GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: MEANING, RELATIONSHIP, PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES

By

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SUMMARY

For there to be sustainable development, there is need for good governance.

Now, some writers see a conflict between the two phenomena. According to them, a country cannot pursue both. Development should be pursued before attention is paid to good governance. Other writers see a relationship between the two phenomena. They put emphasis on good governance, which forms the basis of, and accompanies, sustainable development.

However, the pursuit of the two faces many problems such as impatience on the part of the governed and, in some cases, the rulers; greed and corruption.
A number of strategies should be adopted by various parties to solve these problems and ensure continued good governance and sustainable development in Africa. Examples include the following. African states, together with non-state sectors/actors of all kinds, should devise ways and means of sharing national wealth transparently and equitably. African states should identify the various elements that constitute patriotism and nationalism, and then promote and protect them. African non-state actors [the private sector and civil society] should increase investments so as to reduce unemployment and poverty; and also increase their capacity to monitor public policy management - so as to check actual or potential abuse of power by governments. Individuals themselves should be patriotic and self-less, despite problems in African countries. Lastly, development partners and friends of Africa, both state and non-state, should encourage Africa to be self-reliant; and insist that grants and loans be used for purposes for which they were given and lent.
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

For development to last, there is need for good governance. It is very important to ensure that good governance forms the basis of, and accompanies, development. Otherwise, there will be no sustainable development or “sustainable human development” [UNDP,1997a].

In other words, there is a close link between good governance and sustainable development.

But what do terms like “good governance”, “development”, and “sustainable development” really mean? How is “good governance” connected with “sustainable development”? Which of the two must come before the other? Or should they be pursued simultaneously?

What are the problems involved in creating and maintaining the two phenomena? What are some of the strategies which African countries and their foreign friends should adopt to ensure that they continue to enjoy both good governance and sustainable development?
The discussion in this paper attempts to answer these and related questions. The introduction and conclusion apart, the paper is organized around the following sub-headings:

- The meaning of good governance and sustainable development.
- The relationship between the two.
- Some of the problems involved in creating and maintaining them.
- Some strategies for ensuring continued good governance and sustainable development in Africa.

2. THE MEANING OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Introduction

Most people have a general understanding of governance [whether good or bad] and development [whether sustainable or temporary] plus associated terms. For instance, governance may be viewed as being synonymous with government or management. So, good governance becomes synonymous
with good management or, for a country, good government. Also, development could be seen as being synonymous with growth; and sustainable development as that kind of growth that is durable.

However, given the different meanings attached to good governance and sustainable development in different works, it is helpful to get more technical definitions of these terms. The purpose of this sub-section is to give these definitions.

2.2 Understanding good governance [Kabumba, 2000].

2.2.1 Introduction

Today, the expression "good governance" has become very popular – regardless of profession or discipline or country. However, its definition "varies from one organization [or person/author] to the other" [Agere, 2000:3]. Also, there is a tendency to assume that governance is the same as good governance – whereas not.
The UNDP [1997:9] considers good [the word used is "sound"] governance as "a subset of governance". It notes: "Governance embraces all the methods - good and bad - that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems". Consequently, and to promote clarity, it is helpful to define governance – which writers like Tordoff [2002] consider a major problem in Africa where, according to Cilliers [2002], “civil society is weak and the state often repressive” - before defining good governance [it being understood that once good governance is well understood, bad governance will be easier to appreciate].

2.2.2 The meaning of governance

Governance is the "use of power in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" [The World Bank [1992:1]. It can also be defined [UNDP, 1997b:9] as “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs”.

The UNDP [1997b:10] identifies four types of governance. The first is economic governance. This includes the processes of decision making that directly or indirectly affects a country's activities or its relationships with
other economies. Economic governance has a major influence on societal issues such as equity, poverty and quality of life. The second is political governance. It refers to decision making and policy implementation of a legitimate and authoritative state. The state should consist of separate legislative, executive and judicial branches; represent the interests of a pluralist polity; and allow citizens to freely elect their representatives. The third type is administrative governance - a system of policy implementation carried out through an efficient, independent and open public sector. The fourth is systemic governance, which encompasses the processes and structures of society that guide political and socio-economic relationships to protect cultural and religious beliefs and values, and to create and maintain an environment of health, freedom, security and with the opportunity to exercise personal capabilities that lead to a better life for all people.

