA, UNSO, and other United Nations agencies active in the region, has been fully involved in mobilising the effort in the negotiation for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and support for its implementation, as well as other initiatives for the implementation of

the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. Some other programmes of action of AMCEN are illustrated in Box 1.

Box 1. Important Programmes of Action adopted by AMCEN

- (a) African Strategies for the Implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, adopted by the Conference of Ministers of Economic Planning and Development at its 19th Session, 3-6 May 1993,
- (b) Proposals for the Implementation of the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, the 14th Meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole, 12-16 April 1993, and the 28th Session of the Commission/19th Meeting of the Conference of the Ministers, 19-22 April 1993,
- (c) Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development: the Cairo Agenda of Action, adopted at the Extraordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers on 28 March 1995, subsequently endorsed by the June 1995 Summit of the African Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, and
- (d) The 1996-97 Programme of Work, adopted by AMCEN at its 6th Ministerial Session in Nairobi, 14-15 December 1995.

4. Capacity Building

An important feature of both Agenda 21 and the African Common Position on Environment and Development is the strong emphasis on capacity building for sustainable development. In over 100 priority programme areas in Agenda 21, there are specific recommendations for capacity building. In response, several African countries, with the co-operation of bilateral aid agencies and UN agencies, have made national capacity building for sustainable development a high priority. The objective of the Agencies has been to assist African countries in the consolidation of their institutional, managerial and technical capacity to implement sustainable development programmes. The UNEP Funded Regional Advisory Services project and the Dutch Government Funded \$5 million joint UNEP/UNDP project on capacity building (legislation and institutions). Also, in the same context, the UNDP Capacity 21 programmes have been complementing the efforts of governments in this area. Additionally, UNDP has embarked on the recruitment of sustainable development advisors for some of its country offices.

5. Land

Under land issues actions were taken in a number of areas which include, land system, desertification and drought, land degradation, deforestation, water-related issues and coastal and marine areas. One fundamental fact in Africa is that traditional rights on land and access to land vary greatly from country to country. There are places where most land belongs to the state and of places where they belong to traditional chiefs. Rights on land could facilitate access to land for small farmers or hinder it. The strong trend on the continent towards democracy and decentralisation of civil powers is having positive impact on land-ownership in the rural areas.

The concept of giving back to villagers full authority for their land has gained ground. Within this development, the pilot villages of the AMCEN programme were successful as illustrated in the case of Senegal. Also, many bilateral and multilateral donors and African Governments adopted this grassroots approach to land productivity, for example, Germany in Burkina Faso; the World bank, with Natural Resources Management Projects in many countries; and the UNDP Senegal. Integrated plant nutrition systems, integrated pest management, and agroforestry are providing new packages for land rehabilitation and productivity increase. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) programme on the use of local minerals and organic resources as low-cost fertilisers and soil ameliorants is opening up new solutions to

the problems of soil fertility depletion (UNEP, 1996). With these developments the hopes for the advancements in sustainable development are more assured.

One important reason for the continued land-related environmental problems is that there are limited alternative industrial activities to reduce pressure on land. Furthermore, the declining terms of trade on agricultural commodities add pressure on land and contribute to continuing poverty. Governments have tried to expand and diversify the production structure throughout the industry sector. Generally, these efforts have focused on policies for developing institutional infrastructures that enable change. Additionally, there are also problems in reaching agreements among various stakeholders (Government, the local community, foreign investors, and international financing agencies) on investment activities. The means to appraise the degree of success of various actions and their accountability are urgently needed (UNEP, 1996).

Desertification and drought. In Africa, desertification and drought are closely related to poverty, food security, and land degradation. The United Nations Convention to Combat desertification has stimulated an early national response, especially the preparation of action plans. Solid information, particularly on trends, is generally lacking, and there is evidence of concrete results in only a few countries. Certainly, from the evidence of the country profiles, no country with serious land degradation has yet managed to control it.² Lack of trained staff (especially at the field level) and inadequate information, monitoring networks, and funding represent the major constraints. In many countries, desertification has been exacerbated by fuel-wood collection, overgrazing, and poor land-use practices. In the field of drought monitoring and early warning, as well as of climate in general, regional initiatives include the establishment of a Climatology Network under AMCEN to provide a framework for action on issues related to climate. In light of the climate-related disasters experienced in the African region, it has become important, especially for countries affected by drought, to adopt policies and programmes to minimise the impacts of these disasters.³

Deforestation. Successful measures to prevent deforestation and to meet the need for fuelwood and other woodland products have been achieved through large-scale planting managed by Governments or companies for commercial timber production. For example, in Swaziland, one village that was given a plantation by the Government sold the timber with considerable returns (SARDC, 1994). Tanzania has built on traditional views regarding tree rights to install legal instrument to protect tree ownership. On the strength of this law, virtually every smallholder in the village planted trees along field boundaries, tempering escalating local conflicts over land access (SARDC, 1994). Attempts to reduce deforestation problems with fuel-saving stoves have, in general, not been successful in sub-Saharan region. This is primarily because fuelwood use is not the major cause of deforestation and also because the stoves were not appropriately designed or promoted. In rural settings, the actual consumption of fuelwood was not significantly reduced because the stoves could not be used for other purposes, such as heating and lighting.

The region has several innovative wildlife management strategies, such as game ranching and community-based management schemes, offering promising and practical alternatives to the standard approaches to wildlife conservation. Many of these are pioneered in southern Africa, such as the Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe, launched in 1987; the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (ADMAD) in Zambia; and the Selous Conservation Programme in Tanzania. The establishment of natural history museums and botanical gardens is also significant in conserving and documenting biodiversity.

Water-related issues. Countries are aware of the key role that is played by freshwater resources for future economic and social development. There is considerable activity to develop national freshwater strategies, basin plans, and demand studies. In Africa, policy-setting focuses on water assessment, integrated watershed management and development, water supply and sanitation, recently established

² Regional co-operation in the field of land degradation has also been strengthened either directly through subregional institutions such as IGAD, SADC, and CILSS, and the African Development Bank (ADB), or indirectly through the institutes for applied research with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

³ As part of the Climatology Network and under the World Climate Impacts and Response Strategies Programme (WCIRP), UNEP established a Climate Impacts and Response Strategy Network for Africa (CIRSNet/Africa) to share information and experiences to facilitate the development and implementation of climate-related activities, particularly climate change-related activities in the region.

transboundary water commissions, and economic instruments are being used to encourage conservation in some countries (SARDC, 1994, 11). Solving water-related issues is an important priority and includes providing sustained water and sanitation services to all people. Some examples of successful rural water supply and sanitation projects are found in Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo, featuring drilled wells with hand-pumps. Two examples of the most successful rural sanitation programmes in the region can be found in Lesotho and Zimbabwe (Ohlson, 1995). But future development of water-related issues would hinge on availability of appropriate technology, facilities, and management to harness available water. Water issues could be problematic because of the uneven distribution of freshwater resources and increasing demand for water for various activities such as agriculture, fisheries, mining, industry, and tourism in the continent.

Actions are also being taken at the sub-regional levels in the management and use of international waters and their basins. Only a few international river basins have been managed effectively through co-operation among riparian countries. One example of an important initiative is the Nile Basin Action Plan.⁴ Many countries have developed their own energy policies. But at regional level, co-operation in the energy sector is being forged in the framework of the African Energy Commission, a Ministerial Commission. This Commission is supported by the ADB, ECA, and OAU with a goal to harmonise and co-ordinate the developments of the energy sector in Africa. There are also ongoing activities to develop hydroelectric power for common river basins through regional co-operation. Examples are the Gambia, Mano, Niger, Nile, Senegal, and Zambezi rivers. But the policy direction of Africa is to promote environmentally sound energy systems by ensuring that policies and policy instruments support and stimulate effective actions. These include developing and strengthening regional, sub-regional, and national legislative instruments on energy within the context of national environmental conservation programmes.⁵

Coastal and Marine Areas. With regard to coastal and marine areas, countries have various regulations in place to control activities in the areas of investments, fishing practices, oil spills, and withdrawal of coastal ground water. EIAs are mandatory for development projects in coastal zones. Some examples of regional initiatives on coastal and marine areas include the Regional Seas Programmes, such as for the West and Central African (WACAF) region and for the Eastern African (EAF) region. Also there are agreements for management of coastal resources, such as the Eastern African Convention on the Protection of Coastal and Marine Environment. In general, the implementation of these regulatory measures has not been all that successful because of lack of co-ordination among various authorities; overlapping mandates of various institutions; and lack of resources, including skilled staff and financial and technical resources to enforce the laws. Existing local and national environmental policies are often compromised for the sake of short-term economic benefits, and therefore in the implementation of development projects without adequate environmental consideration (UNEP, 1996). As far as oceans, seas and coastal areas are concerned, there are efforts to prepare in Africa, ocean or coastal management plans. However, at the same time, coastal erosion and pollution, urban development, and the lack of co-ordination are militating against progress.

