

AFRICAN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE
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Gebisa Ejeta- 2009 World Food Prize Laureate

Let me start by saying how great an honor this is for me to be having this dialogue with you. If I may also say, on behalf of the audience, what a privilege it is for us to listen to your wisdom and insights and share your lifelong experiences in a responsibility that none of us in here except the two other presidents that may be sitting in the crowd had experienced.

We very often look at the opportunities that you are given and we tend to focus on that. But we don't always give you the benefit of the doubt and the challenges that you face on a daily basis, priorities that you have to make and the juggling and sorting of the issues that you have to do on a daily basis to make some difficult decisions in building nations and guiding development.

So it is kind of an experience that we would like to get from you today. And I consider this a great privilege, and I surmise that the audience agrees with me with that.

I have some sets of questions that I have prepared. And what I would like to do would be ask each one of you one main question and maybe feed off those supplementary questions and mention your names after the previous speaker finishes their comment, and then I'll pass them on. And hopefully we will leave enough time - and the presidents have general agreed to take questions from the audience - and we would like to leave some time for doing that as well.

My first question probably, since you're sitting on this side, President Obasanjo, I would start with that. And that has to do on a subject that we had discussed over today very articulately when the president of the World Food Program talked about the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

Africa once again is dealing with a crisis, a crisis that follows a drought, a natural phenomenon that tends to frequent our continent. And yet such disasters are very often followed with famine and with starvation.

How can Africa try to avoid these kinds of disasters from happening on a regular basis? And it feels to me, it is so absurd in today's time and age with all the resources available to us, with all the knowledge that is available to us, where drought is a natural phenomenon - it happens all over the place - but very often in Africa, it's followed with a significant loss of lives in the continent. How can we stop this from happening in the continent of Africa? In other words, what is Africa not doing right? Or what can other nations do to help avoid this kind of problem from repeating?

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo- Former President, Nigeria

Thank you very much. You said you threw the first question to me because of my proximity to you. But I didn't choose to sit very close to you. But, you know, this is the sort of thing that happened in Africa.

But to come to the point you have raised – why should Africa at this point in time, at this age still be suffering from drought, famine and starvation. I would say it's unpardonable negligence, neglect on our part generally.

And before I give three or four areas where this negligence has shown itself, I was in Kenya not too long ago. And we were talking about the drought, which of course affected northern part of Kenya. And somebody who was the chairman of farmers association many years back in Kenya, told the story that there was a dry part of Kenya. And he was the chairman of the farmers association.

He sent for experts from Israel to come and advise what they can do with the so-called dry part of northern part of Kenya. He said there were two experts that came, and that they had gone around for about three days. They came back to Nairobi and said, "Well, we have gone around to where you asked us to go. We have looked, we have inspected, but we didn't see the dry land."

He was surprised, and they said to him, "Look, everywhere we see you can grow, and anything you plant will grow because there's water very near the surface. So he told me that he drew the conclusion that they did not have dry land in Kenya; rather, they had dry heads.

Now, I might believe that those dry heads from what we have heard happening in Kenya now, those dry heads have now become wet heads.

But that is the sort of story that you can multiply.

I believe there are five or five, six groups of people that must walk together for us to avoid these type of things and to continuously be able to feed ourselves and in fact create surplus.

One the government, the political leaders – they must be able to give us policy that will endure and will last, and those policies must be consistent and they must be continuing- And those policies, they must deal with the issue of infrastructure and other things that only government can deal with. They are very important.

Another group of people that of course are very important are the farmers. The farmers must have the skill. Farmers must have the skill to be able to do what they need to do – information, education and innovation to be able to do what they need to do and do it well.

Then the researchers. The researchers are important. And they must come in and be able to give research product that will help the adoption by the farmer.

And then of course there must be the financial institutions, because in all this, without finance, it's all abortive. The financial institutions must be there.

And then of course producers, processors and marketers – they have their own role to play. And they have to play their role from the farm gate up to the table where the food is served in terms of processing, in terms of storage, in terms of getting the products adding value up to the supermarket and to the shops.

