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**SUMMARY REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON
GOOD GOVERNANCE AND AFRICA**

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Canada

REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND AFRICA

October 25, 2001

Ottawa, Ontario

*The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised a Roundtable on **Good Governance and Africa** on October 25, 2001. It was the first of two preparatory Roundtables in advance of the **National Forum on Canada's Foreign Relations**, this year on Africa. Experts, academics, NGOs and government officials met to address issues related to good governance in Africa and to recommend possible questions/issues for discussion at the National Forum. Among the participants were: Hon. Flora MacDonald (Partnership Africa Canada), Patrick Jacobs (First Secretary, South African High Commission), Opa Kapijimpanga (AFRODAD), Jacqueline Nkoyok (President of Partnership Africa Canada in Cameroon), Wisdom Tettey (University of Calgary), Malinda Smith (Athabasca University), Ted Dreger (The Parliamentary Centre), and Genevieve Gasser (Canadian International Development Agency). Steven Lee (Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development) chaired the meeting. The second preparatory Roundtable will examine Economic and Social Issues in Africa on November 15, 2001, in Ottawa.*

National Forum 2001:

- National Forum Meeting 1: Toronto, Ontario (January 25, 2002)
- National Forum Meeting 2: Montreal, Quebec (February 8, 2002)
- National Forum Meeting 3: Saint John, New Brunswick (February 15, 2002)
- National Forum Meeting 4: Vancouver, British Columbia (February 25, 2002)

For more information on this year's National Forum and reports from previous years, please visit:

<http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca/NationalForum/nati-e.htm>

1. Introduction

Steve Lee (Chair) welcomed all the participants to the Roundtable. He said that the mandate of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development is to help Canadians contribute to foreign policy making. Besides funding policy development projects and organising roundtables, the Centre holds the annual National Forum on Canada's International Relations. This year, the National Forum will contribute to the development of Canada's Africa policies and takes place in the context of both, the Prime Minister's Africa focus for the G-8 Summit agenda, and the *New Africa Initiative* (recently renamed *New Partnership for Africa's Development*) outlined by African leaders.

The topic of this preparatory Roundtable is good governance – one of the areas identified by African leaders in the *New Africa Initiative* (NAI) as key to African future. Lee set out two goals for the discussion:

1. To build partnerships and to promote networking among experts and NGOs engaged in African studies/issues.
2. To create a loose group on which the CCFPD could draw on for advice and expertise for the National Forum. The group could help generate discussion questions, identify key issues, and recommend possible participants for the National Forum meetings.

Participants were encouraged to think about questions including: What should be the Canadian priorities? What are the key good governance issues? How can Canadians best contribute to strengthening democracy on the continent?

2. Outlining the New Africa Initiative (The New Partnership for Africa's Development)

Malinda Smith (Athabasca University) outlined the NAI. The NAI grew out of a merger of the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) and Omega Plan. The Initiative is a pledge by African leaders to:

1. Eradicate poverty – including a commitment to achieve and sustain an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of above 7% per annum for the next 15 years.
2. Extricate Africa from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world (recognising the failure of post-colonial leadership *as well as* the negative impact of colonialism and structural adjustment programmes).
3. Develop a new partnership between Africa and the international community (especially the industrialised countries, including Canada), while rejecting dependency through aid or marginal concessions. The Initiative recognises the importance of both internal and external commitments. The NAI states:¹

The programme is a new framework of interaction with the rest of the world, including the industrialised countries and multilateral organisations. It is based on the agenda set by African peoples through their own initiatives and of their own volition, to shape their own destiny.

In order to fulfil their pledges, the African leaders take joint responsibility to:

- strengthen mechanism for conflict prevention
- to promote and protect democracy and human rights
- to restore and maintain macroeconomic stability
- to institute transparent legal and regulatory frameworks for financial markets
- to revitalise and extend the provision of education, technical training and health services
- to promote the role of women in social and economic development
- to build capacity to set and enforce legal frameworks and maintain law and order
- to promote the development of infrastructure, agriculture, and manufacturing.

¹See: [Http://www.g8.gc.ca/July-21-01-1b-e.asp](http://www.g8.gc.ca/July-21-01-1b-e.asp) p. 6.

The NAI includes a strategy for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. The strategy has three parts:

1. Preconditions for development	2. Priority sectors	3. Mobilising resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - peace, security, democracy and political governance - economic and corporate governance (with a focus on public finance management) - regional cooperation in integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - infrastructure - information and communications technology - human development (health, education, skills development) - agriculture - promoting diversification of production and exports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing savings and capital in-flows (via debt relief, increased overseas development assistance flows and private capital, as well as better management of public revenue and expenditure).

