

Democracy, Development & Human Rights In Africa

Presentation to the UK Africa All Party Parliamentary Group
(APPG)

By

WOMEN OF AFRICA

“This call for evidence aims to analyse the UK’s role in promoting democracy and human rights in Africa, in time for the forthcoming G8 Summit holding in London in 2013 and the approaching target date of the UN Millennium Development Goals”

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DEMOCRACY:

By definition and application, Democracy is a prerequisite for good governance, socio-economic and political development of nations. As development is driven by the involvement and active participation of citizens, it follows that in the process of active engagement, the rights of the people is protected and respected by the government that hold Nations on trust for the people.

AFRICA IN FOCUS

Historically, Africa occupies a unique place in relation to the rest of the world. Although the cradle of creation and world civilization, Africa continues to lag behind the rest of the world in developing her political and socio-economic structures to meet the requirement of 21st century standard and a fast moving world.

AFRICA'S BACKWARDNESS

Richness in natural and human resources

- Foreign traders in slaves and commerce came into the Continent to pursue their own economic, and socio political development at the expense of Africa.
- The 1884/5 Berlin and 1890 Brussels Conferences carved and shared Africa between foreign powers without regard to Africa's own rights and definition of democracy, development and human rights. This action by external interests laid the foundation for strife, conflict and hatred amongst Africans who find it difficult to see themselves as part of the whole and to recognize the rights of others within the created country.

Examples include genocide in Rwanda in 1994 when 800,000 people were slaughtered, conflict and struggles for governmental control by opposing ethnic groups within the continent. The near collapse of Nigeria, a country created from the amalgamation of the south and a reluctant north is but a few of the outcome of the external interruptions in Africa's developmental process unlike the rest of the world.

- Colonization and controlled political independence
- Premature participation in the world's global project before attaining developmental standard is obviously hindering the ability of Africa to compete and engage in world affairs from her position of weakness. This inability was referred to by Eva Jolly MEP during her talk in Brussels on 16.11.10 in preparation for the January 2011 Africa – EU Summit that held in Tripoli – Libya. Her position was that “partnership with Africa is like an empty shelf”, implying that African Governments lack the ability to deliver on partnership commitments. So true, because Africans are effectively excluded from these partnership agreements. I know because Alice Ukoko was present at this meeting.

Africa's inability to meet world standards stem from the fact that the rules of global engagement by the developed world governments fail to allow for Africa's developmental backwardness.

Democracy according to developed world governments goes with an assumption that Africans participate in the political process of choosing their political leaders and therefore policies that govern their countries. This is a misconception that will continue to hinder Africa's ability to engage as equal partners in world affairs.

The reality is that African leaders are not elected by Africans in free and fair elections like the rest of the developed world. Instead, most African governments operate a system where votes are rigged massively; figures manipulated and extorted to meet international standard and requirements.

It is only in Africa (Nigeria) that small arms (AK47s) are imported and distributed amongst political party thugs ahead of presumed (democratic) elections. Thus, the process selects those to be in government houses across the country beforehand based on party loyalty. In most cases, political thugs become politicians against the cries and hues of the masses. Nigeria's deceased President Umaru Musa Yar 'Dua confirmed that the political system that brought him into political office was not free and fair. Ironically, ex-President of Nigeria General Olusegun Obasanjo; who is known to have brought Yar 'Dua and the current President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and many of the Governors in most States of the country; declared recently that Nigeria is heading for a revolution due to the lack of effective governance in the country and in particular in reference to the high level of unemployment in the country: <http://saharareporters.com/news-page/obasanjo-warns-jonathan-revolution-coming>

Although the General and two times head of the Nigerian State cited mass unemployment of highly educated Nigerian youths and the active population for his reasons in the above assertion, he failed to talk about the level of insecurity of lives and the country itself. Insurgency given religious coloration of Boko Haram in the North and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta in the Niger region is internally the tip of the iceberg. Outside the main security problem known to the world, there are high rate of armed robberies, kidnappings, ritual killings, senseless and unprovoked killings by security forces popularly know as Joint Task Force (JT), and the Nigerian Police that are used by political power holders as agents of tyranny and torture outfit, if they are not on a mission at road blocks set up to extort money from motorists "or face death enterprise". These combined with Internet fraudsters reaching across to world to steal from kind hearted world citizens come together to make Nigeria the most dangerous country in Africa and represents the keg of gun powder that the rest of the world is sitting on.

Though some African Governments claim to be democracies because the ritual of elections are carried out to meet world standard and to legitimize their claims, the fact remains that it is only in Africa that heads of States spend their lifetime in political offices.

