

GLENEAGLES G8 SUMMIT :
ITS SIGNIFICANCE
TO NIGERIA AND AFRICA

AN ADDRESS

BY

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PRESENTED TO "CANADA 25"
ON 31ST AUGUST 2005

I have been asked to address you on the outcome of the recently concluded G8 Summit Meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland, especially its impact on Nigeria and Africa. Before I do that however, I wish to take you down the memory lane on the genesis of the relationship between Africa and the Group of Eight Industrialized nations, commonly referred to as The G8.

HISTORICAL GENESIS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

2. The relationship between Africa and the G8, which was envisaged to be based on mutual accountability and respect for each other, was formalized with the adoption of the African Union's development programme, known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD essentially is a programme of action developed by the African leaders themselves to put Africa on the path of sustainable economic and social development that would extricate the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion from the benefits of globalization. NEPAD therefore, represents a commitment by Africa to far-reaching political reforms and global values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and good governance. It is a programme that calls for new partnership between the Africans themselves on the one hand, and the international community on the other, to achieve sustainable economic development in a continent that is facing several challenges of development.

3. The desire for partnership resulted in the meeting between the African leaders and their G8 counterparts, for the first time, at The G8 Summit in Okinawa, Japan, in 2000. This meeting began the process whereby Africa continues to have the opportunity to present its development priorities to the Group at every meeting. The G8 Summit Meeting in Genoa, Italy (2001) accepted the New Partnership for Africa's Development priorities, which were consequently adopted at the 2000 Kananaskis Summit, here in Canada, as **The**

G8 African Action Plan (G8 AAP). The African Action Plan sets out how the G8 can effectively and practically engage with the African countries to support NEPAD's vision, strategies and development programmes. Both the G8 Summits in Evian, France (2003) and Sea Island, Georgia, USA (2004) resolved that the Implementation Report of the G8 African Action Plan (G8 AAP) would be presented at the Gleneagles G8 Summit. The salient points of the report included consideration for debt relief, increased financing for development, increased access of African products into the markets of the developed countries, diversifying the African economies, improving governance and enhancing Africa's capacity for promoting peace and stability in the continent.

4. Meanwhile, as part of the on-going process by the developed nations to assist Africa, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, established the Commission for Africa. He sought to use his last term in office first, as the British Prime Minister, second, as the Chairman of the G8 and third, as the President of the European Union, to leave a legacy of assistance to Africa that would qualitatively address poverty and other development issues in the continent. He wanted to galvanize world leaders' awareness and support for the enormous development challenges facing Africa and to also see how best these problems could be addressed, including the implementation of Africa's own programme of NEPAD.

5. In anticipation of the presentation of the report of the Commission for Africa at the Summit, commentators of various persuasions and musicians, represented by the Live 8 Concert, captivated the world's attention to the problems of Africa. They all gave expressions of how the Gleneagles Summit should change the course of African history. There is no doubt that the Live Aid Concert played an important role in the final outcome of the meeting, as it helped draw world attention to the challenges of development in Africa, as well as bring pressure on the world leaders to act.

6. I have taken you down on this memory lane in order to better understand the background and nature of the cooperation between Africa and the G8. This is necessary for a better appreciation of the level of expectation, from peoples of all walks of life, in and outside of Africa, on the outcome of the Gleneagles Summit. This understanding would assist in assessing whether, in concrete terms, the regular meetings and formal association between the two development partners has indeed been worth the while. In other words, can the African countries, represented at these annual meetings say with all sense of duty and responsibility that the regular attendance at the G8 Summits has indeed been justified by the outcomes of previous Summits? Have the usual publicized commitments and pronouncement of the august group been matched by concrete deeds? Our interaction today should assist in providing modest answers to these questions.

THE GLENAGLES SUMMIT

7. The Gleneagles Summit was held from 6th-8th July 2005. African leaders from Algeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania, as well as the Head of the African Union Commission, attended the Summit. The Meeting afforded yet another historic opportunity for Africa and the G8 to rub minds on the development needs of Africa, especially against the background of the world mobilization or euphoria generated in the lead up to the Summit.