And, finally, the civil society – they also are important, because they must have to raise awareness. They must have to wake others, where the leaders, chief at the political level may not be able to see. And when I talk of civil society, I'm talking about it broadly.

And, most important is that all these three must work together. It must be collaborative effort, it must be unity of effort, it must be togetherness.

Now, if these work together, I believe that the issue of drought and famine in Africa will be a thing of the past.

Gebisa Ejeta

President Jawara, to continue from that, and the conventional wisdom is – Famine is for the most part a manmade problem, and drought happens in so many different geographies around the world.

A recent article from the *Time* Magazine made a statement that stuck with me and says, "Drought sets the conditions for famine, but man makes it real." And the belief is that, in addition to all these other problems and issues President Obasanjo had raised, there is some politics involved that contributes to starvation and death of people. How can the politics of food, both local and global politics, be removed out so that the basic, fundamental need of humanity, food, is made available without reference to political inclination of an individual?

H.E. Sir Dawda Jawara- Former President, The Gambia

Thank you very much. You're making me feel that perhaps I would have been luckier to sit in this chair nearest to you than to sit in this chair to feel this question, a very difficult one. No, it is man that makes the famine.

Well, the way to look at that is that when have a drought, the ingenuity of man, the scientists, civil society and people generally should come into active play. And if all these elements come into active play, the famine that may be caused by drought would be significantly reduced if not eliminated.

This cannot be in one goal, but if these elements come together, while from the human point of view, the scientific community of the human element should always be there to play their role.

Already there is scientific knowledge existing that can be applied to minimize the effects of drought and hunger. But they can also continue to try and find ways and means of actually avoiding hunger coming in, by designing, by designing products, crops that have significantly more yield, high-yielding crops and crops that could withstand drought, the drought

conditions, that can withstand insect and other infestations, so that in spite of a degree of drought setting in, the human, the farmer can still be this element with these scientific tools there he has at his disposal surmount the effects of drought and still continue to provide enough for the people in that area to survive.

So man makes famine, but man therefore is to eliminate or reduce the famine. Therefore, we should ask our scientists to concentrate on the areas that reduce the food capacity of our populations.

One of the main areas where, in Africa and many developing countries, many lose their capacity to free themselves is post-harvest waste of food. This is extremely important, and I think this is an area where a lot of scientific and even financial resources should be directed towards.

In many areas including The Gambia and many other places, people work hard and produce what can be produced under the conditions; and when they harvest their crops, possibly a high percentage of what they harvest is wasted through the method of harvesting itself, through inadequate storage facilities, through inadequate transportation, and marketing, etc.

So post-harvest losses need a great deal of attention if we are going to fulfill the ends of the World Food Prize that we are here today. So that is one area in which we can really apply our knowledge to increase the availability of food and reduce or eliminate hunger in many parts of the developing world.

So this is one area. I mean, farmers themselves should learn to apply the methods of harvesting, method of storage, methods of transportation and marketing which are conducive to preserving the products which they have produced after hard labor in what we call the farming condition.

There was a time in our area, that is, a long time ago when I was young, when we used to talk about the hungry season. And that season comes usually at the end of one harvest and the beginning of another, which causes so much hardship. Fortunately, over the years we do not hear of those.

Therefore, we are optimistic that with the real progress that has been going on since then, that with global participation, with local effort, anything like hunger seasons will be a thing of the past in world history. And I think the aim of this organization, the World Food Program, and all the efforts that we are doing here is to bring that happy, optimistic condition to prevail - the sooner it is, the better.

Thank you very much.

Gebisa Ejeta

Thank you very much. Maybe to sum up the comments you both made with regards to the hunger issues in the continent and maybe to end with that kind of optimism and the kind of optimism that the director of the World Food Program indicated, suggesting that she is hopeful that we will be able to eradicate hunger in her lifetime - and she indeed has the benefit of her age on her side, and so I'd like to refer to that.

And Ismail Serageldin that many of you know, the former vice president of the World Bank, made a very profound statement at the last G-4 meeting in Montpellier, he said, as President Obasanjo indicated about how we all need to work together to get this done, he said there were other revulsive social events in humanity that have existed.