2.2.3 The meaning of good governance

Khan [1998] refers to Bilney [1994:17] who sees good governance as "the effective management of a country's social and economic resources in a
manner that is open, transparent, accountable and equitable".

The UNDP [1997b:9] equates good governance with "democratic forms of governance". These forms "rely on public participation, accountability and transparency".

The ministers who were attending [December 1999] the Joint Ministerial Conference of the EU and the ACP countries defined good governance as "the transparent and responsible management of public resources for the purposes of equitable and sustainable development" [Holtz, 2000:10].

For our part, we distinguish between “political good governance” and “corporate good governance”.

**Political good governance** is "the effective, ethical and efficient management of public affairs and resources by democratically elected leaders and their appointees".

This definition recognizes the fact that democratically elected leaders and their appointees sometimes mismanage a country's affairs and resources.
However, in that case, and assuming that the elections are free and fair, the citizens have themselves to blame for their wrong choice. Also, self-imposed leaders and their appointees sometimes – even if temporarily - effectively and efficiently manage a country's affairs and resources. When this happens, citizens are in a real dilemma. The choice between, on the one hand, mismanagement by democratically elected leaders and their appointees and, on the other hand, good management by self-imposed leaders and their appointees, is very hard to make.

**Corporate good governance** is "the effective, ethical and efficient management of an organization’s affairs and resources by persons chosen in accordance with the existing laws/ rules". It is applicable to the management of organizations – especially in the non state sectors.

### 2.3 The meaning of sustainable development

#### 2.3.1 The meaning of development
Todaro and Smith [2003:792] define development as “The process of improving the quality of all human lives”. They refer to three important aspects of development:

[1] raising people’s living levels – their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education etc., through relevant economic growth processes; [2] creating conditions conducive to the growth of people’s self-esteem through the establishment of social, and economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect; and [3] increasing people’s freedom by enlarging the range of their choice variables, as by increasing varieties of consumer goods and services”.

Sen [1999:3] sees development as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy”. To him, “the expansion of freedom is viewed as both [1] the primary end and [2] the principal means of development”.

This definition is similar to that of “human development” given by the UNDP [1997a:1] – namely “expanding the choices for all people in society”.

2.3.2 The meaning of sustainable development

Todaro and Smith [2003:811] define sustainable development as a “Pattern of development that permits future generations to live at least as well as the current generation”.

This definition is similar to that of the World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED, 1987; Elliot, 1994:5] – the Brundtland Commission – namely: “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Elliot [1994:13] points out that the concept encompasses the interdependent goals of [various aspects of] development and environmental conservation.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the paper is to answer two broad questions:
First, is there a connection between sustainable development and good governance?

Second, if the answer is yes, which should come first - good governance or sustainable development? Or should they be pursued simultaneously?

3.2 Whether there is a connection between good governance and sustainable development

The question is linked to the perceived dichotomy or conflict between good governance and sustainable development.

The question and its answers are very important for most African countries.

In this section, we shall try and address three issues related to this question:

- Elaboration on the apparent conflict.
- Arguments that see a conflict between the two phenomena and which emphasize the pursuit of sustainable development first
Arguments that see a relationship between the two phenomena and which imply either pursuing the two in a simultaneous manner or [but indirectly] putting emphasis on good governance.

3.2.1 Elaboration on the apparent conflict

Without using exactly these terms, Sen [1999:147-159] discusses this conflict in some depth.

He notes that some writers see “a real conflict between political liberty and democratic rights [which are part of good governance], on the one hand, and the fulfilment of basic economic needs [which are part of sustainable development], on the other”.

In this connection, Sen reminds us of a frequently asked question, namely: “What should come first – removing poverty and misery, or guaranteeing political liberty and civil rights, for which poor people have little use anyway?” He recalls that this and related questions featured prominently in the Vienna conference on human rights held in the spring of 1993.
The issue can also be formulated simply thus: what should a country/government pursue first - democracy OR development?

At the heart of the apparent conflict is the belief that a country cannot pursue both possibilities simultaneously. So, by implication, if a country chooses to pursue democracy first, then its development will be slow – given the attendant need for consultations, compromises, etc. By contrast, if the choice is for development first, then aspects that go with democracy – such as consultations, compromises, media freedom, [certain] human rights, etc. - will be [temporarily] reduced or even suspended.