Thus, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe has been in political office since the country's political independence in 1980. Repressing perceived opposition until a forced election was conducted in 2008, though he lost to his opponent Morgan Tsvangirai, he refused to step down until a compromise was reached for the sake of peace. What happens in the future of Zimbabwe's presumed democracy remains to be seen.

Kenya's Mwai Kibaki has been in political office since 2002, and although presumed to have lost to his opponent in the 2007 election, refused to quit power and instead, swore himself in to continue as President. A compromise was reached to halt the killings of Kenyan masses when the presumed winner Raila Amollo Odinga became the Prime Minister.

The Arab spring which began in 2010 led to the killing of the Libyan leader Muammer Gaddafi; spilling his blood on the Street of Sirte his own homeland (a taboo in African culture and tradition), on 20th October 2011 ending his reign of over 40 years at the helm of political power in his country.

The Egyptian Revolution that ended the thirty years dictatorship of Hosni El Mubarak in 2011 makes the point that the people hold the solution to the recovery of Africa. Events unfolding in Egypt today 30th November 2012 further emphasize the need to empower civil society to dilute political power if Africa is to sustain its recovery once achieved.

Uganda continues to project President Yoweri Museveni who appears to be hanging on to political power in his country since 1986. Opposition is perceived as his enemy and not people agitating for political change to move his country's democratic process forward to achieve development and respect of human rights

The story of Africa's self imposed democratic leaders is endless thus hindering socio-economic and political development. Experience shows that along side extended political office, the incumbent employs repressive tactics to abuse the rights of the people.

It is therefore true to say that absolute political power system operating in Africa is hindering the Continent's ability to recover from her negative past. For until the people of Africa are able to engage actively in the development of their continent, efforts being expended by world governments, the European Union, United Nations will fail to produce the desired outcome.

IMPACT OF AFRICA'S WEAKNESS

The ability of Africans to engage actively in the affairs of their continent is delaying the political (democracy) and socio-economic development of Africa to meet world standards. Particularly damaging is the peoples' ability to elect and hold their governments accountable for their actions or, withstanding the cruel methods that most African government adopts to repress the people in order to prolong their tenure of political office.

With exercise of absolute power come impunity and gross abuse of political power, which is leading to uncontrollable corruption, bad governance; armed conflict; killings and loss of lives. The use of small arms to win elections (democracy) means that political office holding in the Continent means political power; international recognition, control over security outfit and personnel and access to incomprehensible wealth amassed from public funds held without accountability.

The inability for Africans to elect, hold accountable and engage actively in policy-making lead to unparalleled rates of corruption amongst political office holders.

So that while world government use financial policy and planning to control the development of their nations, most African governments embezzle and siphon the resources of African nations to foreign countries for their own enjoyment. The case of Nigeria's Delta State James Onanefe Ibori who was sentenced in April 17, 2012 for embezzlement and money laundering comes to mind.

EMERGING MARKETS

Some African countries are attracting foreign investment interest thus; some argue that Africa is developing new markets. The Chinese will say that emerging markets and investment opportunity in Africa enables China to support the Continent that represents its own past. A win-win situation as Alice Ukoko was told. The question we asked was; how can China ensure that its newfound business opportunity in Africa will benefit Africa unlike the traders in Africa's past? China will respond to the absence of viable political structure or, democratic government to sustain the growing investment interest by saying that China will not get involved in Africa's political affairs.

The irony of Africa's emerging markets is that non African investors are not effectively including Africans in their business models geared towards Africa's recovery and development. For China again, Chinese are migrated into the country to represent the work force while Africans remain unemployed and pressured to migrate to other countries of the world in search of gainful employment, thereby reducing the prospect of Africa's ability to develop.

The responsibility of developing Africa politically and socio-economically rests with Africans themselves and as such, the push for Africans to migrate hinders the ability of the continent to develop.

Take South Africa where the investment is booming for example.

Reports show that economic apartheid persists and the poverty level grow along side the crime level.

The difference between modern day scramble for Africa's natural resources and that of Africa's past is that, whereas Africans were forced out of their homeland by slave traders; aided by Africans and chained to ship anchors; today's Africans are escaping willingly in their great numbers some by legal and conventional route while others travel through unconventional routes.

The deforestation, environmental degradation through the dumping of chemical waste and exploration of natural resources without due regard for Africans and their environment are all factors in the delay in Africa's development and modernization.

With impoverishment through corrupt, premature engagement in world trade and foreign investment and without due consideration for the engagement of Africans, Africans are forced to leave the continent in search for their own survival. Some become trapped in a web of inhumane trading by those who market African women.