And one of those, he said, was slavery. We got rid of slavery because people finally developed sufficiency revulsion against it that it's such a degrading and most inhuman of human practices, and we eventually resolved to abolish it from the face of the earth. And he said that such an absolutely revulsion is going to be necessary against hunger and abject poverty to once and for all eradicate it from the face of the world.

As humans, I am sure we are capable of such a deed, but it's going to require that kind of revulsion and will to get it done.

President Chissano, I've got just the right question for you. You have been a member of the Advisory Council of the World Food Prize. Establishment of the World Food Prize was predicated on recognizing accomplishment of humans that have made contribution to reducing hunger and awarding its prestigious prize those who have made some contribution in that area.

The primary area, and the one that has been repeatedly acknowledged, is science, the contribution of science, science-based solutions to hunger problems. And science has advanced much in all continents except Africa. Has Africa prepared itself, in your opinion, sufficiently well to embrace science, technology and innovation as a solid foundation for attacking the problem of hunger and poverty?

H.E. Joaquim Chissano - Former President, Mozambique

Yes, thank you very much. I thought that I was going to benefit from my elders - that's why I put them that side, and I thought that that question would have gone to President Obasanjo because he is a farmer, and he might know better than me how science play in food production.

But because I have been associated with the World Food Prize and the hunger project and because I have come to know you, I think that I can now guess how important it is to know how the plants live and how the plants yield fruits and how the plants contract diseases.

And all these can become only from science, because we, the peasants, we just see that the maize rots, and we don't know why. We know that there are many insects coming, and we don't know why. And we know that the grain we put on the soil don't germinate; we don't know why. But science can tell us not only why but also how to correct what is wrong with the plants.

What does this have to do with the famine or the eradication of hunger? It has to do because you can more or less define how much food you want to get from each hector you cultivate or from each bag of seeds you put on the soil. You know how much food, and you can know how much you will eat today and how much you can save for tomorrow.

So it speaks for food security. Food security can be well planned if you use scientific means. All this has to do with research. And in Africa we don't have enough research institutions, and the few research institutions we have are not yet enough coordinated so that we may try to solve the problem of food security.

Relating to the first question you asked - in Somalia there's famine because there's no food security, while in Somalia there's a conflict - they are fighting each other there. But if Kenya, Ethiopia and other countries had food in reserve to go to help the people in Somalia, it would be much easier.

I come from a country which has got cyclical floods but also cyclical droughts. We can have droughts in one region of the country and floods at the same time in the other region.

Our problem, again, has to do with science - how to avoid the waste of water when the floods come and then the water goes to the sea, and how to have the seeds to be planted in the dry areas, and how to have this rice which can resist floods for, let's say, one week, and it will grow again when the water would have passed to the sea. We're all aware of this but we don't have it. That's why we have to depend on foreign aid when there's a drought, when there's a flood.

So food security is something which can be well planned if there's involvement of science. But science is not only in the field of crops but also in the field of infrastructure and what President Jawara referred to - how to preserve the crops after harvesting and what infrastructure you need, how you have to build, all these things are studied.

Of course, in Africa we have our traditional means of keeping our crops after harvest, but it is all for small quantities, which you may consume in six months. So we can keep, but after that we cannot keep any amount of food which can rescue people in a time of drought or floods.

And science, you will find it applied in many other areas, like the road infrastructure and the utilization of the machines, rudimentary machines. Also it has to do with innovation, not only research in the field of crops but also on how to alleviate the burden of intensive labor to produce more crops in wider areas and with the best yield.

Gebisa Ejeta

Prime Minister Pinda, as President Chissano indicated, there is continually an over-reliance on foreign assistance in much of our continent, the continent of Africa. These programs can assist, and I'd like to think that you would agree with me, but nation building is not something that can be left to foreign assistance; it is something that needs to be done from within.

Fundamental to that is building the human capacity in each one of the nations of Africa: strengthening the various institutions that we have, such that there is experiential learning through generations of professionals, helping with farming communities, encouraging private sector development, and working in those areas in all of the value chains that we've heard so much about today.