Some writers see a conflict between the two phenomena. They believe that development should be pursued first, after which attention can be given to good governance.

Other writers see a relationship between the two phenomena. They put emphasis on good governance, which they see as forming the basis of, and accompanying, [sustainable] development.

We briefly present below the arguments on both sides.
3.2.2 Arguments that see a conflict between the two phenomena and which emphasize the pursuit of sustainable development first

These arguments are very ably captured by Sen [1999:147-159]. He does not use the terms “sustainable” or “good governance”. He uses, instead, economic needs [which we can take to represent sustainable development] and political freedoms and civil rights [which represent good governance]. He considers three arguments used against political freedoms and civil rights.

First, it is claimed that these freedoms and rights hamper economic growth and development [The “Lee thesis” formulated by Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore].

Second, it is argued that if poor people are given the choice between having political freedoms and fulfilling economic needs, they will invariably choose the latter.
Third, it has often been argued that the emphasis on political freedom, liberties and democracy is a specifically ‘Western’ priority, which goes, in particular, against “Asian values”, which are supposed to be keener on order and discipline than on liberty and freedom – where “‘individuals must put the state’s rights before their own’” [Cooper, 1994:69; Bauer and Bell, 1999].

3.2.3 Arguments that see a relationship between the two phenomena and which imply either pursuing the two in a simultaneous manner or [but indirectly] putting emphasis on good governance first

These have been divided into two categories - those of Sen and other writers.

A. Sen’s rebuttal of the arguments that see a conflict between the two phenomena and which emphasize the pursuit of sustainable development first

Sen wonders whether seeing the two as being in conflict or dichotomous] “is a sensible way” of approaching the problems of the two. He argues that it is not. For him, the issues that have to be addressed involve taking note of the “extensive connections between political freedoms and the understanding
and fulfilment of economic needs”.

Sen then systematically answers the arguments that support conflict between the phenomena.

On the first argument, he admits that it is certainly true that some relatively authoritarian states [such as South Korea, Lee’s own Singapore and post reform China] have had faster rates of economic growth than many less authoritarian ones [including India, Costa Rica and Jamaica]. He nevertheless argues that the Lee thesis is based on very selective and limited information – rather than on any general statistical testing over wide-ranging data that are available. According to him, we cannot take the high economic growth of China or South Korea in Asia as a definitive proof that authoritarianism does better in promoting economic growth.

To Sen, in judging economic development, it is not adequate to look only at the growth of GNP or some other indicators of overall economic expansion. There is need to look also at the impact of democracy and political freedoms on the lives and capabilities of the citizens. He argues that political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw [the] attention [of government]
forcefully to general needs, and to demand appropriate action from the
government.

He then turns to the second argument that if poor people are given the
choice between having political freedoms and fulfilling economic needs,
they will invariably choose the latter - which implies that citizens of the third
world countries are indifferent to political and democratic rights. His reply
is that this argument, like Lee’s thesis, is based on too little empirical
evidence. He argues that the only way of verifying it would be to put the
matter to democratic testing in free [and fair elections] with freedom of
opposition and expression – “precisely the things that the supporters of
authoritarianism do not allow to happen”.

The reply to the third argument - which sees the emphasis on political
freedom, liberties and democracy as a specifically ‘Western’ priority, which
goes, in particular, against “Asian values” [but also, by implication, the
values of other non Western societies especially those in the third world] - is
found in the tenth chapter of the author’s work [Sen, 1999: 227-248]. Sen
counters that argument as follows. First, the justification of authoritarian
political arrangements in Asia - based on Asian values – has typically come
not from independent historians but from authorities themselves [such as governmental officers or their spokespersons] or those close to people in power. Second, not all Asian culture is opposed or indifferent to basic political rights. At any rate, Sen adds, Asian culture is diverse. He criticizes the modern advocates of the authoritarian view of Asian values for basing their reading on very arbitrary interpretations and extremely narrow selections of authors and traditions. He argues that the “valuing of freedom is not confined to one culture only, and the Western traditions are not the only ones that prepare us for a freedom-based approach to social understanding”.

Sen [1999:157] concludes his arguments thus: “Developing and strengthening a democratic system is an essential component of the process of development”.