6. Wastes and hazardous matters

This is an area where progress has been significant in many countries world-wide. Overall, the technical capacity to manage waste in African countries is low, but there is an indication in some countries of an effort to control the use of agricultural chemicals and develop information systems for hazardous waste. In addition, individual municipalities in a few countries have conducted solid waste and sewage treatment pilot projects and are encouraging recycling. Constraints are generally related to issues of urban and integrated land planning and costs. In the case of hazardous wastes, progress has been

⁴ This has five main components (integrated water resources planning and management; capacity building; training and assessment; regional co-operation, including harmonisation of legislation and joint projects; and environmental protection and enhancement) and which promotes a comprehensive and co-operative framework for the basin. Another is the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses Systems negotiated by 11 of the 12 members of SADC and signed so far by nine countries.

⁵ Some of the most important issues to be addressed through regional policies and co-operation include reducing the pressure on natural vegetation cover through the development and use of alternative sources of energy; developing the energy potential of common river basins through systematic co-operation between riparian states to speed up sustainable development and economic integration.

undermined partly because appropriate technologies for storage are not available. An important regional agreement that deals with hazardous waste problems in Africa is the 1991 Bamako Convention on the Banning of Trans-boundary Movement of Toxic Waste. Importation of any hazardous wastes into Africa is outlawed under the Convention. Twenty-two countries are signatories and at least 10 countries are Parties to the Convention. But then it is important to underscore that pollution from transportation remains a major problem in most urban areas. CO₂ emissions, which continue to increase, are relevant for all countries. Less action has been taken in this area in Africa. But efforts are being made to develop strategies for the protection of the atmosphere and to conduct studies on energy substitution, air pollution, and the impact of climate change and adaptation to it. The most common concerns were related to pollution from transportation and the terrestrial and marine impacts of climate change.

7. Population, human settlement and health

In the area of demographics, it is clear that the 1994 United Nations Conference on Population and Development has had positive influence on policies and planning in almost all countries. The common activities in this area include family planning, the active involvement of women in decision-making and regional settlement. Nonetheless, countries are generally not completely satisfied with the results on population issues. For many African countries, progress in these areas would depend on institutional development, research and information dissemination.

All countries have undergone urbanisation, and the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul helped to define that issue and crystallise action in the area of human settlements in all regions. African countries are however at the early stage of urbanisation, with relatively low urban proportions but high rates of urban population growth, leading to severe strains on urban areas and resulting in environmental degradation and urban sprawl. Priority is being given to the provision of housing, infrastructure, particularly, improved sanitation and the protection of open spaces.

In the area of health, some countries in Africa have experienced some improvements in the areas of life expectancy and infant mortality. There appears to be a movement towards integrated health policies. That is health policies in combination with policies on poverty, education human settlement, freshwater and waste disposal. But the least developed countries are struggling to have tangible results. On the whole, there appears to be a need for multi-agency strategy development, integrated programmes, and partnerships with major groups, including women, non-governmental organisations and the private sector (UNEP, 1996, 5). But as far as consumption pattern is concerned the efforts of African countries are largely to meet basic needs, but outside this, steps are being taken in individual countries to promote reduced energy consumption, improve nutrition, and rationalise resource use.

8. United Nations Organisations and international co-operation

The response of the United Nations system and the international community to sustainable development efforts in Africa has been one generally characterised by handicap. After Rio, there has been rapid growth in requests from developing countries and countries in transition for financial and technical support of initiatives related to implementing the objectives of Agenda 21. This created pressure for activities and projects leading to some results. Among other things, there has been increased support for model projects that help test and refine best practices.⁶ The United Nations system, through the IACSD and under the leadership of UNDP, has therefore sought to promote an integrated approach to national strategies for sustainable development as a vehicle, *inter alia*, for relating capacity-building needs in different disciplines and sectors. UNDP's Capacity 21 Programme is intended to promote capacity building in relation to developing and implementing national strategies. Attempts were made to relate these to other exercises, such as that of the Country Strategy Notes or that of the World Bank-IMF Country Policy Frameworks, to ensure that a single framework is used for all country level activities.

Ironically, the period after UNCED has been characterised by stagnation in growth, if not reductions in regular budgets of most UN system organisations. This trend has not matched the increased demand and expectations in the implementation of sustainable development. New demands stemming

⁶ The criteria for the selection of projects include (a) response to a real need in the country; (b) demonstration of significant economic, social or environmental benefits for the end-user; and (c) demonstration of governmental commitment and the infrastructure necessary for the project to have enduring results.

from UNCED cannot be fully accommodated within existing resources. For most organisations, the level of extra-budgetary funds for Agenda 21 related activities have not increased. Therefore, agencies have been hard pressed to carry out both their mandated responsibilities and the new responsibilities under UNCED. Even then, it has been further noted that where there has been some growth in extra-budgetary resources for sustainable development initiatives, such resources were most cases earmarked for programmes of interest to donors. In effect there has often been disproportionate funding for certain countries and regions, for certain substantive areas, and in relation to particular functional activities.

Co-operation between UN organisations and the World Bank has grown substantially, for example in such areas as health, freshwater and food security. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) is another example of improving co-operation between UN agencies and the World Bank for the purpose of proving financing to achieve the global environmental benefits in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters and ozone layer depletion. The GEF was restructured by Participating States in 1994, with \$2 billion pledged to its Trust Fund. It operates on the basis of collaboration and partnership among its Implementing Agencies, (UNDP, UNEDP and the World Bank), as a mechanism for international co-operation for the purpose of providing new and additional grant and concessional funding to meet agreed incremental costs of measures to achieve global environmental benefits in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters, ozone layer depletion, and possibly land degradation as it relates to the other four areas. As far as international co-operation and trade is concerned, there is general support for further liberalisation and expansion of world trade and the establishment of a common institutional framework under the World Trade Organisation. In Africa, there is commitment to the restructuring of the economy to encourage trade, fiscal reform, and a stronger private sector. International co-operation has allowed these policies to be implemented, but countries are still confronted with debt problems and difficult external trading conditions. Also, a number of countries are benefiting in regional economic integration arrangements in the context of trade expansion.

In conclusion, it is clear that the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 is not much to write home about. Some spirited efforts have been made to set the process in motion. Activities have been prominent and alive at all levels, national regional and international. But the results of actions could only be described as unpretentious in all areas because of various hindrances. The forces emanating from the weak socio-economic structures of African countries and the international environment have acted as powerful friction in the wheels of progress. At the national level progress in sustainable development is hindered by the shortage of skilled staff, paucity of training facilities, lack of integration and co-operation among institutions, inadequate information, incomplete integration of all stakeholders into sustainable development programmes. Also, sustainable development has been eroded as a result of some unintended counter-productive government policies. At the regional level, progress in sustainable development has been retarded as a result of weak co-ordination. There are undue duplication of efforts and waste of scarce resources. Also, the lack of commitments of countries to full participation in regional initiatives or programmes have not eased the process of sustainable development. In addition, the lack of financial resources to support programmes pose enormous difficulties. At the international level, the major difficulty arise from inadequate and unpredictable funding of programmes in African countries. At the same time, the special interest of donor countries in some countries and sustainable development programmes has not made the judicious allocation of funds for sustainable development in Africa easy for multilateral organisations. All these problems would need to be more closely examined and appropriate solutions found in order to take sustainable development forward in Africa.

III. ODA FLOWS TO AFRICA

For the purposes of this paper, ODA is defined as the flows to developing countries by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies. The main objective of these flows is to promote economic development and alleviate poverty in developing countries. ODA is assumed to be concessional in character and contains a grant element of at least 25 per cent (based on a standard 10 per cent discount rate).⁷ ODA includes both grants (inflows of unrequited transfers from official sources) for current and capital expenditures and disbursements of concessional loans.⁸

⁷ UNDP/The World Bank (1992, 307).

⁸ Given the varying sources and definitions of data, the ODA flows in this section will not equal those that could be calculated by adding net disbursements of official concessional long-term loans and net official transfers.

In the context of this definition, ODA flows to Africa have declined precipitously over the last two decades. This has taken place while internal developments in many African countries seem to have argued for steady increases. For many African countries, there has been an increasing need for foreign aid to assist in the development of social and economic infrastructures as they implement structural adjustment programmes and at the same time endeavour to meet their obligations in the promotion of sustainable development. The international community has also recognised the need to assist the developing countries to overcome the limitations to development and their fulfilment of international development obligations. This was, for example first, illustrated in the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as recommended by the Pearson Commission in 1969. This was adopted by a resolution of the General Assembly in 1970. Annex table 1 illustrates the pattern of bilateral flows to African countries.