Is in your opinion – you could use your own country as an example or others – is Africa paying enough attention, making enough investments to building the human capacity base and strengthening the institutions, functional institutions, in each one of our nations?

H.E. Mizengo Pinda- Prime Minister, Tanzania

Okay, thank you. Maybe before I react to your question, and because we are sitting before eminent people like these high-level leaders, there is always something that you learn from them.

Because of that, I thought I should say something a little bit on the Somalia issue, of which President Obasanjo as well as Chissano made reference to. As a young leader, I think Africa has to look at some of these as the inside fundamental issues that at times broke down development of their respective countries.

Leadership has got to have attached with its own people. You have to be there in order to assist your people, to work for your people. Now, it's no use in my view, fightings, troubling, you know, crisis after crisis, without regard to the people whom you're supposed to yield.

So I keep on believing that one day, it may be the EU and other organizations within African Continent will talk seriously of this issue, and through their forum at least let each one of them be friend to each other. Let's not give room to these kind of fightings, civil fightings that sometimes lead to deaths but also drag down people to terrible conditions.

The famine in Somalia, the drought that existed in so many other parts, if it were just that without the crisis that we have created, maybe it would have been very easy to handle. But how do you handle that famine case in Somalia when people stay divided, people are struggling for power? It will never come forth.

So it's as if somebody say, "It's me and nobody else – I don't care what happens to the people around me, unless I become A, B, C, D, the president." To me that is a serious anomaly within the thinking of the African leaders that have to address this issue.

Now having said that – I'm young, so these old daddies will keep on guiding me – but I thought I should react to this one, because I still think this is a fundamental area where leadership in Africa must take it seriously, so that people can go ahead and make the development that it requires.

But secondly, we have said so many good things. I have heard so many things from these daddies of mine. But corruption is still a big issue to many of the African countries. People are greedy; they just want to get money, regardless of what happens to their people. Nobody is going to pour money to African continents, to African countries, if they know you have a corrupt government. There is no way.

So the struggle for famine and these other things have got to go hand in hand with a leadership that is committed towards the development of their people. Then we can see a lot of these

things coming out in a forceful way, in a positive way, and everyone will say, “Yes, I think Africa now is being driven to the right direction.”

Now, let me come now to your issue. I come from Tanzania, okay. And human capacity-building is a crucial area, because I’ve seen, I’ve talked to the prime minister, and I believe this is what has happened to many of the around countries.

I don’t believe that there is a country in Africa that has been able to focus on the need for training of these people who are necessary components for the development of agriculture in their respective countries.

Extension services are still far from being where they are required to be. The farmers in the rural areas are just grappling here and there. But if they lack people who can assist them through the knowledge that they’ve acquired to be able to lead the society at that lower level so that education and agriculture that is required gets where it’s supposed to be.

So it’s an area, it’s a challenge, and I think the leadership in Africa has got to address this because it’s critical. Otherwise, we shall get all these good people coming to us with all these technologies, but its application cannot be taken down to the people who require it because there’s nobody to teach these people how to use that technology.

So what Tanzania did in the recent years - President Kikwete made a very, very bold decision. He said he wants to build up a university that is going to take 40,000 students; 20,000 of them he wants to be science students, including agriculture, so that maybe we can provide these services to ordinary people in a much more effective way than what it is today.

So I think every government must look at it in that form. Everyone must drive its efforts towards capacity-building so that we can harness the good opportunities that are coming to us in an effort to try to help us.

The second thing is capacity-building. Today during lunch, I liked Ellen Kullman’s opening speech. She said, yes, science is universal, but solutions are local. And I agree with you. You see, in the case of Tanzania we had to come up with a modus operandi of how we can communicate with the rural people in order to drive agriculture to a better developed level.

So what we did was for every about 50 families, households, we made sure that we want to have at least one demonstration farm – a farmer’s school, so to speak – where we can use that now to try and explain to this poor man who has been used to old ways of cultivation, old ways of using seeds, he has no idea about the new technologies. But you can only do so by applying that knowledge physically in the area where he belongs.

So in one village you might find such clusters, a multiple of five or six, and that has had a very big impact on the outcome. Of course, we had to combine now with these other things, including the inputs that are required, depending on the type of soil.