8. As mentioned earlier, the report of the Tony Blair Commission, which focused essentially on Africa, was presented at the Summit. The Commission actually met its goals or mandate, which was to define the challenges facing Africa and to provide clear recommendations on how to support the changes that are needed to reduce poverty on the continent. Let me quote on major item from the Commission's Report as follows: "Poverty in Africa will continue to rise unless there is a greater economic growth. Faster growth and greater poverty reduction however require major investment in infrastructure, agriculture, urban development, a climate that fosters investment, whether local or foreign, and takes due account of the environment and climate change". "Even though good

governance creates the conditions for growth, this can only be driven by the private sector. That is why there must be a strong growth". It was as a result that the Report indicates that Africa needs US\$20 billion for infrastructure development and also concluded that increased trade is vital and perhaps, a sine qua non to increased growth.

9. The Gleneagles Summit was particularly important not just because of the euphoria that preceded the Summit itself, but for the fact that Africa was one of the two major issues on its agenda. The other major issue was climate change. Given these antecedents, there was high expectation not only from Africa, but also from the rest of the world, that the developed countries would do more to assist Africa beyond more rhetoric and platitudes. This is to enable the continent overcome the incredible challenges to her economic development, evident in poverty and disease, HIV-AIDS, insecurity and the crippling debt burden. The issue of debt in particular has, over the years, militated against the development efforts and aspirations of most African countries, including Nigeria. This is because of large chunks of their national resources are often used to service the unsustainable debts that in some cases are not even verifiable. There were also expectations for concrete assistance that would enhance Africa's capabilities to address conflicts and keep the peace without which there can be no development. Perhaps more importantly, Africa countries looked forward to practical discussions during the Summit on ways and means to enhance Africa's trade flow to the markets of the developed nations, through discussions on the removal of barriers that prevent African goods from getting into these markets.

10. To objectively assess the success of the Summit and its impact on Africa, we would need to look carefully to see how much of these concerns were adequately addressed.

11. Admittedly, one of the practical results of the Summit was the presentation and consideration of the Progress Report by the G8 Africa Personal Representatives on implementation of the Africa Action Plan. But it should be borne in mind that the report itself was a collection of the series of commitments made by the G8 to Africa from previous Summits but formalized in particular, in Kananaskis 2002. The Summit was therefore presented with the opportunity to realistically assess how much has been achieved in concrete terms, in the agreed programmes of the G8 African Action Plan.

12. The report noted the positive changes taking place in Africa. These include the enthronement of democracy and good governance in many countries; the establishment of the AU Peace and Security Council; and the African Peer Review Mechanism that allows the African leaders to critically assess themselves, thereby sharing the best practices of governance and economic development amongst themselves. The report underscores the fact that 23 African countries have made a binding commitment to take part in the review process. Let me point out here that all these were adopted freely by Africa and its leaders and not because of any external force or influence. It was Africa's realisation that she must herself tackle and confront head-on, its problems. In doing this however, she is prepared to cooperate and partner with the developed world. This was the philosophy behind the attendance of African leaders at the annual G8 meetings.

13. The Progress Report on the G8 African Action Plan and the meeting itself basically reaffirmed all the commitments enunciated in the documents. Such commitments included the desire by the G8 to enhance Africa's capabilities to undertake peace support operations through mobilizing technical and financial assistance so that by 2010, Africans can more effectively prevent and resolve conflicts in the continent. In specific terms however, it must be stressed that improving the capacity for peace building has been on major area where the several promises of The G8 have actually been translated to practical action. For

instance, in the case of the on-going crisis in the Sudan, G8 members have actually provided over \$200million to support the AU presence in Darfur. Canada, in addition to total pledges of about C\$20 million financial support, has also sent some armored personnel carriers to assist the peace operations in Darfur. The United Kingdom has contributed about \$32 million to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

14. In the area of the peace and stability on the continent, the meeting agreed to support Africa's capacity to resolve conflicts and keep the peace, including assisting to prevent conflicts and at the same time ensuring that previous conflicts do not re-emerge. It also agreed to provide technical assistance to the African Standing Force. To this effect, the meeting reaffirmation of support for the African Union's Mission in the Sudan (Darfur) (AMIS) and the G8 role in the United Nations Mission In the Sudan (UNAMIS).