It is clear from the table that there has been serious decline in bilateral ODA from DAC countries during this decade. Total bilateral disbursements to African countries were \$16.7 billion in 1991. This fell to \$13.6 billion in 1993, but rose to \$14.5 billion in 1994. Thereafter, there has been a steep decline, falling to an all time low of \$11.4 billion in 1997. The major recipients include Egypt, Mozambique, Tanzania, Morocco, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana, C[^]te d'Ivoire, Senegal and Cameroon. Indeed, the trend in decline is also manifested when disbursements from other bilateral donors (Annex, table 2) are included, from \$25.2 billion in 1991 to \$21.5 billion in 1993, rising to \$23.5 billion in 1994, but thereafter steeply declining to \$18.7 billion in 1997. It will be observed that the flows to the America region during this period experienced some improvements. Total flows to the region in 1991 were about \$6 billion. This fell to \$5.6 billion in 1993, but rising steadily increasing to \$8.1 billion in 1996 and falling to \$6.3 billion in 1997. During this period, it could also be observed that the flows to East and Central European countries did not experience significant decline. The average annual flow was \$6.4 billion. There was a remarkable rise to \$8.4 billion in 1995. However, Africa's share of total disbursements during this period did not experience major decline. The average annual share was 27.7 per cent. A high share of 29 per cent will be noted for 1992. This fell to 27.5 per cent in 1993, but rising to 29.3 per cent in 1994 but declining thereafter.

Thus, it could be observed that, contrary to expectations, bilateral flows to African countries have declined in the years after Rio. This has been a trend that has raised serious questions about the commitment of the developed countries to assisting developing countries in the fulfilment of their obligations of Agenda 21.

The declining trend in ODA can, however, be understood in the context of the changing political and economic situations in Africa and world-wide that have significantly impinged on the donors' decision-making process for foreign aid disbursements to Africa. Beginning from the early 1980s, donors began to emphasise the need for African countries to implement structural adjustment programmes as a condition for the disbursement of aid. It was argued that the full engagement of African countries in a market economy would facilitate the absorption and effective utility of foreign aid. In response, over 37 African countries implemented structural adjustment programmes essentially propounded by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). These countries were themselves convinced that adjustment programmes were needed to halt economic recession and to promote economic growth. By the mid-1980s many African countries had added the dimension of sound democracy, which they perceive as essential for sustainable economic growth. But the subsequent unfortunate events in a few African countries apparently changed the perception of the donors. The wars in the Horn of Africa embroiling Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea resulted in considerable human tragedy. Also, the war in Rwanda and Burundi culminated in huge human and material loss in both countries. The same would be said of the wars in Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The sequential occurrences of these wars shifted the attention of the donors to emergency relief efforts in the countries concerned and in the neighbouring countries hosting refugees and displaced persons. At the same time, the feeling that the crises of these countries could have demonstration effects in other African countries did not encourage the flow of traditional ODA to them. In other words, the absence of wars could have aided the flow of ODA to Africa while most countries were committed to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes.

Furthermore, by 1990, the whole world witnessed an unexpected collapse of the former Soviet Union and consequently a reduction of tensions in East-West relations. Prior to this, in 1989, the Berlin wall collapsed and brought about the unification of Germany. Although this development brought about a reduction in military expenditures by the developed countries, this has not translated into increases in the flow of resources to needy developing countries. This was the case because the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by the severe erosion or demise of socialism in most developing countries. At

the same time, the geographic strategic importance of many developing countries became less significant. This, in effect, reduced foreign aid to many developing countries, including those in Africa.

One important related development with significant influence on the flow of aid to Africa has been the effect of the emerging states in Central and Eastern Europe. The West could not look the other way but gave necessary support to the fragile market economies and democracies of these new states. Thus, the support of the developed countries to the economies in transition amounted to an erosion of the flow of aid to African countries. At the same time the transition economies, most of which, had hitherto been members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and had in the past provided financial aid to African countries, reduced their flows to Africa to apparently negligible sums while they were confronted with major internal development needs. Generally, these states emerged into market economy system severely handicapped, as they needed to consolidate macroeconomic policies, strengthen their infrastructure and the rejuvenate their industrial sectors.

Another important factor accounting for the fall in bilateral aid to Africa has been the increased stringency among donor governments to reduce budgetary deficits at home. More stringent budgetary discipline has been motivated by the accumulation of debt from large deficits during the 1980s, concerns over the impact of high levels of expenditure and taxes on economic activity, and agreement to reduce fiscal deficits as a condition for attainment of monetary integration in the European Union. (World Bank, 1999, 71)

Yet another important factor that seems to have undermined bilateral aid in the 1990s has been "aid fatigue" in the developed countries. As from the early 1990s, many developed countries began to show concern about the results of the several decades of aid flows to African countries. The poor results from aid in the past were deemed to have occurred as a result of the inadequacies of the aid environment in African countries: weak economies as result of weak economic policies, mismanagement, corruption and poor co-ordination of aid, to mention a few. While this view was held in many countries, foreign aid to Africa declined. Most developed countries hold the view that these problems should be addressed adequately by African countries if more aid is to flow into the continent. With the absence of African pressure groups within the developed countries, this view has not been seriously challenged.

A. Multilateral Flows

Annex table 3 presents the pattern of multilateral flows to African countries from 1991 to 1997. It is also obvious that there has basically been a declining trend. Total multilateral flows amounted to \$8.8 billion in 1991. This rose to \$9.7 billion in 1992 but thereafter declined; from \$9.1 billion in 1994 to a low of \$6.8 billion in 1997. This is in sharp contrast to the trend in the Eastern and Central European region or the economies in transition. In 1991, multilateral flows to the region were \$2.5 billion. This rose to \$3.5 billion in 1993, \$4.1 billion in 1995 and a record level of \$6.5 billion in 1997, or a three-fold increase during the 1991-1997 period. A similar increase is also manifested in the America region, from \$2.9 billion in 1991 to \$5.6 billion in 1997, with a low of \$1.3 billion only in 1992. The Asia region maintained the biggest amount in total flows, experiencing a big leap to \$14.3 billion in 1997 from \$9.1 billion in 1996. The share to Africa of total multilateral flows diminished substantially over this period, from 35 and 40.1 per cent in 1991 and 1992 respectively, but thereafter declining to 31.1 per cent in 1993. It rose to 33.5 per cent in the following year, but declined to 30.7, 25.4 and 19.5 per cent in 1995, 1996 and 1997, respectively.

The trend in the flow of ODA from multilateral institutions has been largely dictated by the policies of these institutions and contributions received from donors. By the late 1980s environmental impacts carried considerable weight in the programmes and projects of bilateral donors. This development was accorded greater impetus by UNCED and the plan of action laid out in Agenda 21. Thus, the 1990s witnessed a new dynamism in bilateral agencies with respect to support for environmental sustainable development goals. This has been characterised by increased efforts among bilateral donors to work together towards coherent approaches to contribute to environmental sustainability through aid policies and programmes and increased attention to integrating environmental concerns at the institutional, policy and programme levels (United Nations, 1996, 37).

It will be noted that beginning with the early 1990s, OECD countries' foreign aid policies towards developing countries have been designed to promote sustainable and broad-based economic growth. The emphasis is on the stimulation of productive energies through investment in people and on participatory

development. Foreign aid was directed to environmentally sound and sustainable development and the reduction of population growth. However, by the mid 1990s, in view of the changing circumstances on the African continent, additional importance has been attached to averting conflict (OECD, 1994, 108-109). In addition developing countries have been expected to have implemented economic policies, including structural adjustment and good governance through the promotion of democracy. These policies, as could be observed, are complementary to the promotion of sustainable development. They should be useful to the extent that they are harmonised with the policies designed for the promotion of sustainable development in African countries. Also, the flow of aid to African countries through multilateral institutions would depend, among other things, on convergence of the objectives and strategies of multilateral institutions with those of African countries for the promotion of sustainable development in African countries.

The issues of policies and programmes have been approached from both a cross-sectoral and global point of view. The review and evaluation of emerging trends and assessments of their effectiveness is another feature of the commitment among bilateral donors to the pursuit of environmental and sustainable development goals. As far as many bilateral agencies are concerned, the concept of sustainable development now serves as the guiding principle of development co-operation at the policy, programme and project levels. The ramifications of global environmental issues for development processes have received increased attention and are increasingly taken into account in the design, monitoring and evaluation of projects. In the follow-up to UNCED there has been increased co-ordination of efforts among aid agencies and other departments of ministries concerned (United Nations, 1996, 37).

Clearly, multilateral institutions have advantages for better foreign aid deliveries in African countries, through better co-ordination, freedom from aid tying and diverse technical support, to mention a few. But the 1990s have shown an even sharper decrease in the channelling of aid through the multilateral institutions. Some of the reasons that appear to explain this are to be found in the reservations by the developed countries about the nature and style of operations of most of the important multilateral institutions. Many are considered too large and because of this it has been argued that the greater part of the resources received by them are consumed by the bureaucratic process rather than by programme implementation. The United Nations and most of its agencies, including UNDP, UNEP, etc., that are responsible for the implementation of sustainable development have been affected by this development. There is demand for restructuring and the streamlining of these bodies; effectively downsizing to save costs. The process of restructuring has begun, but contributions to these bodies have yet to increase to enable them to carry out their international obligations of facilitating the implementation of Agenda 21 in developing countries, particularly those in Africa.

IV. CRITICAL ISSUES IN ODA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

African countries have individually and collectively made some progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. The international community, has at the same time, provided some support in this direction to complement the efforts taken at national, sub-regional and regional levels in Africa. However, it is clear from the overview of the performance of the continent that the road ahead towards the attainment of sustainable development is still fraught with difficulties. The weak economic position of many countries and the limitations which they continue to encounter in a rapidly globalizing world economy suggest that appropriate action should be taken at all levels to consolidate the gains made and accelerate the movement towards sustainable development. The dynamics of sustainable development should be carefully identified and consolidated, especially in the areas of resources.