Patrick Jacobs (South African High Commission) added that the Implementing Committee of the NAI issued a Communique on October 23, 2001, identifying five areas for immediate attention, to be addressed under the auspices of different organisations:

1. Capacity building on peace and security (Organisation of African Unity)
2. Economic and corporate governance (UN Economic Committee on Africa)
3. Infrastructure (African Development Bank)
4. Central Bank reform (African Development Bank)
5. Agriculture and market access (Organisation of African Unity).

The Committee agreed to set up teams to address these priorities. Moreover, it was agreed that parameters for good governance should be created, including a peer review mechanism. The initiative was also given a new name: The New Partnership for Africa's Development.²

The Roundtable participants made some critical observations about the Initiative:

1. The Initiative is highly unrealistic because there is no capacity on the ground to absorb the resources allocated for certain reforms. For instance, establishing long-distance education centres is useless, if there are no technical reception facilities on the ground. The 7% annual GDP growth target is not going to alleviate poverty because it is only sufficient to keep economic growth in step with population growth.

Recognising that the context for Canadian aid in Africa will likely not change as a result of the Initiative, Canada should continue to focus on promoting human rights and on human security issues, including the provision of basic needs (shelter, nourishment, safety) and the development of civil society and institutions. While other initiatives, such as closing the digital divide, may be a worthy goal, they may be premature and ineffective at this time.

² The updated version of the NAI should be soon posted on: www.dfa.gov.za

2. The NAI is comparable to structural adjustment programmes in that it does not reflect the views of the people it affects the most – ordinary Africans:

S The centralised model ignores the need to build capacity at the local level in order to enable mass participation in the reform process. (A point was made that even though the African leaders are reluctant to promote bottom-up approaches, the NAI acknowledges the activities of civil society groups and movements.)

S Wisdom Tettey (University of Calgary) pointed out that the African leaders have embarked upon designing and implementing the Initiative without setting-up any domestic public monitoring mechanisms or checks – raising serious questions for the leaders’ accountability at home.

Strengthening local and municipal governance could address the accountability and transparency gaps (and improve the delivery of basic services). Creating public monitoring mechanisms, including media outlets, could also be useful.

Canada could help build capacity at the local level to enable mass participation in the reform process and beyond. For instance, Canadians could draw on our experience with Information and Communications Technologies (ITCs), mass media, and local governance, to help local media outlets better inform constituents and help them hold national leaders accountable.

3. The Initiative lacks an internationally-based monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms.

4. Currently, the African countries lack administrative capacity to implement the Initiative.

5. Some participants pointed out that while the NAI contains some worthy ideas, it offers nothing new. Others disagreed, pointing out that new elements include:

- indigenous ownership of the reform process,
- a new multilateral partnership, and
- the willingness to accept responsibility for the failures of the post-colonial leadership

3. Strengthening Good Governance in Africa

Elizabeth Weir (MLA, New Brunswick, National Democratic Institute) shared her experiences in assisting parliamentary reforms in Africa. She suggested that strengthening parliamentary structures is a key component of any democratisation process. Training deputies is especially important (and includes assistance to review legislation, advice on how to report to their constituencies and the media, and provision of basic infrastructure needs). Parliamentary assistance needs to be complemented by broad decentralisation efforts and bureaucratic and administrative reforms. Political parties also need to be strengthened along with the media. Meanwhile, external electoral support should continue. Canada has played an important role in these areas but more support is needed.

Some participants said that training parliamentarians is problematic because they leave after four or five years when their term ends (if they are not re-elected). Therefore, it is better to invest in the training of civil servants (or parliamentary permanent staff) who may impart knowledge and expertise to parliamentarians on an ongoing basis.

Others pointed out that decentralisation should only proceed once the capacity to cope with new demands/tasks on the local level is developed. “Decentralisation in the absence of capacity is irresponsible.”

Canada could help civil society in Africa develop capacity to cope with decentralisation (downloading of responsibilities to local governments) in the area of health care, elderly care, and other social issues.

A suggestion was made to draw on the African traditional governance structures to serve as a balance to the adopted Western parliamentary system. The Parliament invariably is alien to the people it is meant to represent. People are either not familiar with the workings of the parliamentary system or do not have the capacity to fulfill their duties as deputies and constituents alike. The majority of people are reluctant to get involved in parliamentary processes and to keep track of their representatives – a situation which results in what Daniel Osabu-Kle (Carleton University) called “the dictatorship of the elected few.” Indigenous governance structures may provide the necessary incentives and checks that are currently lacking.

Some participants raised concern about the ability of Chiefs to pass judgement on Parliaments. On the one hand, indigenous structures are the repository of democratic tradition because they do represent a community. On the other hand, they are also the repository of *status quo* because they are based on a hierarchical structure which excludes women. Some thought has to be given to integrating these two elements into the democratic reform agenda. A suggestion was made that the traditional modes of governance should be adapted to contemporary political realities (including the need to include women), rather than revive and accept old structures at face value.

