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A Speech to be delivered during the Delft University of Technology's Celebration of its 165th Anniversary

Theme: Sustainable Development with focus on Africa.

President van Luijk, the Rector Magnificus,  
Distinguished Guests, Your Excellences,  
Faculty Representatives, Students,  
Distinguished representatives of the media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Mr President, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to you and your advisory committee, under the leadership of Professor Droste, for having invited me to address this distinguished audience. This is, indeed, an historic day, the opening of the University's celebration of its 165 years of existence, accelerated growth and excellence.

For the audience to appreciate what Africa is capable of becoming, it will be important to briefly reflect on where she comes from.

Africa's first encounter with Europe, more than 350 years ago, was that of colonisation, conflicts and hostilities. The era of colonisation went to an extent of producing scholars who advanced scientific knowledge which defended the genetic and supernatural basis of the superiority of the north and the inferiority of the south, specifically Africans.

The mystery which is likely to occupy scholars for many decades to come, is the manner in which the legacy of the past sustains itself. Some African leaders, for instance, still live up to the stereotypes of the colonisers, by failing to embrace the values of democracy and to strengthen the culture of human rights and the rule of law.
Mr President

The theme for the 165th Dies Natalis Celebration is, “Sustainable Development with focus on Africa.” In choosing the theme the organizers argued that,

“Africa is a continent of huge potential, rich in mineral resources needed by the world, yet at the same time, home to millions of people struggling to improve their day to day lives.”

I can only concur with the organisers that Africa’s development pace, in contrast to its wealth, raises important questions.

World leaders attending the UN Summit, during September 2005, reviewed progress made on the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. They were unanimous in saying “Africa is one region which is not likely to meet its MDG’s”. Their plea was that, efforts to assist Africa to realise the MDG’s, have to be accelerated.

These aspirations were eloquently expressed by Mr Sepp Blatter, the President of FIFA (the world body regulating soccer) and the South African President, Mr Thabo Mbeki. They said the awarding of the bid to South Africa to host the 2010 soccer World Cup, gives an opportunity to the Continent to further develop itself.

My guess might be correct if I said, distinguished delegates are curious to know what concerted efforts are being spearheaded by South Africa and the Continent, at large, to ensure sustainable development.

The Continent is representative of many and diverse countries. Each country has its unique challenges and opportunities for consolidating peace, strengthening the rule of law and Public – Private Partnerships.

Dr N.C. Dlamini Zuma, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, made an important observation at the occasion of the 2nd meeting of the African Peer Review Mechanism, in October, 2003. She acknowledged that Africa’s concerted effort to realise her renaissance, is taking place at the time “when the world is ...facing the most challenging time since the Second World War”

Her prophetic words are vividly comprehensible today, given the competing interests between the war on terror and efforts to push the frontiers of poverty and under-development.

I will attempt to highlight common challenges and strategies which have been embraced and are being, voluntarily, adhered to by most African countries today.
January 12, 2007

The Challenges

The main challenges of Africa are four-fold and interrelated:

Firstly, we witness Africa’s apparent inability to effectively communicate remarkable progress made within the continent, over the past decades. The continent has not been able to redefine itself. It remains defined through stereotypes and perceptions characterised by narrow-mindedness and negativity. In a nutshell, the Continent continues to be characterised and portrayed as a symbol of doom.

Very little has been done to scientifically analyse the development status of countries which,

- have held successful democratic elections.
- chose to pursue reconciliation, as against shaming and dishonoring the other, in the midst of deep seated generational hurts.
- are fighting against impunity, by advocating for their leaders who are believed to have abused power, to be held accountable, before their law enforcements agencies, including the UN tribunals and the International Criminal Court.
- are committed to multilateralism, consensus-decision making and friendships as against military solutions.
- have voluntarily subjected themselves to a Peer Review Mechanism under the leadership of the Panel of eminent Personalities.
- have committed, themselves to be signatories to the Kimberley Process, a process aimed at preventing blood diamonds from being sold.
- have sustained an annual GDP growth rate in excess of 4.5 percent since the mid 1990’s.
- have significantly raised and sustained primary education enrolment rates.

Secondly, a related challenge is the world’s reluctance to acknowledge and reward Africa for her resilience and ability to take her rightful place in the league of prosperous and sustainable nations.

Thirdly, the redress strategy remains indecisive and hesitant. The African Development Indicators (ADI) 2006 Report of the World Bank, highlights that the Continent which received a mere 1.6 percentage of global foreign direct investment, is home to 6 of the 10 countries, with the most difficult environment for starting a business.

Fourthly, the ADI 2006 Report further highlights that African companies still struggle to enter the global markets, meeting quality assurance standards and
compliance requirements, being hampered by inadequate roads, inefficient ports, trade barriers, over cautious foreign direct investments and power outages.

The Strategy

I’ll briefly highlight the following strategic framework, which has been pursued by African leaders, to create an environment conducive to accelerating technology development in Africa:

1. The conceptualisation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) projects.

NEPAD projects are based on the premise that African countries are faced with multiple challenges in their poverty eradication strategy. The conceptualisation of the NEPAD philosophy, provided policy makers, with an opportunity to adopt an integrated approach to entrenching democracy, peace and security, observing a human rights approach to environmental protection, and strategically positioning the Continent, in competition with the forces of market saturation and all trade barriers, characteristic of economic globalisation.