A. Halting and Reversing Declining ODA

In the context of the present state of sustainable development in Africa there is an urgent need to halt and reverse the present declining trend in ODA flows. This has clearly emerged as one of the major problems confronting policy-makers and administrators in African countries as they attempt to implement the programmes of Agenda 21. The decline in ODA should be arrested in order to give a new life to the process of sustainable development. But this exercise can only be done by coming to full grip with the fundamental problems posed by Africa's aid management, the transformations in the world economy and the responses from the international community.

1. Aid management and ODA

One factor that donors seem to utilise to explain the reduction in the flow of aid to African countries has been the internal situation in African countries. The internal environment appears to some to not be right to justify increases in the disbursements of more aid to African countries. Among other things, the weak economic performance of many countries has been cited as a discouragement for the inflow of aid. Poor aid co-ordination and management have been limiting factors. Also, corruption, as has often been stressed, has a negative impact on the allocation of aid to African countries. All these put together have culminated in what has been described as “aid fatigue” for Africa. The case for better aid co-ordination and management in recipient African countries cannot be over emphasised. This has been noted in several studies on aid to developing countries.

Poor aid management is linked to both institutional and personnel limitations. At the personnel level, there is a need for better commitment to aid projects. At the institutional level, relevant aid implementing institutions need to be free from political interference in order to function more effectively (Cassen, 1994, 117). A number of African countries have acknowledged the need for improvement in both areas. They have evolved policies to address corruption and mismanagement. They are developing better foreign aid institutions with relevant capacity and autonomy to ensure continuity in aid implementation and sound delivery of aid projects. The positive impact of foreign aid is likely to be more significant the better the aid co-ordination and management. African countries therefore need to continue to strengthen their efforts in the improvement of the environment for foreign aid in order to enhance its effectiveness for sustainable development process. The efforts of African countries need to be complemented in this connection with support from donor countries since this development could, in the near future, assist in the termination of the need for additional aid. This apart, the more important cause of the decline in ODA flow to Africa countries emanated from the changing economic situation of donor countries.

2. Donor economies and ODA

At the external level, the decline in the flow of aid is to be found in the economic situation of donor countries, the financial limitations of the multilateral institutions and the changing circumstances in international relations. It was observed that increasing scarcity of fiscal resources was a major reason for the decline in ODA in the 1990s. Thus, most of the G-7 countries moved toward more restrained fiscal policies around 1993. Between 1993 and 1997, greater budgetary discipline was motivated by the accumulation of debt during the 1980s, concerns over the impact of high levels of expenditure and taxes on economic activity, and the agreement to reduce deficits as a condition of the European Monetary Union (EMU) (World Bank, 1999, 71). Also, donor countries generally take actions to ensure positive effects of ODA on their own economies. Disbursements of foreign aid should in this context enhance and stimulate economic growth. Addressing these issues could entail the tying of aid to purchases within donor countries or outright reduction when there is a need to ensure a balance in the balance of payments accounts. Aid tying, as has been noted in various studies, has reduced the volume and value of aid to developing countries. The basis has been challenged and the call made continuously for donor countries to make a distinction between aid and trade. The ability of recipient African countries to utilise aid for purchases at the cheapest sources would enhance the value of aid. Outside this, the decision of the donors to disburse ODA during the 1990s has also been greatly influence by some surprising developments.

3. International developments and ODA

Events in the international economy are in most cases beyond the control of individual countries. The implications of a positive or an adverse development can be far reaching for ODA flows out of any economy depending on its strength and extent of integration into the world economy. The recent developments in international relations have redefined the interests of developed countries away from African countries. Contrary to expectations, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s did not yield “peace dividend”; that is, it did not lead to a reduction in the arms race and a corresponding increase in the flow of aid to developing countries. The collapse resulted in the loss of strategic and political importance of many countries in the continent to the developed countries, both of which had been reasons for aid. The emergence of new and weak democracies in Eastern and Central Europe drew the attention of the developed countries to their development needs. These new democracies and their embryonic market

economies needed to be supported, in order to be consolidated and integrated into the world economy. African countries also lost aid from most of the Eastern and Central European countries as their resources were concentrated on national economic growth and development. In addition, wars in some regions of the world, such as in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and natural disasters led to a reduction in development aid during the decade. For example, the share of ODA of emergency assistance required by natural disasters and recovery from civil war increased from about 5 per cent in 1990 to 9 per cent in 1994 (World Bank, 1999, 72).

In other words, new developments in international relations, especially those involving human tragedies, have acquired more importance than the global commitment to partnership for development, including those of sustainable development. Conflicts are inherent in human nature and are part of the characteristics of human society. The necessity for containment and resolution does not elicit any debate when the loss of human lives is involved. But the question is whether this should be at the considerable expense of the promotion of sustainable development. Sustainable development by itself represents an important ingredient towards peace and security in the long run. The international community may therefore need to address emergency global crises without unduly compromising the financial support for sustainable development.

The decline in ODA has been the single-most major blow to the serious advancements in sustainable development in Africa. The financial demands of Agenda 21 are huge. The implementation process began during the first half of the 1990s at a time when most countries in the continent started to recover from the long economic recession of the 1980s. The structural adjustment programmes implemented by African countries to this end also strengthened the need for increases in the inflow of financial resources. While these countries were confronted with the obligation to consolidate the gains in structural adjustment, they were at the same time handicapped by the paucity of autonomous internal financing, declining external trade as a result of the decline in the price and demand for major commodity exports, as well as adverse weather conditions. Also, those countries emerging into industrial production are confronted with the problems of market access in the markets of the industrially developed countries. Given these developments and requirements of African countries, the decline in ODA that occurred during this decade cannot be sufficiently justified. Again, some of the reasons for the reduction in disbursement of aid by the donor countries to African countries to adequately meet sustainable development needs are not highly convincing. The political and socio-economic situations in many African countries have improved substantially over the years to encourage increases in ODA. The case for increases in ODA flows to Africa cannot be stronger given the development partners' various pronouncements and commitments to international development and assistance to developing countries, especially those in Africa. African countries require significant increases in ODA in the short-run to establish the structure for the promotion of an enduring sustainable development.

B. Support for the Development Process

The promotion of sustainable development is intricately linked to the overall development process in Africa. A stable political environment and steady economic growth will facilitate the implementation of measures under Agenda 21. In this connection, concerns are in the areas of a consolidation of democratic processes and the cessation of hostilities in the countries experiencing conflicts. At the economic level the issues concern keeping on track sound macro-economic policies and consolidating the gains in structural adjustment.

1. Political stability

At the political level, it has been observed that many African countries have in the last two decades engaged in meaningful programmes to establish democracy. In the past five years, thirty countries have put in place multi-party structures, conducted elections and established governments on the basis of popular participation. South Africa has abolished apartheid. Decentralisation and community participation, stimulated by more open communication and free press, are on the increase in many countries. Governments in African countries are taking action to tackle endemic and systemic political problems such as corruption, mismanagement, human rights, and lack of accountability in order to promote good governance. But all these require huge sums of money to address the legal and institutional arrangements to back up these efforts. The financial resources of many countries to adequately address

these issues are limited. There are constraints emerging from poor internal revenue arrangements as well as those imposed by the international economic environment. There currently exist a number of programmes, both bilateral and multilateral, to support the democratic process in African countries. For example, there is the UNDP Programme for the promotion of good governance in Africa. Additional financial and technical support is required by these countries to enable them to nurture and consolidate the incipient democratic process. Democracy could falter and spill-around, with all gains made thus far lost, if additional and adequate financial and technical support are not given to this group of countries. Conversely, the transition to a more open society, through the empowerment of the people at local and national levels, will facilitate environmental management.

The case of those countries that are in conflict or just emerging from conflict presents more difficulties. The difficulties here are in the areas of refugees and internally displaced persons. In addition, the countries in this category are confronted with infrastructure problems of large proportions. The international community has in the past responded to the problems of these countries at both bilateral and multilateral levels. However, it is clear that there is still a gap between the needs of these countries and the support received from all sources from the international community. The countries in crisis or just emerging from crisis are generally in a unique position to effectively address these issues and at the same time confront the promotion of sustainable development.

The international community has encouraged and supported the democratic process in Africa in the past. The donors and UN agencies such as UNDP have provided technical support to many countries in the region. However, while this has been very useful, they have generally been deficient and unpredictable. In effect, most democracies on the continent remain highly vulnerable. Sustainable development is incompatible with political instability. The social, environmental, and economic impacts of political instability are immense as illustrated by the tragic events in Liberia and Rwanda. The political atmosphere must be supportive of environmental measures in order to promote sustainable development. The measures of sustainable development can only be effectively implemented through stable political institutions that provide the structure for the legal and institutional frameworks. There is a need for significant increased support for this group of countries. Political breakdown and civil strife could make sound environmental husbandry virtually unattainable.