These victims of International trafficking are vulnerable members of Africa's society who find themselves in the hands of modern day human traders. Alice Ukoko travelled to Western Africa to meet with these women and could not believe the inhumanity of humans against humanity.

Africa needs to recover from her negative past in order to develop politically and socio-economically.

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION TO ENCOURAGE AFRICA'S RECOVERY

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** recognises the dignity and the equal rights of all human beings as being the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world without discrimination

Article 2 of the Declaration entrenches the rights of all human beings irrespective of "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin..."

Since, 1948, the United Nations Security has passed various Conventions to consolidate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights such as: -

- **The United Nations' Convention Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): 1979**

The Beijing Platform for Women: 1995

The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals have up until 2015 to achieve its provision, but how likely is this to be if urgent and drastic actions are not taken now?

The **Commission for Africa** was a clear attempt to lay the building block for Africa's reform. It failed to achieve its aim because African governments appeared to have participated in the initiative as outsiders.

The 2005 G8 Summit which held in Gleneagle Scotland on 6th July had a package of increased aid, proposal for fair trade and debt relief as the answer to Africa's problems. Whereas in a parallel African conference organised by Women Of Africa and hosted by a Member of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on the same day, gave Africans from all over Africa to consider whether increased aid, fair trade and debt relief would produce the anticipated outcome. Africans were unanimous in concluding that the efforts would not produce the outcome that the G8 led by the British Government envisaged.

As reported by James Button and captioned his report in the *Sydney Morning Herald Weekend Edition* on July 2 -3 2005; "Aid is not enough, for the children of Africa, the future depends on the willingness of Africans and the West to confront corruption" (Copy is being enclosed)

Seven years down the line in 2012, it is obvious that the G8 Summit and the package of increased aid, fair trade and debt relief is not what Africa needed to "heal" its historical "scars" and to make poverty history in Africa as predicted by Lord David Triesman who was the Minister for Africa at the time.

For the **2007 elections in Nigeria**, I am aware that there was an attempt to help the country democratize. Funding was made available through joint donors who included, Britain and Canada with the European Union contributing about 85% of the entire funds, through the UNDP and UNIFEM (now UN WOMEN). This funding basket was aimed at supporting the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to be truly independent of the Nigerian government in order to conduct free and fair elections. This fund was to support women to come into political offices across the country.

Rather than produce reasonably free and fair elections, INEC under Professor Maurice Iwu appeared to have produced the most corrupt and crooked elections in the history of the country. I am aware because Alice Ukoko was one of the governorship candidates for Delta State in that year. I had to escape for dear life as there were attempts to assassinate me.

Women told of their hallowing experiences in the hands of party leaders; the extortion and the deceit; women showed scars from machete wounds sustained during party primaries. It was a time of great distress, not only because women suffered such tragedies, but for me, yet another lost opportunity for Nigeria to reform, democratize and pave the way for sustainable development and respect for the rights of women and Nigerians.

Painfully, information revealed how the donor grant was embezzled and laundered in the run up to the exercise.

Outside voter's registration by INEC, Party leaders were known to have conducted their own registration of voters in their own homes, to the extent that the official registration by INEC was packaged to frustrate prospective voters.

This was the election that produced Nigeria's deceased President Umaru Musa Yar 'Dua who was to later admit that the political system that brought him into political office was not free and fair. In fact, it was the worst the nation had ever delivered. A worker with the INEC was to later tell Alice Ukoko that the country's electoral register is non-existent yet, this is the same electoral register that is claimed to have brought Nigeria's President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to the Presidency of his country.

DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA: THE WAY FORWARD

As a professional defender of women and human rights, I have worked with Women Of Africa, a charity registered and based in the United Kingdom to support African families and particularly women and children in distress in the UK.

- I have advocated and given advice to asylum seekers and African women in immigration detentions in the UK.
- I have supported victims of international trafficking to know that this is a major problem, not only because the victims are young and old, but that there is a serious danger of sexually transmitted diseases.
- I have travelled and listened to the stories of pain and distress and the tragedies of African women trafficked and sold amongst slave traders in modern day Africa.
- I am deeply concerned about violence against African women both in their homes, institutions and in the course of them trying to get on with their lives the best way they know how.
- I have spoken to Africans including men, who are overwhelmed by the pressure of the demand to remit money back to Africa.
- I travelled to Tripoli – Libya in January 2011 to see for myself the pain of Africans trying to cross through the country's boarder and into Europe to escape the emptiness that Africa represents for them. I am aware of those who lose their lives in the course of the tedious journey across the desert of Africa before reaching Libya. The exploitation and abuse they suffer along the way. I am aware that during the Libyan revolution, many darker skinned Africans were tortured and killed.