2. The adoption of the Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction.

Similar to NEPAD, as a philosophical approach, the Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction enables policy makers to move away from a fragmented approach to underdevelopment and abject poverty eradication. The policy compels leaders not to adopt a tendency of focusing on any one need, as though it sufficiently represents all other needs. For example, investment in peace and security is not sustainable on its own without fast tracking, amongst others, economic reforms, skills development and research in technology.

3. Rationalisation of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

The Continent is huge and as such, for economic recovery to be carefully managed and be performance driven, it became necessary to delimit economic communities. Each economic community has its own products, logistics challenges and prospects for economic growth.

4. Harmonization of Products including tourism and leisure across the Continent.

Investors look for bigger markets, and, aim at minimising risks as much as possible. It becomes important to market available and potential
products across the Continent. Clarity on available opportunities enables investors to target partners, and also to minimise risks related to demand and supply of products. Although the Continent has the best tourism sites, those who are in charge of Information and Communication Technology continue to, unilaterally, determine images and the text when profiling the Continent.

A mere glance at The Good News website shows that South Africa features consistently as a country with the best tourist attractions.

The latest announcement, featuring in the Good News website, is that on the 23rd of November 2006, the Cape Garden Route scooped the grand prize of the Global Trade Organisation for the Gold Tourism industry.

5. Establishment of Centres of Excellence in Science and Technology for Africa's Sustainable Development.

Universities like yours, Mr President, have an opportunity to initiate and to strengthen innovations, across the Continent. The African Union has already made a firm commitment to the establishment of research and technology centers across the Continent, as pillars of sustainable development.

South Africa alone has been short-listed, with Australia, to host the **Square Kilometer Array (SKA)** telescope. Other bidders were Argentina and China. President Thabo Mbeki, reporting on the 2006 milestones, characteristic of the Age of Hope, quotes the Minister of Science and Technology as having announced the good news thus:

“The SKA will be unique. Not only will it be the biggest telescope ever built, but it will also be the only one of its kind in the world. It is the only instrument which can solve the most basic questions relating to the origins of the universe, and the birth and evolution of stars and galaxies. The SKA is also expected to solve the problem of the **Dark Energy**, which has recently been found to fill the Universe, as well as test Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity to greater precision than any other instrument can do.”

The President further made reference to an announcement, which was made at the beginning of December 2006, that South Africa had won the bid to host a laboratory of the **International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology** (ICGEB).

South Africa will be the third country in the world to host such a laboratory. The other two countries, currently hosting a laboratory of the ICGEB, are India and Italy. The laboratory is believed to have a potential to boost the development agenda. It is envisaged that
“The laboratory, will be dealing with many scientific issues such as better disease control and the management of crops ...to strengthen our scientific community and attract many scientist from all over the world to Cape Town”.


Africa is no stranger to Europe. Before I ever dreamt of stepping on European soil, I learned, quite early, about some personalities of European heritage, which had come to shape the history of Africa. Names that come to mind are, among others, those of Jan van Riebeeck, Hendrik Verwoerd, Jan Smuts, and Paul Kruger.

The European Union's commitments to the development of Africa, can no longer be half-hearted. The expectation is that development cooperation should, more and more, move beyond hand-outs.

The European Union member States are expected to streamline their area of cooperation so as to ensure that each partner is recognised for its strength and all other members, with similar interests, get their cues from a lead country, thereby minimising a risk of duplicating assistance.

The message is that for too long, the west has been the sole beneficiary from international cooperation, thereby creating an unsustainable international community.

Conclusions

Mr President, allow me to conclude by emphasising that, the above exposé is an affirmation of African leadership’s belief that, the time for Africa has arrived. In President Thabo Mbeki’s favourite saying ‘Africa has reached the stage of HOPE’.

As Africans, we are transparent and extend friendship to all our allies, to join hands with us, in pushing the frontiers of poverty and under development.

The African leadership has created an environment conducive to fast tracking Africa’s development, through an integrated framework.

Established Centres of Excellence for research, technology development and other related achievements, offer endless opportunities for Universities, like Delft, to find a niche for their scientist in Africa. Introducing and injecting science, and, high quality technology, will assist to ensure that:
1. Priority **NEPAD** projects are executed as an integral whole. In simple terms, food security within the Continent is no longer tackled without posing scientific questions about infrastructure development, energy requirements, impact on environment, adherence to universal human rights, people’s quality of life, skills levels, tariffs or tax incentives.

2. Rationalised **regional economic communities** are harmonised. Much as each economic community is likely to prosper, at its own pace, no economic community will be self sufficient for economic growth. Advanced research and technology will assist to identify the standard criteria against which economic growth of each economic community could be monitored. Standardised monitoring of progress, amongst economic communities, ensures timely risk management, removal of barriers and exchange of the best practices and avoidance of policies and practices, which could yield only short term gains, rather than long term, sustainable economic results.

3. There is equitable knowledge and skills transfer. Centres of Excellence could, objectively, examine the impact of power relations between the European Union and its related economic formations and those of the Continent, specifically with an aim of assessing balancing of forces when it comes to degrees of beneficiation.

Allow me, once more, to reiterate the message of the century, which is that, Africa has reached the stage of Hope, by doing all the necessary things, for it to join the league of sustainable nations.

I thank you and wish you productive and fruitful celebrations of the 165th Dies Natalis. I also hope that the outcome Report will endorse some of the statements I have put forward today.