2. Economic growth

At the economic level, the overall economic growth of African countries still remains very modest even though a turn around has been made in the recession that dogged growth and development. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes by many countries have assisted in the arrest of recession and facilitated the creation of a framework for further growth and development. The international community that has been instrumental to this process has provided support over the years. But it has been clear that the support has generally not been adequate and as a result there are possibilities that the growth process could stagnate and poverty could be accentuated. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that further economic growth and the promotion of sustainable development in these countries could be seriously undermined unless immediate action is taken to consolidate the achievements so far made and redress the critical impediments to economic growth. In the first place, continuous support is needed from the international community to African countries in their efforts at the implementation of macroeconomic policies for durable economic growth and the integration of Agenda 21's environmental measures into national economic policies. This is undoubtedly a precondition for the implementation of environmental measures in African countries. Among other things, there should be strong support for measures designed to mobilise internal resources, for example through reforming taxation systems, to support economic growth. The prospect of strengthening economic growth in Africa presents a promise of greater resources for the management of the environment.

The trends in external trade of African countries pose considerable difficulties for the promotion of sustainable development. The declining share of African countries in world trade was due, among other things, to a lack of access for the products of African countries into the markets of the developed countries. There is an urgent need for the developed countries to remove all impediments, administrative or quota, which hinder the exports of African countries. At the same time, there is a need for the diversification of exports of African countries to expand their export base and enhance export exchange earnings. The increase in foreign exchange earnings of African countries constitutes the most important factor for the independent promotion of sustainable development. The international community should

assist with the expansion of the external trade of African countries in order to build an autonomous base for sustainable development and reduce dependence on ODA.

It is also clear that growth and the promotion of sustainable development in many African countries has significantly been undermined by the burden of external debt. External debt servicing for many countries has reached disturbing levels. As of 1996, the debt service-export ratio (ex-post) for the continent was 17 per cent. But for some countries such as Burundi and Somalia, it was over 50 per cent whereas for a few countries, such as Comoros and Congo Democratic Republic, it was about 3 per cent (World Bank, 1998, 180). There is an urgent need to address this problem in the context of the importance of sustainable development. The existing external debt strategies including, in particular, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), are still inadequate for providing quick relief which most of these countries need for increases in resources to tackle effectively the measures on environment and development. The international community should therefore, as a matter of urgency, consider the possibilities of the cancellation of the external debt of the least developed countries as an option to enhance the capacity of these countries to meet their obligations of Agenda 21.

Diminishing ODA implies a covert denial of support for the development initiatives, both political and economic, in African countries. Democracy and market economy processes are in the formative stages in most African countries, excluding those experiencing conflict. These processes, which are mutually complementary, are weak and vulnerable. They will need to be well nurtured and strengthened to prevent their reversal so that they can effectively contribute to the process of sustainable development. Thus, development process in African countries could be weakened and the promotion of sustainable development compromised if sufficient support is not forthcoming from the international community. The structures of democracy and economy must be sound to give support to sustainable development. But then the more problematic issues are in the extent of the contribution of ODA to basic areas, such as capacity building, for putting in motion the process of sustainable development on the continent.

C. Capacity Building

The failure to develop adequate manpower in African countries has made capacity building a major objective. Skilled manpower is lacking in many highly technical areas of development in this era of advanced technology and innovative approaches to development. African countries have, since the attainment of independence, been engaged in the improvement of this sector. It will be recalled that at independence most countries inherited very little skilled manpower. Governments of African countries have developed educational policies and programmes to address this problem. But sufficient progress is yet to be made in many countries for reasons of lack of financial resources to meet the requirements. It was noted that the implementation of Agenda 21 requires a full complement of skilled manpower at various levels and capacities. This has been well recognised in Agenda 21, especially as far as the developing countries are concerned. It was for this reason that many developed countries and multilateral institutions have provided support. Some countries have, through special programmes with African countries, sporadically assisted in the training of Africans. For example, UNDP under "Capacity 21" has made significant efforts in this connection. Also, other UN agencies and organs, including UNESCO and ECA, are involved in capacity building in Africa. But the efforts of these organisations to effectively assist African countries seem to have been weakened by reduced funding from donors.

Thus, as it is today, achievements in this area are still far from satisfactory for many countries in terms of the enormous and diverse technical issues associated with all aspects of Agenda 21. The process of building a robust base of skilled manpower for the implementation of Agenda 21 is still constrained, among other things, by inadequate funding. For the promotion of sustainable development on a long-term basis, the educational structure, including the education curriculum, need to be strengthened. Educational institutions need to improve qualitatively. Additionally, more technical institutions need to be established in African countries to train Africans. The process towards sustainable development in Africa could be severely retarded unless sufficient ODA is timely received by African countries to complement internal efforts at capacity building.

D. Institutions

Traditionally, the process of development in African countries has entailed the establishment of development institutions for policy implementation. The adoption of Agenda 21 imposed obligations on all countries to have in place the relevant institutions to translate environmental measures into reality. This calls for the strengthening or creation of environmental institutions. It also calls for co-operation and harmonisation of objectives and strategies among these institutions. Many African countries have made spirited efforts in this area since the adoption of Agenda 21. However, as it stands today, the progress made in this area varies from one country to another in the continent depending on the level of development. Some have made some remarkable progress while others may be said to be at low levels on this issue. Generally, however, there still exists a gap between sustainable development requirements and available institutions. The consolidation or creation of environmental institutions, among other things, has suffered from the lack of resources. There have been constraints in the efforts by African countries to adequately and autonomously finance these institutions. The decline in foreign exchange earnings and poor internal revenue collection has constituted significant impediments in this connection. At the same time, efforts in this direction could not be pursued, particularly with the decline and unpredictable receipt of ODA.

Thus, given the current difficulties of many African countries to finance the relevant environmental institutions, there is a need for increased support from the international community. African countries should, from the outset, be sufficiently assisted in the creation of appropriate institutions to implement the Agenda 21. Without adequate and strong institutions, Africa's attempt to complement global sustainable development could be seriously compromised. The international community should therefore increase technical and financial support to African countries to facilitate rapid development of environmental institutions.

E. Technology

Technology represents a vital factor in the process of development. For many countries in Africa, it is the critical missing link in development efforts. Thus, African countries have, in this domain, engaged in the formulation of appropriate policies for the development of technology. The development of indigenous technology and the encouragement of technology transfer have been considered most practical for rapid development. But these, among other things, entailed information and finance which have been scarce for most countries. The cost of the importation of technology has in many cases been out of reach for many developing African countries. The implementation of many aspects of Agenda 21 requires application of appropriate and some new forms of technology. It is clear from the efforts made so far in the implementation of Agenda 21 that the paucity of appropriate technology has posed some difficulties. This could reach monumental proportions by the time more incursions are made into the complex areas of Agenda 21. The problems associated with appropriate and new technology in Africa are many. These range from the deficiencies in domestic policies to the paucity of funds.

Thus, the limited progress in sustainable development could be interpreted in the context of these overwhelming factors, namely, the precipitous decline in ODA and the weak internal economic situation making it difficult to mobilise resources for rapid implementation of the programmes of Agenda 21. The decline in ODA derives from several negative influences that emanate both from the donors and recipient countries. The decline in ODA has, on the whole, weakened the efforts taken by African countries, both individually and collectively, to promote sustainable development and raised serious questions about its future. The present weak economic conditions in many countries also derive from a weak domestic economic policy base and deleterious international economic influences. But it is clear that the process of sustainable development in Africa is now at a critical phase. The process runs the risk of coming to a stand-still if business is carried out as usual. There is a need for more imaginative approaches to the decline in ODA. The decline in ODA should be halted and reversed and a new impetus provided to the process of sustainable development in Africa.

V. TOWARDS PROGRESS IN ODA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

International co-operation for sustainable development in Africa cannot be business as usual in the new millennium if the objectives of Agenda 21 are to be attained. The challenges of sustainable

development in developing countries, especially those in Africa, are still enormous in view of the over 100 programmes that are to be implemented in Agenda 21. At the same time, the programmes so far being implemented are few compared with the progress made in other regions, such as Asia, Europe and Latin America. There is a need for Africa to have tangible results by Rio + 10 in the year 2002. But this could only materialise if new and more sublime methods are found to existing problems and new action plans laid out to address in a more integrated manner the diverse problems of ODA and sustainable development. The dynamics of ODA must be effectively harnessed to ensure that Africa will be fully part of the global sustainable development process.

A. National Level

If the flow of ODA is to significantly increase to meet the enormous demands of sustainable development in African countries, these countries themselves must continue to take all necessary internal measures to enhance its inflow. The commitment to the creation of the right environment would enhance the inflow of ODA. Among other things, better and innovative ways of harmonising and co-ordinating policies would be a significant improvement.

1. Policy: Improvements in co-ordination

There is a need for progress and new methods in policy co-ordination in order to ensure a greater positive impact of ODA on sustainable development. African governments must intensify the integration of environment policies into national development policies. Efforts should be made to ensure effective harmonisation of the interests of both bilateral and multilateral donors into national environment policies. There should be adequate co-ordination of policies among environmental institutions. The governments of African countries need, at the same time, to avoid the adoption of other national policies that may be counter-productive to environment policies. The effective co-ordination of policies is a precondition for sustainable development on the continent. The process of sustainable development could be severely constrained in the frame of non-complementary policies.