It is because of the burden that I bear for Africa and Africans that I became devoted to working towards Africa's recovery.

WOA is convinced that a new world order is urgently needed and that it is possible.

INTERNATIONAL AID TO AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS NOT PRODUCTIVE

I have always been opposed to the giving of international aid to African governments for the following reasons amongst others: -

- Africa has corruption and bad governance as major challenges.
- Aid only adds to the volume of public wealth available for embezzlement, laundering and the buying of private jets by politicians.
- A weakened sense of responsibility for citizens as African governments need to learn to govern by providing amenities for their own people and to respect the rights of Africans.
- I believe that financial independence is a prerequisite for independent Nations.

In view of the above and others, I am convinced that one of the reasons that African politicians see public office as the source of wealth accumulation and personal wealth is the amount of wealth they have available without accountability. Government investment in infrastructure, health care, education building of roads will help unemployment at the heart of exodus from Africa. The creation of mass employment is paramount for Africa's recovery. Funds embezzled can be used to create capital projects to create employment.

HOW THE WEST CAN HELP AFRICA & ACHIEVING THE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

WOA is aware that world governments have made efforts to support Africa's recovery. The Commission for Africa (2005), Debt relief, fair trade and increased Aid were geared towards that process and possibility but the efforts failed to deliver on its outcome. Why? African government stayed outside of the process. In other words, there was no corresponding commitment on the part of African governments to make these laudable initiatives succeed. Like spectators in their own affairs, African governments stood back and watched to see where international aid would come from. Africa lost.

Africa needs to recover from her negative past and on going challenges not just for Africa but in the interest of world peace and sustainable development.

To achieve democracy, civil society Africa must become actively engaged in Africa's affairs as major stakeholders. This point was stressed during the Development Day held in Brussels in December 2010 by most of the contributors. This was reflected by **Eva Jolly MEP** on 16.11.11 when she talked about the emptiness of entering into partnership agreements with Africa.

Responding, Alice Ukoko assured the MEP that Women Of Africa is working to raise the status of African women for international recognition and acceptance at policy decision-making tables.

By tradition, African women define Africa's tradition and culture, they are the economic backbone of the continent and the world that fail to see and support them. In traditional Africa the women had their place and were recognized in it. This was lost when foreign traders came into the continent to reorder the social structure.

To reverse the trend for Africa's recovery and reform, there is an urgent need to stimulate and support the work that Women Of Africa is doing to constitute African Women's Commission to represent Africa's civil society voices. Democracy is about civil society active engagement in the affairs of State and ensuring that partnership agreements with world governments are complied with, not just in the interest of the rest of the world but in the interest of Africans and their families.

Achieving democracy from within Africa and not imposition from outside as experience show, is the only way that Britain can help and protect the rights of women, girl children and Africans as a whole. Empowering civil society from the grassroots level upwards is the only way Africa can democratize and develop to meet world standard in the longer term.

The achievement of actual democracy through the participation and engagement of the people in the democratization process, will unlock Africa's political and socio-economic potential. It would trigger deep rooted development potential which is lying dormant in Africa at the moment.

Recognizing and empowering Africa's civil society would improve the commitment of Africans themselves to contribute to the development of their Continent. Poverty, diseases like HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be reduced as availability of other means of gainful employment emerge. The crime rate and the rising incidences of violence against women would fall.

Women Of Africa is confident that with greater recognition and say in the affairs of Africa, Africans presently trapped outside of the Continent with their developmental expertise and resources would be encouraged to return home to contribute towards the recovery and building process.

Africans in the Diaspora often complain that the conditionality for them to participate in Africa's popular emerging markets are stringent as most African government are seen to prefer foreign investors in place of African investors. This should be actively overhauled and African governments should be encouraged to review their investment policies and procedure.

Viable structures that are not enforced through cruelty and abuse of the rights of Africans should be encouraged, such as the African Women's Commission that WOA is campaigning for.

I am aware that there are United Nations Conventions and instruments to which African governments are signatory to protect women and end violence against women. The growing abuse and violence against women in Africa; the never ending RAPE as a weapon of war being used against women will stop with the raising of the status of women at the international community level. This would be a major item on the agenda of the women as quickly as we are recognized and empowered to join recovery and developmental process.

RECOMMENDATION

Women Of Africa believe that a new world order is urgently needed and is in fact, possible but the rights and appropriate actions are taken by the well meaning world powers and governments.