And this is what has led Tanzania now that we have been able to produce over five million tons of food surplus because of the use of the farm structures that speak for themselves. It’s a form of

capacity-building but very much relevant to the situation in the area where each one of these lives – because Tanzania is big.

So wherever you go to one region is different from another, so we are able to know how to handle the farmer so he can get some of these technologies.

So capacity-building must also be looked at both levels - at the level of these scientists but also at the level of the farmer in the village. Once he acquires this, now we are having a big problem because now he is crying for all these technologies, sometimes without even knowing how they're going to apply them. So we say, "No, no, no, no – let's go slowly." So we started with a few families, then we moved to another.

So we started with 700 families. We went to 750, then 1.5 million. This year we're aiming to a million households. So by so doing we hope we shall be able to build the capacity that is required to absorb some of these technologies but also have a much bigger impact in terms of productivity that is our biggest, crucial problem at the moment.

Gebisa Ejeta

If I may come back to you with a follow up of that question. Very often when we talk about capacity-building, it's not only training a large number of professionals. It's not only opening offices, it is providing these individuals and programs with the necessary support so they can be functional and build experiences over time. And very often there are directions that come from the top in Africa, almost like a campaign of one kind or another and not left to the professionals to make the right kind of decision that is based on knowledge and experience that has been gained locally. Either it would come from influences from outside or from uninformed direction from the top.

And so what is a challenge? Why is it an informed person like you – the way I heard you, you almost sound like these professionals in articulating the need that is out there. But how can we get the potential benefit from the leadership of someone like you or the ministers working under you, in giving the right kinds of support to the professionals in the institutions to get that internal development experiential growth to take place in the country, so that these institutions are well-supported, gaining experience, know the problems – because no one knows about the local problem than the local people, and if those people are trained very well and they're supported in their own institutions, they're likely to deliver the better solution than people from outside can.

Mizengo Pinda

You're quite right on that one, and the case of Tanzania, maybe let me say, let me make reference particularly to the research institutions that we have back home. What you are saying is quite true. I think for many African countries, research and development is indeed a big challenge.

And it is unfortunate that at times the leadership doesn't even see the relevance and the significant and the importance of research institutions. Many of them have almost collapsed,

research that could be very, very useful have been left almost abandoned, and nobody seems to care about it.

No. This is something serious, and it has got to be addressed.

So what I did was to go around the country. I visited almost all the research centers in order to see the problems and learn a little bit more on what they need. When I finished that exercise, I came back and told my president, "We have to do something on research. Otherwise, every effort that we are trying to drive at will not work."

The president said, "Fine, let's do something." So we moved it now on our budget. The idea was, let's try and see if we can have at least one percent of the budget of the government going specifically to research institutions. Now, that was a big decision that was taken. So we said, let's see if we can manage.

So we started the first year. Of course, we couldn't go the one percent we wanted, but at least we were able to start with some amount of money, which we pumped into research so that we could slowly start building up, give encouragement to these researchers and give them the spirit they would want. And of course the feedback we got was wonderful. They said, "Mr. Prime Minister, you have really given us a job."

Even their salaries had in a way been forgotten, so we had to come up with a new scheme. We have to encourage these people if you want them to deliver good services to our people.

But we have done one more thing, which I think maybe it is good to share. Now, Tanzania has come up now with a new approach on trying to award researchers who have played a big role maybe in discovering new seeds or new types of whatever, so that annually we award them for good things they have discovered in the course of their research in order to give them encouragement.

So it is an area indeed that I think cut us short. We have all got to be clear on that one. We have to support these people. We have to support these institutions, budget-wise, but also through these other forms like awards and things like that. And awards, yes, awards in terms of certificates, okay, but in our case we thought we should go a little bit farther than that, even monetary-wise, so that they could be encouraged to do an even better job than before.

And lastly, we are now using these researchers who are producing the seeds and other successes for themselves to carry these results down to the farmers in certain areas, applied, teach, and then at the end of the day come out and say, "Wonderful, my seed has performed so well," and they feel so nice. And most of them are ladies who have done such a wonderful job in my country.