2. Institutions

The institutions on environment provide the structure for the long-term implementation of Agenda 21. One obvious observation from this study is that many African countries have not gone far enough in the establishment of appropriate institutions. There is a need for a renewed approach to tackle this issue. African governments should explore new autarkic ways of funding the consolidation or establishment of these institutions and make them functional. This could be done through new forms of taxation on environmental issues and support of the private sector. The support of the community must also be sought. Both bilateral and multilateral donors should be encouraged to provide sufficient technical and financial support for effective operation of environment institutions. One particular area of need of these institutions is in the training of a good complement of staff for their effective operation. The United Nations agencies, including UNDP, could assist in this area. This is the time to have the right institutions in place for sustainable development in African countries. The process of sustainable development could be unduly handicapped unless African countries and the international community take prompt actions.

3. Aid: Increasing effectiveness

In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, much has been done over the last decade and a half to liberalise prices, foreign trade, and the exchange system under structural adjustment programmes. Obviously, this has not been a small achievement not only in terms of the sacrifices, such as the social and political costs, made but also in the visible pickup of economic growth. New and innovative approaches must be devised to tackle, on a permanent basis, the problems of corruption and mismanagement that are primary sources of concern to many bilateral donors. There is a need for more transparency in the utility of commodity grants and concessional loans to public enterprises. Corruption and mismanagement have in many cases combined to lead to the unsatisfactory completion of aid projects. Many African countries have already acknowledged the need for correcting these social ills. But the observation is that they are still a long way away from a satisfactory situation in these matters. There

is therefore the need for more stringent laws and regulations to deter corruption and mismanagement. There is a need to develop a culture of a corruption-free society. The principle of accountability should be more unequivocally held as a high priority in the hierarchy of administration in African countries. Increases in ODA flows will be encouraged for sustainable development the more sound the administrative process, which will also lead to better aid results.

The effectiveness of foreign aid in the sustainable development process in Africa will also hinge on the judicious selection of projects for financing. Several measures have been proposed for implementation under Agenda 21 towards sustainable development. As it is, many African countries have commenced work in some key areas such as the creation of an appropriate legal framework, appropriate institutions and capacity building. In all of these areas, the desired satisfactory levels have yet to be attained to build the basis for sound sustainable development. It is necessary that African countries and donor countries work more closely to identify the critical levers in these areas that would ensure rapid positive demonstration effects in other areas of Agenda 21.

4. Full utilisation of allocated ODA

Even though there has been a decline in ODA over the years, it has at the same time been observed that large amounts of allocated funds by OECD countries are not disbursed. The undisbursed proportion of allocated ODA should be more closely examined, as this represents a significant amount in total allocation each year and a loss to the promotion of sustainable development. The administrative, political and economic bottlenecks to full disbursement should be identified and appropriate solutions found. It is not uncommon that available grants or technical assistance have not been effectively utilised because of insufficient information. Doing this would lead to additional resource flows for sustainable development.

B. Regional Level

Regional institutions are important to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the attainment of sustainable development in Africa. Many environmental issues are transnational in nature and could best be solved collectively at sub-regional and regional levels. The regional development banks, intergovernmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations need to intensify their commitments to sustainable development in Africa. They should assist in the generation of additional ODA to African countries, while acting within their respective mandates. As it is today, the resource flows from regional and sub-regional development banks in Africa constitute a minute proportion of the overall ODA flows to Africa. This, to some extent, will be accounted for by the limitations imposed by the charter and defined objectives of the banks. In institutions where this is a major problem, efforts should be made for adjustments to accommodate sustainable development. Sustainable development issues should be more integrated into the development assistance policies to African countries. Broadening the base of ODA will enhance the possibility for steady increases in inflows and assure predictability in the implementation of the measures and programmes on sustainable development.

C. International Level

If African countries are to meaningfully carry out their obligations under Agenda 21, it is imperative that the international community, at both bilateral and multilateral levels, should effectively and faithfully honour their commitments to provide additional resources on a timely basis.

Political will: the need for consolidation. The basic question in the flow of ODA to African countries is political will to support the development process. This has to be strong over time in order to ensure increases in inflows. Political will is generally related to expected results, either in terms of benefits to the donors or positive outcomes for the recipient countries. The decade of the 1990s has witnessed the waning of political will with some countries disillusioned about the impact of foreign aid in the development process in Africa. This tendency and view may not be sufficiently justified in the context of the various internal and external overwhelming negative factors that have frustrated the development process in African countries in recent years. However, in view of the spurt of economic growth in most countries in the last seven years, there is a cause for the emergence of stronger political will to support the

development process in African countries. Sufficient ODA should be disbursed to African countries to enable the building of momentum for the take-off of sustainable development.

Aid constituency. The allocation of scarce resources to increasing competing demands in the developed countries entails both economic and political considerations. Actions taken by lawmakers on the allocation and disbursement of ODA in the developed countries could be influenced by the inputs of pressure groups. Negative pressure from the local constituency of lawmakers has generally had the result of limiting the flow of ODA. As it is presently, African countries lack the constituency to advocate for continuous and sufficient flow of ODA for sustainable development. Aid constituency is necessary to clearly articulate the importance of sufficient ODA flows in the process of development in African countries. Aid constituency should be created to inform the public and the lawmakers in the developed countries of the positive impact of ODA and why it is only an exercise for the short-run which aims for the creation of the structure for durable development. The NGOs and multilateral institutions cannot do this alone for Africa. African countries should assist and get involved in the creation and operation of aid constituencies in the developed countries. The lawmakers would need to be more effectively lobbied to arrest the decline in ODA.

Disbursements: adequate and timely. One of the original concepts of ODA to developing countries in the early 1950s sees it as filling a savings investment gap. In this context, it was envisaged that a sufficient inflow of foreign financial assistance, over a period of time, was what was needed to raise production and income to a level that will lead to adequate domestic savings being made for investment. Today the same is still true of many African countries where the level of savings is very low and grossly inadequate for the desired level of investments. The investment situation appears much larger when the dimensions of sustainable development are added. As already noted, the decline in aid and its unpredictability have indirectly made the need for huge inflow inevitable. The present conditions call for adequate ODA flows to African countries over a number of years sufficient to assist in the building of the necessary momentum for the right level of investments and the take-off of sustainable development. This strategy is practicable as African countries become more efficient in the management and utility of ODA. The model will, in the long run, be cost-effective for the donor countries since after the given period at which ODA has provided the right level of investment, additional ODA will no longer be required.

Aid tying reduction. Aid tying was one of the characteristics of ODA in the 1960s but continues to undermine the flow of ODA and its effect on sustainable development in the 1990s. The time has come for donor countries to effectively separate aid from trade. In the present global economic dispensation, it is superfluous to continue to view aid as a means for promoting trade and the stimulation of growth. The multilateralism of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has offered more robust channels for the expansion of trade of member countries. It is most imperative for donors to take appropriate action to substantially reduce or eliminate aid tying to make ODA more meaningful to recipient African countries. When issues of trade acquire a priority position in bilateral aid the support for the promotion of sustainable development diminishes. The future of sustainable development would be better in Africa if more aid funds are utilised for the purchase of capital goods from the cheapest sources in the world market.

Policy performance: support for specific needs. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a strong emphasis of the donor countries on policy implementation by developing countries, including those in Africa, as the yardstick for aid disbursements. Prior to this period most African countries were in deep economic recession. But they have all fully acknowledged, since the mid-1980s, that a sound democratic process and structural adjustment programmes are mutually reinforcing strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21. African governments have made strong pronouncements on these both individually and collectively in their development plans and joint declarations and resolutions at the Summits of the Heads of State and Government of the OAU (See for example, OAU, 1995). Today, these are processes well entrenched and irreversible in many countries in the continent. While this is the pattern in development in many countries, the yardstick of implementation of political and economic policies becomes superfluous. In the current economic dispensation in African countries, the yardstick should be the specific needs of African countries, particularly the need of African countries to meet sustainable development challenges as integrated into their development plans.

Enhancement of autonomous financing. It must be recognised that ODA alone cannot and should not be conceived as the primary source for sustainable development in Africa. Sustainable development will be attained when ODA is available to effectively complement robust domestic resources. In this connection, there is an urgent need to remove impediments to the external trade of African countries. As a

first step, the international community should, as a matter of urgency, address the question of market access of African countries to the markets of the developed countries. The Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organisation, scheduled for November/December 1999 in Seattle, USA offers a vital forum to find more realistic practical solutions. Market access for the industrial products of African countries in the markets of developed countries together with improvements in the prices of commodity exports would create a more sound resource base for African countries to tackle the implementation of Agenda 21. In the same vein, the international community should more seriously consider the limitation to autonomous resources placed by the burden of external debt of African countries. Debt cancellation should be considered an important option along with the HIPC strategy, especially for the weaker least developed countries in the continent. The resources released from debt should effectively be diverted to the implementation of the projects and programmes of Agenda 21.