B. Other views

The ministers who were attending the Joint Ministerial Conference of the EU and the ACP countries in December 1999 saw a relationship between good governance and equitable and sustainable development [Holtz,
For its part, the UNDP [1997b:11] argues that [good] governance promotes sustainable development - including the aspects of "poverty reduction, job creation and sustainable livelihoods, environments protection and regeneration; and the advancement of women". Bad governance leads to the opposite of the foregoing - such as: increase in poverty and unemployment or underemployment.

According to the European Union, good governance is a development *sine qua non* [The ACP Courier, 1999-2000 : 9]. For its part, bad governance is seen as likely to lead to the suppression of liberty, the stifling of competition and underdevelopment.

3.3 *So, which should come first - good governance or sustainable development? Or should they be pursued simultaneously?*

The answer seems to be that every effort must be made to pursue both in a parallel manner OR that, if a choice must be made as to which to begin with, then good governance must come first.
However, realistically, at the personal and governmental levels, the answer is likely to differ from one individual/ government to another since the circumstances and so the choices of all individuals and all governments can never be the same.

4. SOME OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN CREATING AND MAINTAINING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

There are many problems which are involved in creating and maintaining good governance and sustainable development in Africa and which those in charge of its management confront and should try and resolve. They include:

- Impatience on the part of the governed and, in some cases, the rulers.
- Greed
- Corruption
- The nature of politics
- Poverty
• Insufficient innovation and so over dependence on foreign systems, methods and models in the way African affairs are managed

• Internal weakness of the various African states particularly in the face of globalisation

Below, we elaborate on three of these – impatience, greed and poverty.

For different reasons, both parties are impatient for quick development. Yet, by their very nature, good governance and sustainable development are not produced instantly. What Adedeji [1994] says about democracy is applicable to both, namely, “Unlike instant coffee, there is no instant democracy”!

Greed is one of the Seven Deadly Sins which, as Muniini [2005] reminds us, were [first] enumerated by Thomas Aquinas. Muniini describes greed - for power and glory, territory and resources, etc - as “the master and mistress of all other sins, the engine that gives life to lust, gluttony, envy, pride, sloth and anger” and “a national disease” as far as Uganda is concerned. We would add that many African countries suffer from this vice. Unfortunately,
where it abounds, neither good governance nor sustainable development can grow in a healthy manner.

Excessive poverty is likely to force otherwise decent citizens to tolerate bad governance, particularly where such is accompanied by real or apparent prosperity/ development – however temporary. Also, very poor citizens are not good allies of sustainable development. The following statement by Anane [1996:8] about Ghana is likely to be true of most of Africa even now [2005]. He says:

Poverty is a major setback to environmental protection and sustainable development in Ghana. This is because a majority of the people, particularly in rural areas, are poor. For them, where to get the next meal is much more important than any problem of desertification or wildlife depletion.

Poverty is caused by, or leads to, other problems/ evils like hunger and disease. Indeed, one of the worst aspects of poverty is the apparent willingness to surrender one’s freedom. In the biblical times, the experience of the Israelis [Exodus, chapter 16] when in the desert of Sin [International
Bible Society, 1984] is instructive. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron saying:

If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.

Luckily for Moses, God intervened and gave people manna and quail to eat.

5. SOME STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING CONTINUED GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

5.1 Introduction

Because good governance and sustainable development are intertwined, it is not easy to isolate strategies that are exclusively relevant to the one or the other. Consequently, in the sections below, we have not made a distinction between the two phenomena or tried to address individually the few problems identified. We have divided the strategies into four types as follows:
- Some strategies that are best adopted by the African states and non-state sectors/actors [and so which involve a partnership between various stakeholders]
- Some strategies that should be adopted by the African states
- Some strategies that should be adopted by African non-state actors
- Some strategies that should be adopted by development partners and friends of Africa [both state and non-state].

Due to limitations of space, most of the strategies will only be listed.

5.2 Some strategies that should be adopted by the African states and non-state sectors/actors

These partners should work together to:

[a] devise ways and means of sharing national wealth – however little it may be - transparently and equitably;
[c] devise ways and means of increasing national wealth to facilitate the sharing; and increase the amount and quality of what is to be shared;
[d] avoid weak or failed states;
[e] ensure discipline and organization;
[f] encourage a culture of competition – with win-win but also win-lose situations;
[g] try and innovate as much as possible so as to find solutions that are adapted to African problems and issues; and
[h] fight corruption by making it very costly to indulge in corrupt practices.

We will briefly elaborate on only one – **ensuring discipline and organization**.