Gebisa Ejeta

Coming back to you, Mr. Obasanjo – Most development practitioners now agree that the most important key to agricultural, rural and economic development is national leadership. Your friend, Norm Borlaug, more than any person I know or at least more than any other scientist,

understood and recognized and appreciated the value of governments, policy and executive leadership in advancing the cause of science-based development.

Is Norm right in holding up the importance of government, policy and leadership as being crucial to science-based development? Or is it possible to build resolve and commitment for nation-building without or in spite of leadership?

Olusegun Obasanjo

Norman Borlaug was absolutely right, that whatever else you may try to do – and I mention six areas, but the most critical of these areas is the government, which is political leadership. I had opportunity to work with Norman Borlaug and Sasakawa on the program in Africa called “Sasakawa Global 2000.”

And to achieve success, of course we targeted farmers, but we had to go to the political leader at the highest level. And wherever agriculture had made progress in the world, the political leadership at the highest level must be at the driver’s seat. And it is only then that the other groups, the other participants that I mentioned earlier – the farmer, the researcher, the financier, the processor, and the civil society – they can be brought together around this pillar, and that pillar is the political leadership.

Political leadership must have the vision, must have the understanding, must have the will and must be ready to put its money where its mouth is. It must be ready to also do what is right.

And we have had what is happening in Tanzania as given to us by the prime minister. We have known now the story of Malawi, that within the space of 24 months they went from being a grain deficit country to a grain surplus country – because the president took it as a matter of life and death.

When I was in government as president of Nigeria, we took each commodity that we wanted to work on, and we formed what we call “Potential Initiative.” And around that potential initiative we have the minister, the producers, the financial institutions, including the central bank, the manufacturers and processors, the exporters and the marketers, including in our own case, including those called informal marketers, the women – and they are very important because if you withdraw the women from the distribution of agricultural products in Nigeria, then you will have nothing, nobody to do it for you.

So we bring all of them together, and every quarter they report on the progress they are achieving. And where correction needs to be made, it is made. Where additional input needs to be brought in, it is brought in. And even the Sasakawa Global 2000 that I mentioned, the success that was achieved was achieved because of the farmers, but we also reach out to the political leadership at the national level, at the regional level within the country, and at the local level.

So it is a must – the political leadership must be the one to drive the initiative.

Gebisa Ejeta

Thank you very much. I know that you have done your share during your time of leadership, and you continue to serve in that capacity in consulting with the current government in Nigeria.

And I would like to say, maybe in front of this partisan crowd that are sensitive or empathetic to the concerns and the aspirations of Dr. Borlaug, that you continue to be his voice in convincing the leadership of Africa to continue to be committed to the cause.

Olusegun Obasanjo

Thank you very much. Of course, I believe that the only thing that we can do in the memory of Borlaug is to continue where he has left behind. It will interest this august audience that on the 3rd and 4th of November we are going to have the 25th anniversary of the Sasakawa Global 2000 in Mali, and it is again to continue that program and the work that Norman Borlaug has started and the one we have done together.

I believe that there's no end, there's no rest, as I always say, for the wicked, until we are able to eliminate poverty and famine and starvation from the surface of the earth. That is the challenge for each and every one of us.

Gebisa Ejeta

President, Jawara, when good African leaders get focused on development, they tend to focus a lot more on developing public programs, public institutions; and therefore public institutions tend to be the predominant employers of the young and the professionals. What is stopping Africans from not getting as much commitment in promoting and advancing the private sector to contribute to the cause?

Dawda Jawara

Well, I think this is to be expected, because the government concentrated on problems more easily than the private sector. But all the same, I think the two sectors have to come together for the best outcome. I mean, government and its institutions and the private sector, the civil society.

Especially in Africa and similar developing countries, women play a very vital role in many institutions, particularly in farming. In Africa I think they possibly have become a higher priority in the country, better in the agricultural development than men.

Therefore, I would sum up by saying that for the best result, government and its institutions should lead the way if possible; in some cases, individuals and individual bodies can in fact seize the initiative and lead the way in some particular areas.