Indigenous technology. The lack of technology represents the weakest link in the process of development in African countries. This has much to do with a weak educational base and lack of resources for its development. The lack of information and of resources have also been reasons for their inability to import technology for development. It has also been noted that the institutional support for the development of technology is feeble in most countries. Agenda 21 encourages the transfer of appropriate technology from developed to developing countries to facilitate sustainable development. This has not been without problems while the transfer is largely associated with the information and co-operation of multinational corporations. However, it is obvious that in the long term the future of sustainable development in Africa may well hinge on the development of indigenous technology. An increase in ODA to this sector would therefore be most highly desirable to address the issue of policy, information gathering and sharing, the co-ordination of research results within and between African countries, and for the establishment of research institutions in the region.

Enhancing the capacity of multilateral agencies. Multilateral agencies, especially those of the United Nations, have no funds of their own but depend on the contributions from donors in order to support the sustainable development process in developing countries. These agencies have in recent years witnessed a dramatic reduction in contributions from the donor countries largely for reasons related to performance. It has been argued that the UN and its agencies are too large and some times too old-fashioned to effectively address the current global development issues. Hence, the call for the restructuring and streamlining of its agencies. Over the past two years, the UN Secretary General has embarked on a restructuring process. Agencies, including UNDP, have been streamlined. But this has apparently not produced the desired effects from the donors. Contributions to UNDP have tended to dry up as it was being streamlined. Contributions to non-core resources in which donors have control over the way donations are expended have increased at the expense of core resources controlled by the agency and in which Africa has the largest take home portion. This development suggests the fears and interests of donors are elsewhere, and that they are presumably in dissatisfaction with the emerging structure of the agency.

However, sustainable development is not likely to be effectively promoted with a continuous weakening of the agency while it is starved for funds to meet its programmes on sustainable development, especially of Capacity 21. There is an urgent need to reverse the declining contributions to UNDP. The agency may not at all times be able to fully respond to the special interests of one or some few countries given the unique circumstances of the changes being carried out and of its operation. This should be weighed more against the unique advantages of the agency for facilitating sustainable development, particularly the co-ordination of aid and channelling to priority sustainable development programmes on the ground in African countries. Additionally, the technical resources available to African countries from the UNDP is larger than that of any individual country acting alone collaborating with African countries in the promotion of sustainable development. Thus, donors should increase resource flows to multilateral agencies to enhance their capacity to perform. Sustainable development in Africa runs the risk of serious erosion if the decline in donations from donor countries persists.

Thus, in order to take sustainable development forward in Africa at the turn of the century it is important that sufficient attention should be accorded to the dynamics of ODA in a changing environment. The attitude towards aid by both the donor and the recipient will need to change to ensure increases in the flow of ODA. Some old obstacles to ODA will need to be perceived through a different prism to acknowledge the need for additional ODA flows. Also, taking sustainable development forward will require the tapping of the complementary forces of domestic resources and ODA.

VI. CONCLUSION

The promotion of sustainable development in Africa since Rio could at best be described as reasonable when compared with the performance of other regions and given the enthusiasm that heralded the negotiation and adoption of the programme in 1992. Although the level of implementation varies from one country to another and from one sub-region to the other, nevertheless the broad areas of activities for all countries have been those primary areas that are fundamental to long-term sustainable development. The critical areas of focus at national, regional and international levels to which all efforts have converged include the integration of Agenda 21 measures into national economic policies, strengthening environmental laws and creating them where they do not exist. There have been actions in the consolidation of environmental institutions and the creation of new ones where they do not exist. Other actions relate to environment impact assessment and capacity building. But major actions here remain incomplete and unsatisfactory for most countries for lack of funds and skilled manpower. Regional actions have been very encouraging with intergovernmental organisations taking the leading role in the articulation of the path which African countries should individually and collectively take in the all-important programme that is vital to the future of mankind.

On the substantive issues of Agenda 21, incursions have been made into natural resource management covering land and water-related issues, agriculture and rural development, deforestation and coastal and marine areas, poverty, population, human settlements and health, and waste and hazardous materials. Again, progress on these issues in each country or sub-region remains largely intangible for reasons of paucity of funds and skilled manpower. The weak economic positions of many African countries have been a major limitation to their attempts to make advancements in the implementation of the programme. But the more serious disappointment came from the decline in ODA. The precipitous decline in ODA almost immediately after Rio took the wind out of the sail of all initiatives both at national and sub-regional levels and, in effect, left major environmental programmes to spill around, thanks to the disillusionment with the role of ODA in the development process in African countries.

But the important question here is whether the international community could abandon expressed commitments to increase flows of ODA to African countries for the implementation of Agenda 21. Logically the answer should be no. The gains so far made could evaporate into thin air if not consolidated with sufficient increases in ODA. The promotion of global sustainable development for mankind would suffer if Africa lags behind. Environmental degradation knows no national boundary. The implications of continued environmental degradation in Africa would have ramifications for other regions and prove devastating to current efforts at poverty eradication. It is therefore imperative that the international community increase its political will in the commitment to an authentic international development underscored by the preservation of the environment. During the interim, the weak African countries should be sufficiently assisted financially and technically in order to be brought into the mainstream of global sustainable development.

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ANNEX

Table 1. Net Disbursements of ODA by DAC Countries Combined to African Countries (\$ million)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
South of Sahara							
Angola	158.9	194.0	151.4	224.0	241.7	294.4	227.0
Benin	160.0	171.2	147.7	142.0	177.4	164.9	148.0
Botswana	104.2	93.4	80.1	56.7	54.5	67.9	55.8
Burkina Faso	270.1	267.6	254.7	264.7	252.3	269.2	217.9
Burundi	122.9	148.8	125.75	108.5	108.4	67.8	38.2
Cameroon	377.1	579.0	528.0	397.0	345.5	279.6	330.2
Cape Verde	79.1	80.0	81.4	81.5	76.9	77.5	68.0
Central African Rep.	98.1	106.71	116.8	94.2	122.4	121.0	61.3
Chad	137.6	148.4	145.7	103.5	127.0	121.8	96.4
Comoros	30.5	23.1	28.8	17.8	21.7	22.0	15.3
Congo Dem. Rep.	342.71	162.7	99.1	97.3	117.7	106.3	104.5
Congo Rep.	117.7	101.7	116.3	252.9	105.0	394.6	260.0
Cote d'Ivoire	434.7	527.4	708.5	820.2	726.6	449.2	232.7
Djibouti	82.9	92.0	94.0	94.2	79.6	70.8	62.2
Equatorial Guinea	35.2	35.9	27.7	16.5	21.7	23.3	17.8
Eritrea	-	-	48.1	95.7	94.6	124.8	80.9
Ethiopia	464.4	457.0	417.1	566.9	525.5	445.4	372.5
Gabon	140.5	64.8	97.5	161.2	135.6	113.4	30.2
Gambia	55.0	50.4	49.9	38.2	25.1	17.2	17.4
Ghana	448.6	332.7	312.4	331.8	358.6	348.9	291.9
Guinea	173.3	233.5	184.6	186.3	220.4	134.7	125.5
Guinea-Bissau	62.3	56.8	56.5	123.5	76.9	124.8	58.5
Kenya	608.4	519.7	426.5	400.5	458.7	345.7	301.0
Lesotho	74.1	69.0	73.8	45.5	61.6	49.3	44.6
Liberia	56.7	26.1	24.6	35.5	31.1	112.4	31.0
Madagascar	274.2	215.5	227.8	189.9	194.9	229.8	549.0
Malawi	208.7	207.9	158.6	251.1	220.9	263.9	174.0
Mali	279.7	239.1	221.0	243.0	285.1	297.5	256.6
Mauritania	110.36	116.4	196.0	128.1	126.0	98.8	95.5
Mauritius	61.5	34.7	26.8	7.7	11.0	-1.1	2.7
Mayotte	71.4	73.2	82.1	96.4	106.2	123.9	102.3
Mozambique	769.3	1006.9	812.8	733.0	698.3	551.9	621.6
Namibia	95.1	97.9	122.8	112.5	147.7	136.4	122.9
Niger	264.4	262.0	254.0	261.5	193.9	163.2	181.2
Nigeria	171.62	137.7	71.0	47.3	72.6	47.3	52.2
Rwanda	232.9	187.5	201.4	487.4	339.2	252.0	178.7