There is need to ensure discipline and organization [The New Vision, 2005] - both words are used here in their dictionary meaning [Longman, 2003].

Good organization is likely to enhance both good governance and sustainable development. As part of organization, and as an example, there will be need to establish and/ or strengthen national, organizational and individual life, health and other forms of insurance plus pension. These are what we would describe as “participatory safety nets” as opposed to the
usual safety nets, that are government initiated. The latter are [Subbaro et al., 1997:2]:

programs that protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes: chronic incapacity to work and earn [chronic poverty] and a decline in this capacity from a marginal situation that provides a minimal means for survival with few reserves [transient poverty].

Both types of arrangements will assist in looking after the temporarily or permanently unemployed; those who are too sick to work; orphans; widows and widowers; etc.

5.3 Some of the strategies that should be adopted by African states

African states should:

[a] identify the various elements that constitute patriotism and nationalism – and then promote and protect them;

[b] strengthen national defence;
[c] work out, adopt and maintain, a wise foreign policy that includes honourable peace with neighbouring countries;
[d] ensure that the stability resulting from law and order serves all peace loving citizens rather than a minority;
[e] practise discipline in financial and other aspects of management;
[f] ensure that elections are held at regular intervals – and that there is a level playing field; and also review electoral systems in Africa to remove “complete” win-lose and encourage “largely” win-win ones.
[g] strengthen regulatory agencies so that competition among enterprises and organizations is fair; and the consumers are not ripped off;
[h] embrace NEPAD’s African Peer Review Mechanism [APRM]; and generally strengthen evaluation mechanisms in whatever they do; and
[i] institute and/ or strengthen free and compulsory education – initially up to high school level and, later, up to the tertiary level.

5.4 Some strategies that should be adopted by African non state actors

5.4.1 Some strategies which should be adopted by [“commercial”] private sector organizations
These organizations should assist governments by forwarding proposals on how the economy and government can be maintained and improved; keeping governments on their toes through both constructive criticisms and support; and increasing investments so as to reduce unemployment and poverty.

5.4.2 Some strategies that should be adopted by civil society organizations

These organizations should:

- reduce dependency on foreign aid since such tends to make governments justifiably suspicious of their agendas and intentions;
- strengthen transparency and accountability in financial matters;
- strengthen internal democracy; and
- increase their capacity to monitor public policy management so as to check actual or potential abuse of power by governments.

5.4.3 Some strategies that should be adopted by individuals themselves

For their part, individuals themselves should:
[a] be patriotic and self-less, despite problems in African countries, including some shortcomings on the part of the leaders;
[b] work very hard/ avoid laziness – instead of hoping that “government will do everything for them”;
[c] adopt a culture of systematic saving for the future;
[d] learn to participate actively in the affairs of their countries through debating the issues of the day and voting when elections are due;
[e] refuse to be bought by prospective representatives to legislative bodies;
[f] challenge representatives to deliver or quit;
[g] avoid making unrealistic demands on the government [such as, for public servants, demanding remuneration similar to that payable in developed countries];
[h] be patient when dealing with their representatives and officials; and
[i] if elected leaders, stop making politics their source of livelihood but, instead have an exit strategy [in case the people get tired of them] [Nkuuhe, 2005].

5.5 Some strategies that can be adopted by development partners and friends of Africa [both state and non-state].
These partners should:

[a] encourage Africa to be self-reliant;

b] insist that grants and loans be used for purposes for which they were
given and lent; and

[c] be consistent and principled regarding the policies adopted – by, for
instance, avoiding supporting governments that obviously and needlessly
practise bad governance, or which threaten durable development simply
because such support is in the national interests of the foreign country.

6. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Good governance and sustainable development are important but complex
phenomena.

Citizens cannot eat or drink good governance. They require food, drinks, etc
– which are associated with development. However, with patience, good
governance is likely to bring about the kind of development that is durable.
By contrast, attractive though it might be, the suppression or disregard of good governance in an effort to pursue development [with plenty of food and drink] is likely to give a false picture - of development, even stability. This is because these are likely to be temporary. In the end, people will want and seek freedom, sometimes at all costs, including the destruction of persons, property, and institutions, so as to get a new order – one that will, hopefully, guarantee them good governance.

Good governance and sustainable development are intertwined. Therefore, to the extent possible, they should be pursued simultaneously. If that is not possible, emphasis should be on good governance.

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