15. Besides these however, the Progress Report on the G8 African Action Plan merely reaffirms the numerous commitments made to Africa in the areas of capacity for building peace and security, strengthening African institutions, fostering trade and investment, economic growth and sustainable Development, governance and implementation of debt relief. Apart from assessing the Progress Report of the G8 AAP, specific commitments were again made to Africa during the Summit. The meeting pointed out that real progress in the continent would only depend on the leaders and the people of Africa themselves. Conscious of this fact, the G8 leaders made commitments to put in place amongst other things, policies that would promote economic growth and thereby reduce poverty, accelerate the enthronement of good governance and strengthen democratic institutions, in addition to eradication corruption in Africa. With regard to the commitment to Africa's economic growth, I dare say that no concrete action was taken to assure Africa's private sector development, as well as for massive injection of fresh local and foreign direct investment. It is the sincere hope of Africa that the Investment Climate Facility, a private-sector driven

initiative of NEPAD's programme, will attract appropriate financial response and support.

16. On the question of good and responsive governance, the meeting pledged to engage and strengthen the African Union and the NEPAD. It promised to provide flexible funding that would enable them to articulate and follow up their programmes of action, especially in relation to implementation of good governance, credible action against corruption and increased transparency and accountability. In particular, the meeting promised to support the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), an initiative aimed at promoting transparency and accountability in the oil and mineral sectors. The meeting encouraged African countries to implement similar programmes and pledged to support all African countries committed to the implementation of the programme. In may interest you to note that Nigeria has been very active in this initiative, as part of the country's anti-corruption and transparency drive. We therefore, look forward to further assistance, cooperation and collaboration in this matter, in line with the commitment made at Gleneagles.

17. There was commitment to invest in better education with the sole aim of ultimately achieving education for all in the continent. In the devastating HIV-AIDS scourge in Africa, the Summit pledged continued support, in partnership with Africa, to train and retrain doctors, nurses and other community health workers. In this regard, the Meeting pledged to work with the WHO, UNAIDS and other international bodies to reduce and prevent the spread of the disease and having in mind the ultimate aim of attaining universal treatment by 2010. Other diseases that the body promised to assist Africa combat are malaria, tuberculosis and other killer diseases.

18. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Summit was the commitment by the leaders to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa from \$25 billion to \$50 Billion a year by 2010. There was also the commitment to

cancel 100% of the outstanding debts of fourteen African countries that qualified as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) to the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund.

IMPACT OF THE SUMMIT: THE NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE

19. As mentioned earlier, Africa was the major focus of the Summit, which inevitably brought to the front burner of international discourse, the problems of Africa. This focus was expected to serve as a reinforcement of the interdependent nature of nation-states and the realisation that the prosperity divide between Africa and the developed world needed to be addressed. It was also to demonstrate that whatever happens in any part of the globe has the potential to affect the rest of the world. Certainly if Africa is not assisted to come out of its debilitating poverty and economic degradation, then the developed countries themselves cannot feel secure for too long. These realisations, perhaps beyond any other consideration, informed Prime Minister Tony Blair's desire to place Africa squarely on the Summit's agenda.

20. From the Nigerian perspective, the Summit recorded remarkable success in the set agenda, in spite of the dastardly terrorist attacks in London during the meeting. This was clearly stated by President Olusegun Obasanjo in his assessment at the end of the Summit. The British Prime Minister certainly did not allow himself to be detracted from the Summit agenda by these despicable acts of terrorism. The outcome of the Summit must also be applauded in spite of the fact that the implementation of the commitments would be conditioned on satisfying the criterion of good governance on the part of Africa. This is a development, which a majority of Africa's leaders have already committed themselves to anyway, as part of their responsibility to their people.

