

The Africa Dialogue Series -Virtual | 27th May 2021

“Cultural Identity and Ownership: Reshaping Mindsets” – Geopolitical Session

Keynote Address by Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki
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Salutations

Provide a list of dignitaries at present.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

It's truly a privilege and an honor for me to be extended an invitation to be part of the Africa Dialogue Series themed: *“Cultural Identity and Ownership: Reshaping Mindsets”* which is in line with the AU theme of the year, which in 2021 is *“Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want”*, based on Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063.

Most importantly, to be featured to present a keynote address on this critical discussion on the geopolitical situation in Africa on behalf of the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD demonstrates the keen interest of the United Nations Office of Special Adviser on Africa to promote African narrative within the UN system. This further foster global consensus on achieving the 2030 Agenda and the AU Agenda 2063 in the African continent.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Evidently, geopolitical context presents both an opportunity for socio-economic growth among African countries and challenges that can spark social and political instability not only in one country but an entire region if not properly managed.

For instance, in the case of the great lakes region and the Sahel where geopolitical scenarios pose both opportunities for cooperation among countries while on the other hand, pose the risk of insecurity for all neighboring countries especially

when one country is affected by instability in the particular region. For example, the intercommunal violence and extremist attacks in West Africa and the Sahel region make it cumbersome for development activities to be fully implemented where as a result, prevents the attainment of both the global and continental development blueprints.

These blueprints cannot be attained when predatory elites participate in illicit financial flows and do not create conditions to fight inequality.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

According to the United Nations, in Burkina Faso, as of June 2020, 921,000 people were forced to flee, representing a 92 percent rise over 2019 figures. While in Mali, nearly 240,000 people were internally displaced — 54 percent of them women — while in Niger, 489,000 people were forced to flee, including Nigerian and Malian refugees.

When people move in such forced and painful conditions their mindset is shaped by anger and frustration ; nonetheless it is by digging in their cultural heritage that they succeed to survive.

We need to know that this level of refugee influx presents a significant geopolitical dilemma for all countries bordering the respective fled countries where in many cases creates new problems to host countries such as environmental damages and insecurity triggered by the rise of crimes and terrorism activities.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Consequently, the geopolitical interconnectedness emphasized the need for collective action at the national, regional, and global levels in finding lasting solutions for Africa's development problems as far as Agenda 2030 and 2063 are concerned.

Mind you, global challenges such as terrorism and climate change as to name a few can not be fully addressed alone by individual countries.

Subsequently, the use of a comprehensive approach that includes national, regional, and global efforts should be the way forward in addressing geopolitical challenges and promoting the socio-economic development agenda for all countries towards the Africa we want to see in the next few decades.

This is why we should promote a new nexus humanitarian/development and culture : this nexus will not be imposed a top down process by external actors but in a bottom up process by voiceless actors.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

In January 2021, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) started to become operational to facilitate intra Africa Trade as well as making it easier for businesses to trade within Africa. However, the presence of geopolitical challenges such as conflicts and foreign covetousness where in most cases lead to political instability in most natural resource-rich countries in Africa e.g Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'ivoire, Central Africa Republic, Sierra Leone and Angola as to name a few, makes it difficult for this strategic framework for delivering on Africa's goal for inclusive and sustainable development to be successfully implemented.

Therefore, through this particular platform of the Africa Dialogue Series, the new innovative ideas from various contributors to the discussion can help to rectify our strategic planning where we got wrong in our quest to silence the guns across the continent by the specified timeframe of the end of 2020 which forced us to extend the deadline to another 10 years until 2030.

Notably, without ensuring sustainable political and economic stability in Africa, and promoting justice it will not be possible to remove over 389 million people from absolute poverty. That being the case, geopolitical influence should be at the advantage of promoting prosperity rather than instability which in most cases is observed across the African continent.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Africa is estimated to need about \$200 billion a year to achieve the SDGs. However, only about half that amount is available. In this regard, the geopolitical advantage should be utilized to elevate the mobilization of resources that can cover the gap for financing development initiatives in Africa. We know the amounts of illicit flows coming out of the continent : do we want these processes to perdure or are we serious about stopping them?

Moreover, with the prevalence of geopolitical dynamics where geographical settings and political processes change from time to time, it is imperative to adopt new ways of managing emerging related geopolitical challenges in Africa by ensuring that natural resources and the environment at large are equally benefiting the mass rather than the few privileged elites in our society. This will significantly address unnecessary grievances among the community members which create conflicts or civil wars that could have been avoided.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Without further due, I would like to once again thank the organizers of this important dialogue series as well as other partners who equally contributed to the success of this meeting.

I do believe that with diverse views from various stakeholders from this dialogue, we will be able to find a common position and solutions on how we can address geopolitical challenges as well as finding better ways to foster inclusive growth to bring about equal distribution of resources, social justice, democracy and respect for people's rights. In this case, our political will to work collectively will be the cornerstone for ensuring that geopolitical risks are handled swiftly to prevent them from becoming threats that can inhibit Africa's progress.

Thank you for your attention.

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