A point was made that the main constraint to good governance in Africa is not so much lack of resources as the unwillingness of African leaders to govern well. Others maintained that resources do play a significant role in the quality of governance: Political, institutional and other incentives are largely ineffective amidst poverty. Indeed, it is the lack of resources that prevents African leaders from governing well. Chris Brown (Carleton University) said that the experience in Botswana demonstrates this point well. When institutions with adequate incentive structures are built, governance improves. However, institution building is a long-term endeavour (ten years or longer). Many reform programmes have only a short-term focus.

Some participants said that governance conditionality is instrumental to removing dictatorships and stopping the “brain drain.” Governance conditionality could be tied to resource allocation. Others warned that externally imposed conditionality failed before and has been used by international organisations for their own purposes on many occasions.

Participants discussed the role of advocacy NGOs in the democratisation process. Flora MacDonald (Partnership Africa Canada) described the operations of Health Age International in advocating for the rights of elderly people in Africa. A point was made that while supporting advocacy groups in developing countries is important, it is also tricky because it could be perceived as a “new cultural imperialism.” Many participants, including Osabu-Kle said that local ownership of the advocacy process is key. Moreover, advocating on universal issues – common to all humanity, such as ageing, rarely provokes charges of cultural imperialism. Supporting non-confrontational, locally owned advocacy strategies on universal issues is a worthy endeavour.

Opa Kapijimpanga (AFRODAD) added that there are African NGOs advocating for policy change. Institutional linkages through which Canada could help these NGOs to do their work also exist, including networks such as Partnership Africa Canada.

Canada could enhance and support horizontal synergies between Canadian and African NGOs working on advocacy and policy issues.
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4. Policy Options for Canada and Questions for the National Forum

The priorities for Canadian engagement in Africa include:

- Canada could help build capacity at the local level to enable mass participation in the reform process and beyond. For instance, Canadians could draw on our experience with Information and Communications Technologies (ITCs), mass media, and local governance, to help local media outlets better inform constituents and help them hold national leaders accountable.
- Canada could help civil society in Africa develop capacity to cope with decentralisation (downloading of responsibilities to local governments) in the area of health care, elderly care, and other social issues.
- Canada could enhance and support horizontal synergies between Canadian and African NGOs working on advocacy and policy issues.
- Canada could help Africans harness ITCs for development and to bridge the digital divide. Areas of assistance could include:
 - e-commerce,
 - tele-health,
 - long-distance education.
- Canada could help build administrative capacity to implement the New Africa Initiative.
- Canada could share its experience with maintaining synergies and linkages among the various levels of government (i.e., federal, provincial, regional, municipal).
- Rather than attempting to do everything at once with negligible impact, Canada should focus on one issue/area such as, for instance: landmines (niche areas for “making a difference”).
- Canada could address issues identified by the New Africa Initiative. In particular, Canada could help the Secretariat meaningfully engage African civil society in the reform process.

On the international level, Canada could:

- respond to the call for a new set of relationships at the multilateral level by reassessing its roles and responsibilities in international organisations/fora (including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) as well as bi-lateral relations with African countries
- play a role in ensuring that the pledges outlined in the NAI are fulfilled

- advocate on debt forgiveness.

At home we should strive to:

- raise the awareness of African issues and diffuse Afro-scepticism
- link with African civil society in order to consult on policy options for Canada
- build research and policy capacity on good governance issues in Africa.

In conclusion, three questions were posed for the National Forum participants:

1. How does Canada benefit from its relationship with Africa?
2. Where will Africa be in the near future with respect to issues including: the progress of the NAI, regional and global economic integration, HIV/AIDS, and conflict resolution?
3. How can Africans and Canadians relate to each other as global citizens in international fora? How close are issues of poverty and exclusion to those living on the “islands of prosperity” (including the Canadians and the Americans)?

Roundtable on Good Governance and Africa

List of Participants

October 25, 2001

Fairmont Chateau Laurier, Burgundy Room

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Program and Partnership Branch
International Development Research Centre
(IDRC)

Mark Schacter

Director (Capacity Building in Developing
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Institute on Governance

Hon. Flora MacDonald

Partnership Africa Canada

Elizabeth Weir

MLA - New Brunswick
National Democratic Institute

Opa Kapijimpanga

AFRODAD in Zimbabwe

Jacqueline Nkoyok

President of PAC in Cameroon
CONGAC
(Confédération des ONGs d'environnement et de
développement de l'Afrique Centrale)

Engudai Bekele

Coordinator of PAC in Addis Abbaba

Wisdom Tettey

(working on democratization processes in
Africa, impact of media)
University of Calgary

Daniel Osabu-Kle

Department of Political Science
Carleton University

Malinda Smith

Department of Political Science
Athabasca University

Chris Brown

Professor
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Ted Dreger

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André Guidon

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