The British Government should lead the world in the recognition and empowerment of African women through the establishment of our proposed **African Women Commission (AWCOM)**, which should link grassroots Africa with the international community including the United Nations. This way; there would be for the first time in world history; structure in Africa through which sustainable peace, respect for human rights, economic development and democracy stemming from the active engagement of grass roots population in the world decision making process.

WOA recommend very strongly that: -

- Britain should consider her place in Africa, not through the amount of Aid given to African governments that are not representing Africa and the African peoples, but in terms of positive and productive partnership for the interest of Africa and world progress.
- Britain should review in earnest, the contributions that our government is making towards supporting Africans to actively participate in the recovery of Africa and installation of good governance in the various African countries. Africans are by tradition proud and determined peoples. Africans want to stay in their own homeland. This should be considered from the way that Africans taken by forces during the direct slave era fought to return to Africa. Transparency & Accountability is key to democracy, development and respect of human rights.
- Millions of Africans in Britain feel trapped as the conditions in their own homelands do not allow them to return. Thus, the quality of life within the African community in Britain leaves so much to be desired. It is akin to living in captivity. Britain should effectively change this human tragedy for; it is an infringement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to directly and or, indirectly prevents people from enjoying their rights to their homelands. (This infringement is subtle).
- Britain should lead other world governments to tackle the problems of embezzlement of Africa's public funds by individuals and laundered into world banks and real property purchases.
- INTERNATIONAL MONEY LAUNDERING LAWS SHOULD BE GLOBALLY & ACTIVELY ENFORCED (See the case of James Onanefe Ibori of Delta State of Nigeria)
- Britain should actively encourage conventional Faith institutions improving on the errors of the past to join efforts towards pulling Africa from the negative past. Bearing in mind that faith is being used by unscrupulous operators further deepen Africa's recovery. Africans need to understand that there can be no Heaven unless we get Earth (Africa) right.

Africans in Britain are eager to see how the British government will end their enslavement and unlock Africa's economic potentials for all the peoples of the continent and not just for a few who adopt violence, weapons of mass destruction from foreign lands to kill their own people steal and drain their countries of economic powers.

Africans in the United Kingdom view aid given to African government as Britain buying into the destruction of their Continent through stooges.

Africa is a very rich Continent in natural resources; to release that economic resource potential, Africa's civil society need recognition and support to take their place in Africa's affairs. African women have the task and responsibility to contribute their potential to the recovery process, but as major stakeholders if the Continent is to recover from its negative past to join the comity of Nations; a Continent that is able to compete at the world stage as equals with the rest and not as a "stooge" of the rest.

FAITH IN DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS

Creating civil society structure such as the African Women's Commission will start the process of redefining status within Africa thus, removing the risks involved by the co-option of religious institutions into partnership of government against the interest of democracy, development and respect for human rights in Africa. Religious institutions should not have a prominent and co-opted engagement with governments. This continues to be a major set back as the effectiveness of Faith institutions to defend rights and contribute to democracy, development and human rights in Africa is hindered.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Traditional institutions such as the Monarchy if applicable, should be independent of States (The people of Uzere in Nigeria's Delta State are currently resisting attempts by the State Governor to co-opt their traditional institutions into government control to re-enforce vote rigging and deep rooted and political control) This is dangerous for Africa's democracy, development and respect for human rights.

CONCLUSION

World peace is possible but the search for that peace must be the responsibility of Africans and the world at large; not just by a few.

Recognizing and empowering African women would lead to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and other United Nations Conventions. And, will achieve true democracy, development and end abuse of the rights of Africans worldwide.

Over two hundred years ago, Britain was able to end the direct slave trading of Africans against protests by Africans who benefited from the evil trade. Britain can and should in this our lifetime bring about an end to the human suffering and plundering of Africa's natural resources in the name of so called "**emerging markets**" which is really a modern term for a renewed attempt to re-colonize Africa. Make this our joint lifetime; one where genuine effort is made to bring about real democracy, development and respect for human rights in the Continent of Africa.

**UNITED NATIONS MUST EQUAL UNITED PEOPLES, IRRESPECTIVE OF
RACE, RELIGION & CONTINENT OF BIRTH,
NO ONE IS BORN RICH OR POOR**

ABOUT WOMEN OF AFRICA

WOA was created and became a registered charity in the UK for the welfare of Africans in the UK and in Africa.

For information about the contributions that WOA has made to mediate cultural misunderstanding between families and professionals please visit our websites: www.womenofafrika.org, www.aliceukoko.org and www.aliceukoko.com

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