Table 1. (continued)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
South of Sahara							
St. Helena	14.8	15.2	14.1	13.1	12.4	15.4	14.8
Sao Tome & Principe	24.1	26.1	28.3	26.4	61.5	28.9	21.2
Senegal	421.4	454.0	363.8	475.1	399.4	392.0	292.0
Seychelles	16.8	15.4	6.8	7.3	11.0	7.8	6.3
Sierra Leone	67.9	74.1	105.7	53.8	59.6	67.0	41.4
Somalia	116.0	497.3	687.9	437.6	119.2	39.6	46.0
South Africa	-	-	183.3	214.4	318.5	311.9	415.0
Sudan	368.8	187.5	164.1	174.5	130.6	118.1	85.7
Swaziland	31.1	26.7	33.4	27.5	37.7	20.6	16.3
Tanzania	763.8	816.2	650.1	570.3	586.7	605.4	569.1
Togo	124.5	134.9	77.2	63.5	117.8	97.2	75.7
Uganda	285.3	254.8	347.8	344.5	423.1	369.9	438.8
Zambia	582.8	699.0	510.6	434.0	439.5	354.1	367.0
Zimbabwe	359.2	535.8	310.1	280.3	347.7	280.8	222.5
South of Sahara Unallocated	600.0	682.1	393.3	434.4	364.8	469.4	361.4
Total	10950.0	11539.8	10647.4	10870.3	10391.8	9688.5	8598.8
North of Sahara							
Algeria	306.9	375.5	265.1	373.5	289.8	263.0	192.5
Egypt	4157.0	2996.2	1823.8	2310.7	1689.5	1933.3	1496.3
Libya	3.0	1.5	2.0	1.8	3.2	2.1	1.8
Morocco	610.8	733.7	422.0	317.9	347.4	391.4	215.2
Tunisia	263.9	298.2	126.8	72.7	52.1	41.5	69.3
North of Sahara Unallocated	5.7	5.5	3.5	7.8	23.8	12.2	12.9
Total	534.3	4410.5	2643.1	3084.3	2405.8	2643.3	1987.9
Africa Unspecified	389.2	385.5	266.4	578.6	433.9	496.3	791.4
Africa Total	16686.5	16335.8	13556.9	14533.2	13231.5	12828.1	11378.1
America	4856.7	4293.7	4263.8	4550.0	4798.7	5757.4	3920.9
Middle East	3783.4	2871.8	2086.8	3061.8	1715.3	3597.5	1355.3
Asia	13349.3	13602.8	12176.0	13910.3	12481.7	11975.1	8119.9
CEEC/INIS	4985.5	5203.5	5217.1	5549.5	7087.0	4036.8	4041.8

Source: OECD, Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Aid Recipients 1993-1997, p. 64.

Table 2. Net disbursements of ODA from all sources
Combined to regions (\$ millions)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
South of Sahara	17690.0	19143.5	17330.0	18912.0	18488.7	16748.5	15065.5
North of Sahara	6986.3	5366.7	3737.3	3908.3	2981.1	3362.5	2881.3
Africa Total	25208.5	25029.8	21476.9	23531.4	22055.3	20680.6	18743.9
Europe	2241.0	2284.0	3411.5	2196.3	2284.6	2518.4	2002.7
America	5998.0	5587.8	5605.2	6150.1	6861.7	8185.1	6270.8
Middle East	5076.1	3738.8	3128.7	4392.9	2908.3	4870.3	2549.3
Asia	20272.4	19724.9	17611.3	21118.2	18767.6	18973.3	14545.1
CEEC/INIS	6574.2	6057.1	5952.6	6863.2	8420.0	5602.3	5634.2
Total	90046.5	86932.6	78253.5	87072.4	82767.3	80941.0	67692.8
Percentage Africa	28.0	29.0	27.5	29.3	26.7	25.6	27.7

Source: OECD, Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Aid Recipients 1993-1997, (OECD: Paris), p. 64.

Table 3. Net Disbursements from Multilateral Agencies
to African Countries (\$millions)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
South of Sahara							
Angola	135.2	166.4	139.8	227.0	176.7	249.7	208.6
Benin	108.4	98.8	140.2	110.5	96.9	122.0	78.5
Botswana	42.9	35.5	35.3	-1.7	-1.9	-14.5	43.9
Burkina Faso	140.7	167.9	210.6	167.1	227.3	145.5	147.7
Burundi	134.8	161.6	92.2	203.4	181.4	133.2	77.7
Cameroon	250.9	229.2	-13.0	284.4	-9.1	68.7	80.5
Cape Verde	24.7	42.1	34.7	38.4	39.6	39.0	40.8
Central African Rep.	73.3	76.1	56.5	71.8	44.8	44.4	30.5
Chad	126.0	92.4	79.2	110.2	111.8	180.4	123.7
Comoros	29.0	24.5	21.2	22.2	21.8	18.0	12.8
Congo Dem. Rep.	212.8	97.4	77.7	146.7	76.8	57.4	54.9
Congo Rep.	13.5	11.7	4.2	147.8	2.4	52.7	-9.1
Cote d'Ivoire	382.4	311.2	-22.7	653.5	426.7	291.8	28.5
Djibouti	22.6	22.1	30.2	23.3	23.5	21.8	19.9
Equatorial Guinea	20.5	24.6	25.3	13.8	12.2	6.2	6.0
Eritrea	-	-	19.3	50.4	50.2	29.5	29.5
Ethiopia	642.6	737.0	684.0	511.3	379.4	440.1	300.5
Gabon	29.2	12.2	15.4	106.6	46.2	23.4	8.5
Gambia	45.9	64.4	37.0	33.4	22.2	21.7	24.0
Ghana	451.0	301.5	390.3	203.1	124.7	280.8	168.7
Guinea	197.1	233.7	259.8	205.1	209.3	157.9	226.2
Guinea-Bissau	51.3	45.2	38.0	51.6	36.3	53.1	66.3
Kenya	214.4	300.3	376.1	175.6	185.9	171.8	75.5
Lesotho	49.3	75.4	90.8	87.9	62.3	59.2	45.2
Liberia	100.3	93.3	97.5	27.7	91.7	94.0	64.4
Madagascar	178.2	139.3	132.3	92.4	103.8	128.9	263.5
Malawi	308.8	351.2	325.0	207.9	196.5	224.2	168.4
Mali	172.5	192.0	165.0	212.8	314.4	235.0	201.8
Mauritania	99.7	114.8	132.7	138.9	118.5	179.8	156.9
Mauritius	3.0	-4.7	-12.4	-9.3	-4.1	11.7	21.6
Mayotte	0.8	1.5	1.2	8.3	1.5	5.8	1.9
Mozambique	303.3	458.3	369.0	487.7	397.5	371.1	336.9
Namibia	89.1	45.5	31.9	31.9	45.0	54.3	42.8
Niger	107.0	108.0	77.6	108.0	79.0	94.3	148.2

Table 3. (continued)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
South of Sahara							
Nigeria	291.9	400.3	407.9	232.7	-31.9	-139.7	-111.0
Rwanda	127.3	165.8	154.5	226.4	373.4	421.5	412.3
St. Helena	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.2	0.5	0.3
Sao Tome & Principe	27.2	30.8	18.6	23.3	22.8	18.1	12.3
Senegal	178.2	254.3	182.0	177.8	233.4	160.5	106.3
Seychelles	4.2	8.0	16.0	10.1	6.2	11.5	7.7
Sierra Leone	35.6	63.2	105.5	222.3	143.1	124.3	87.5
Somalia	70.2	146.1	193.2	99.9	72.1	51.4	56.9
South Africa	-	-	92.0	80.2	67.5	90.9	159.4
Sudan	490.0	350.4	293.0	240.3	123.2	126.9	102.7
Swaziland	19.7	21.8	17.8	18.6	17.4	23.2	21.3
Tanzania	277.8	496.6	266.0	355.7	268.1	270.3	373.4
Togo	73.4	89.6	18.9	59.9	74.2	68.4	49.0
Uganda	311.3	447.0	243.3	383.8	390.5	308.0	398.0
Zambia	116.6	312.0	303.3	210.4	1524.7	205.2	201.5
Zimbabwe	139.5	425.1	351.3	235.3	94.9	78.5	104.9
South of Sahara Unallocated	11.1	102.8	20.5	203.8	55.0	427.1	383.9
Total	6935.4	8144.6	6826.2	7731.1	7325.7	6299.3	5661.8
North of Sahara							
Algeria	400.7	242.8	205.5	215.9	401.9	307.5	484.6
Egypt	285.7	332.3	346.0	335.2	78.2	140.3	450.7
Libya	23.4	4.9	4.0	5.1	5.2	7.9	7.3
Morocco	521.4	586.0	505.8	387.4	216.7	398.1	43.6
Tunisia	480.1	244.2	425.6	222.0	120.9	234.0	164.1
North of Sahara Unallocated	0.0	7.6	38.2	41.4	46.8	42.2	8.2
Total	1711.4	1418.0	1525.1	1207.0	869.8	1129.9	1158.5
Africa Unspecified	150.8	145.7	145.3	137.5	155.1	72.8	6.5
Africa Total	8797.5	9708.2	8496.6	9075.6	8350.6	7501.9	6826.8
Europe	158.4	544.9	1186.0	130.5	196.8	1163.7	906.4
America	2948.4	1284.8	4195.6	3319.8	4059.3	5761.8	5584.5
Middle East	960.8	873.1	848.7	964.8	1195.2	1207.7	841.7
Asia	9789.1	8459.9	9082.7	9421.8	9364.0	9137.8	14344.2
CEEC/INIS	2448.9	3001.8	3468.6	4172.9	4074.2	4782.0	6453.8
Total all Regions	25103.1	23872.7	27278.2	27085.4	27240.1	29559.9	34957.4
Percentage Africa	35.0	40.7	31.1	33.5	30.7	25.4	19.5

Source: OECD, Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Aid Recipients 1973-1997 (OECD: Paris), p.72.