21. This perspective is however, without prejudice to the fact that most of the commitments will only be effective from 2010, when there would have been political changes in the leadership of virtually all of the G8 countries and indeed

in Africa as well. In this regard, can Africa, nay the whole world, wait for another five years before the results of the Gleneagles Summit become a reality? Like Prime Minister Tony Blair noted, the result of the Summit was not necessarily what everyone wanted but, at least, it was progress made in the right direction. The outcome certainly fell short of the expectation of Prime Minister Tony Blair who had worked assiduously to make poverty reduction in Africa a major focus at home and abroad, as well as making it a cardinal objective of the Commission for Africa. He wanted the G8 leaders to reaffirm their previous commitment at the Monterrey Summit to devote 0.7 per cent of their GDP as aid to Africa. Certain members, such as the United States and Japan, refused to make this commitment.

22. Incidentally, even Canada, whose former Prime Minister, Lester Pearson first mooted the idea as far back as the early 60s, only accepted this in principle and has refused to set a time frame for reaching the 0.7 per cent bench mark. In this regard, even though Canada expects to double her development assistance budget between 2001 and 2010, the concentration of such assistance in a smaller group of 25 developing countries, 14 of them in Africa, has generated concern in some quarters. For us in Nigeria, while Canada's assistance to Africa is appreciated, we would wish to see further improvements in market access, as well as better trade arrangements for African goods and exports. Canada's assistance in capacity building of institutions, of governance structures, as well as human resource development is critical and is also essential to Nigeria's development.

23. More significantly for Nigeria, the poor track record of delivery on the previous promises and commitments made by the G8 is more worrisome. A careful look at the Communiqué of the Gleneagles Summit as it concerns Africa, shows clear re-affirmation, re-packaging and re-pledging of prior unfulfilled commitments made in the previous Summits. Thus, for the results of the just concluded Summit and the Implementation of the Africa Action Plan to be of any significance to Africa and its peoples, the G8 needs to translate the several

promises and commitments made into concrete action. Africans have indeed become weary of the too many unfulfilled commitments and programmes that have been counted against them while their existential conditions continue to deteriorate. Africans cannot forget in a hurry the results of some earlier promises, exemplified in such initiatives as the United Nations Priority Programme for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UNPPAERD) and the Compact for Africa, among others. It is important at this point to ask how much of the commitments made by the developed world to the NEPAD Programme have been met, more than four years after the Programme was launched. What this shows to Africa and Africans is that there has been no shortage of initiatives to help Africa. What is however lacking is the political will. It is my sincere hope that the Gleneagles Summit has succeeded in galvanizing the political will needed for a sustained engagement of the G8 in the development enterprise of Africa.

24. Nigeria commends the laudable commitment to cancel 100% of the debts of the HIPC's since this should translate to more money that can be used to address other projects that are of great importance to the people. However, it is worrying to note the silent protests and dissensions by some European countries, which felt that they were not consulted by the G8 before making the pronouncements. Our hope is that such dissensions will not derail the noble idea. Beyond this, there are also credible fears, based on previous experience, that the conditionalities that might be attached to the cancellation of the debts could create further deleterious effects on the affected African Countries. Furthermore, there are still many African countries outside of the HIPC that are labouring under the yoke of unsustainable debt, for which they continue to devote large chunks of their national resources to service. This certainly reduces their capacity to meet the social needs of the citizens.

25. In the case of Nigeria, the debt relief granted immediately after the G8 Summit is a pointer to what can be achieved when there is the political will.

When the deal is finally executed, Nigeria stands to gain about \$18billion. When this happens, almost half of the country's total debt stocks would have been written off. This will free resources, about US\$1.6 billion hitherto annually devoted to debt-service, for development purposes. Certainly a great impact should be expected on the implementation of Nigeria's National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), aimed at facilitating the achievement of MDGs in the country, particularly in addressing the challenge of poverty.