I am a veterinarian by training, and I actually went into this profession because of the food situation in some parts of our population - the pastoralists. At that time in Africa there was devastation in the livestock population. The cattle and other hooved animals suffer periodic outbreaks of rinderpest, of cattle plague. And this is how I went into this profession.

And it was my honor and privilege in 1999 when a fellow veterinarian was the winner of the World Food Prize that we are here celebrating today for inventing a vaccine which actually gave us, the veterinarians, the tool to protect the health of our livestock populations around Africa. And this colleague who won the World Food Prize in 1999 was a veterinarian who worked on his research partly in Nigeria and partly in Kenya.

And he and his collaborators and colleagues invented the tissue culture vaccine, which was named after him. It's known as the fluoride tissue culture vaccine, and it is with this vaccine really that it became possible in the final analysis to control and eliminate the effects of cattle plague, of rinderpest. And in fact the aim in the 1960s of the FAO and those of us who are in the field, we already saw that it was possible with collaboration around the continent to eliminate rinderpest.

And it was formally announced by FAO only a few months ago that rinderpest has now joined smallpox by having been eliminated from the face of the earth. So that was a great contribution to saving our livestock in Africa and in many other parts of the world and therefore a great contribution to the preservation of food for one very important aspect of food, which provides protein for our populations.

So this is one area of science in which a specific contribution was made, and the effort was not only by government or government institutions but by individual scientists and scientists who contributed to elimination of cattle plague.

Thank you.

Gebisa Ejeta

Thank you very much. President Chissano, I know that Mozambique is one of the countries where public/private partnerships are developing a little more than most of the other African countries. And issues of markets, profit, and incentive are being recognized more and more, and the so-called value chain is being promoted in Mozambique as in many other African countries now.

But do you believe, continentally, there is sufficient effort being put in removing more macroeconomic restrictions starting business, for example, removing regulatory concerns, the concerns about the rule of law, the intellectual property rights and so on – the major concerns of the private sector. Is Africa doing those kinds of things efficiently? Are you encouraged by what you see?

Joaquim Chissano

Well, I must confess that there's a lot to be done. I just came from London where the Mo Ibrahim index for this year was launched. And the index shows clearly that there's economic growth in the most parts of countries in Africa; at least among the 54 countries, 39 are experiencing growth.

But we look at the other indicators in two categories: security and the rule of law. And the deficit is so big; it's a big contrast, which means that there's an imbalance of all categories – development, human development and economic development on one side and the participation of the people, of the citizens and civil society, and also human rights and security.

There is a lot which still needs to be done in that field, because there we see a decline in these indicators. And this is an analysis that was made and brought us to the conclusion that the upheavals which are occurring in Northern Africa and the other countries are the result of this

imbalance. Because all this has to be coordinated. Development cannot be only one-sided – development must take all sides.

Development requires the participation of all, including the private sector. So the more a country is open to the private sector and gives incentives, the more participation you can find in that level.

But here I would like to include also the informal sector; not only the formal sector but also the informal sector is very important. So incentives must be given so that the informal sector also may grow and become, enters into the field of the formal sector.

So in a nutshell I would say that we are progressing in Africa, but there are still enormous challenges. My neighbor here has singled out the sector of governance which is not there, this sector of governance, by referring to corruption. But this is all involved in this lack of a comprehensive understanding of what governance should be.

But I don't like to whip myself, and I think that we Africans must recognize, but we should also know that we had beginnings. We began from somewhere, and what we should appreciate is the progress which we are making – and we are making progress.

The awareness is one of the things. We are speaking here about technology, about research. When I became president, I had no idea about research institutions – what is this all about? But because I started working and trying to find solutions, I came to the conclusion that I had to create a ministry of science and technology. When I created that ministry, my colleagues came up and said, “What is this for – science and technology?”

But now, since we created that ministry, we have a coordination of the research institutions. We are creating new research institutions and we are giving incentives to innovators. And this is part of governance and it is part of bringing people to participate.

Gebisa Ejeta

This is a good segue. It leads me to ask one question that I have to ask this distinguished panel. Much has been written about the large tracts of African lands being leased to foreigners. And my understanding is from the perspective of the African leadership, it's just a land lease.