26. Nigeria would have certainly liked to see greater commitment by the G8 in the area of trade liberalization. Unfortunately, the Summit only agreed, in principle, to work towards the elimination of agricultural subsidies without any set date to achieve the goal. A situation whereby the finished products of Africa, no matter how qualitative, cannot have easy access to the developed markets because of high tariffs and other trade distorting or inhibiting measures, is not acceptable. To this end, the outcome of the upcoming WTO Ministerial meeting in Hong Kong, in December 2005, would represent the first crucial test of the success of the Gleneagles Summit. It is our expectation that this meeting will break the deadlock over the issues that have stalled the Doha Development Round. It has now become clear that the G8 countries have considerable difficulties with issues regarded as critical to their national interests however narrowly defined these interests. While the agreements on the crucial issues of debt and peace support operations are welcome to Africa, the contentious issues remain trade barriers and agricultural subsidies.

27. Nigeria certainly believes in the immense potentials of the partnership and cooperation between the G8 and Africa. It accepts as historical fact, the influence of the rich countries over the developing countries. Some have however questioned the foundation of the partnership, which they consider as an unequal relationship of power, influence and even domination. One must therefore pose the question whether it is a relationship that is based on rights,

duties and obligations, on shared humanity, and commonality of interest, rather than paternalism. This is why Nigeria remains convinced that the destiny of Africa must be in the hands of Africans alone. However, in an interdependent world where globalizations has severely constrained the solo efforts of any country or continent attain its development objectives, Africa must continue to cooperate with the rest of the world.

28. African leaders must be committed to the principles of good governance, respect for the rule of law and deliberate articulation and implementation of realistic economic policies that would put Africa on a surer footing, thereby enabling her to compete with the rest of the world. Nigeria believes that Africa, well endowed with abundant natural resources, should work to end this cycle of patronage from the developed nations and that the continent must effectively tackle and take care of its problems. That is the message and hope of the NEPAD initiative and process to which we are fully committed. All that Africa seeks is the creation of an international climate and an effective complementary development policy that are conducive to a self- generating socio-economic development. There is no doubt that the real challenge is for Africa to increase its domestic production of food, goods and services, in order to meet the needs of its teeming population. It must, at the same time, strenuously strive to increase its share of global trade. This is one cardinal objective of Nigeria's current economic policy and it is a lesson to be drawn from contemporary Chinese resurgence.

29. In conclusion, Africa has, for too long, only been known and associated with conflicts, misery and despair. The developed world has seen and viewed Africa mainly as a continent constantly desirous of assistance and handouts from them. The developed world, Canadians inclusive, are only familiar with the sad drums of war from Africa and images of poverty-stricken African children, which are regularly beamed by the often biased media to prick the conscience of the world. Unfortunately, not much is said or reported about the positive

developments in the continent. In the reports and analysis of developments in Africa, some even ridiculously talk of a pictorial representation of Africa, as if Africa is just a country. Many people forget that Africa is a continent, comprising 54 countries and inhabited by millions of people with diverse and very rich cultures. It is a region where investments in human and economic welfare can be rewarding. In this respect, I commend to you all the September 2005 issue of the celebrated magazine, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC and following words of its new Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Chris Johns, himself a veteran of Africa. "Africa is not just a place; it's a million places. Its a million voices...no one photograph could capture the mystery, the diversity and the surprise of Africa as it moves forward. Africa is one of the most hopeful continents in the world. It is a continent with a bright future and a great tradition of story telling". How I wish that Africa's development partners, including Canada would continually view Africa from this prism. We certainly need to change our mindset and remove wrong perceptions and stereotypes about Africa.

30. In concluding this address Ladies and Gentlemen, let me refer to a commentator who described the outcome of the Gleneagles Summit as "a modest step forward, still a good deal better than a few steps back that have characterised recent years of relationship between the G8 and Africa". I fully agree with this assessment of the Summit. Let me hope that we will continue to build on the partnership which Africa and The G8 have embarked upon, to the mutual satisfaction of the peoples of the two worlds.

I thank you.