Many Africans and Africanists are outraged, particularly by the lack of transparency in much of this deed. Out of that outrage, they have dubbed this transaction, land grab, land rush, land giveaway, nation for sale – all kinds of terms have been coined for that.

Many people also feel that the transaction favors the foreigners making the lease and the purchase and it compromises Africa and its poor people. The argument is that priority should be given for producing food for the hungry Africans and not provide food for these other expanding economies for their people or for their other adventures in which they would need this raw material for.

So there are very, very strong sentiments being expressed in that regard. But it's happening in a large number of Africans. And I'm not even sure if that is correct, and maybe it's small or big.

But what is the official version of what is going on in these land leases given to foreigners?
Prime Minister Pinda, I wanted to direct that to you.

Mizengo Pinda

I'm not sure whether there is an official version position on that one, because I think it must be looked from each individual country's situation. But I think generally the caution that is being brought up through these statements is a valid one. It's a question actually to the leadership of many of the African countries that find while you are driving your efforts towards food security, bear in mind that you have the ordinary farmer with you. Okay? So don't emphasize one side at the expense of this other side, which is very, very important to any African country.

I think the question is a valid one, and we should all take it seriously and judge it in each other's country, depending on the situation.

Tanzania's situation maybe is a bit different because our country is about a million square kilometers where 44 million hectares of land can be cultivated.

So I think a good government, a good leader would definitely have caution, but certainly it will not do him any good if he is going to say no to an investment venture into a situation like that of Tanzania. I think a good leader would say, "Okay, out of the 44 million, now that the ordinary farmers are taking about 23 percent, let's set aside just about 10 percent of that other land and see whether we can have some good people around us to come and invest in that area, provided all these cautions are taken into account."

So the idea would be create now a policy that recognizes that some amount of land that you can be ready to lease to some good investors provided you adhere to rules of good governance. Let it be as open as can possibly be done, be careful, so that environmental implications - assessments are carried out properly so that you don't jeopardize anything along that area.

But thirdly, which to me looks more important, is what you do now with these small farmers around this big investor who has been given that portion of land. There must be some way of connecting these farmers through this investor, either through contract farming or some other form so that they are not left unattended and so they don't see any benefit out of this investment that is being made.

And you have also got to make a decision on what he must produce. So you either produce rice because you need it, or you produce sugar because we need sugar, or you produce maize because we need maize.

So it is a question of how the government organizes its policy orientation and how you deal with some of these issues that sometimes create a little bit of worries about what's going on. So this is what I would say about this area.

Gebisa Ejeta

Mr. Obasanjo, would you care to comment on that?

Olusegun Obasanjo

Well, yes. I believe we will always be welcome for investment. It's just a question of returns. If any investor comes and he wants to have the size of The Gambia, from Nigeria, for instance, and he says he wants to grow food for his own country and he wants to bring his own workers from his own country, then he will have to be mindful of the villages or villagers that would be encompassed by the land that he's been given. Otherwise, I believe that sooner or later there will be trouble.

And for me, I believe that the one thing that is very, very difficult to add to for the country is land. And it must be very well managed, particularly for the citizen of that country, and the government must be seen as holding the land in trust for the citizens of the country.

Of course, anybody in the past who wanted to invest in mining or in manufacturing - it wasn't a problem, but now where he wants to go into millions of hectares of land for agriculture, we must watch it; otherwise, we are preparing for a problem.

There was one thing that I would want to add to whatever we are doing in agriculture - to be able to deal permanently with the issue of food insecurity, famine and starvation. Agriculture, farming and agricultural production must be seen as a business. In the past, it used to be perceived as just a developmental issue, but it must be seen as a business, and all the things that go into running a business - manufacturing, distribution, etc. must go into agricultural production.

And if we do that, the private sector that we are talking about will be given more leeway - government generally and particularly in Africa is a poor producer of anything. Whether it is agriculture, manufacturing, mining, whatever, government is normally a poor producer. Give it to those whose job is to do it - the private sector, and they will do it well.