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CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INTERDEPENDENCE OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES

(Item proposed by the Republic of Benin)

REPORT ON THE COTONOU INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM: 16-20 NOVEMBER 2010

1. In pursuance of the “Year of Peace and Security” proclaimed by the African Union (AU) and on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of African independence, the President of the Republic of Benin, His Excellency Dr. Boni YAYI, took the initiative in organizing an international symposium which was held in Cotonou from 16 to 20 November 2010 under the theme:

“Audacity, the only challenge for a new Africa”

2. The meeting did not pretend to resolve, at one fell swoop, all of Africa’s developmental problems; neither did it seek to replace the Lagos Plan of Action, NEPAD or the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). By offering an opportunity and a collective reflexion framework, the meeting was intended to serve as a trigger mechanism and pep for African decision-makers on a number of development springboards that are considered as fundamental. **The Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto** which resulted from the meeting should indeed be seen as a directional compass for **Africa’s Rebirth** for the coming fifty years.

3. This synoptic document which is made out in three parts is intended to provide an account of the deliberations and outcomes of the Symposium. The last part is devoted to the prospects offered by the Symposium’s deliberations for which the African Union (AU) was clearly a vital player.

I. SCIENTIFIC DIMENSION OF THE SYMPOSIUM

4. Although the Cotonou International Symposium was organized from 16 to 20 November 2010, it actually took place in two segments:

- the first was the scientific symposium *per se*, held from 16 to midday of 18 November; while
- the second segment was devoted to the international summit for the Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto which followed immediately afterwards in the afternoon of 18 to 20 November 2010, with the presence of two African Heads of State and eminent international personalities.

1.1. The Scientific Symposium (16-18 November 2010)

5. Opened in the morning of 16 November 2010 by the Minister of State of the Republic of Benin, Mr. Irenée Pascal Koupaki, representing the Head of State, this segment of the Cotonou International Symposium was attended by about two hundred and fifty personalities, including leading players of the scientific world from Africa, the Diaspora and other continents as well as young African leaders. Two introductory papers, presented in plenary, helped to situate the participants on the two keys themes of the Symposium: **Audacity, and Peace and Security in Africa**. Whereas the first, presented by Professor Albert TEVOEDJRE focused on “*Audacity, the only challenge for a new Africa*”, the second, presented by an African Union expert, Mr. Biro Diallo, dwelt on the theme “*Overview and highlights of peace and security in Africa*”. Deliberations continued in four panels working *in tandem*:

- Panel 1: **Audacity of admission and rupture;**
- Panel 2: **Audacity of science and its multiple applications;**
- Panel 3: **Audacity of the leap and the conquest;**
- Panel 4: **Triumph of shared victories.**

6. The first phase of the event recorded a total of thirty seven papers in addition to ten presentations. It is noteworthy that, in each panel, the discussions and analyses culminated in resolutions which provided the ingredients for the elaboration of the **Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto**.

1.2. The International summit

7. The second segment was the International Summit on Science, Culture and Commitment which followed in the afternoon of Thursday 18 November 2010, with the participation of Presidents Boni YAYI of Benin and Paul KAGAME of Rwanda.

8. The whole of Africa was represented at the meeting in the person of the Chairperson of African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr. Jean PING, and the President of the WAEMU Commission, His Excellency Soumaïla CISSE. Other distinguished partners of Africa, particularly France, the UN, the Holy See and many others accompanied this original initiative through the presence of their respective representatives.

9. The conclusions of the deliberations of the four panels were submitted, for appraisal, to the various personalities who not only registered their satisfaction at their

substance but also made inputs in their capacity as participants. On this score, President Paul KAGAME's speech following the conclusions of Panel 1 was highly rewarding and appreciated. The President of the Republic of Benin, His Excellency Mr. Boni YAYI, followed suit with the same verve and interest, after the submission of the report of Panel 4.

10. Participants will for long remember the moving speeches made by the sons and daughters of the first players of African independence in the persons of Madam Samia Nkrumah, daughter of President Kwame Nkrumah, Madam Juliana and Mr. Roland Okito Lumumba, daughter and son of Patrice Lumumba, and Madam Justine Kasavubu, daughter of the first President of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

11. The second segment of the Symposium culminated in concrete and positive outcomes, namely: the Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto, the General Partnership Framework and the Youth Message to Africa.

II. THE OUTCOMES

2.1. Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto

12. Outcome of the commitments made and the resolutions adopted by the participants in terms of the break that henceforth has to be made to ensure a definitive and salutary leap for Africa's take-off, **the Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto** above all represents the culmination and centerpiece of the scientific event. With reference to each Panel, the Manifesto unequivocally admitted our failures as Africans, while at the same exposing the share of responsibility by external bodies. Bold and appropriate measures were recommended; measures that should now be translated into our daily actions.

13. Made out in 50 points representing the half century of African countries' independence, this founding text of benchmarks and commitments boldly traces the rigorous and disciplined itinerary to be followed while having our eyes riveted on **Africa's Rebirth** by 2060.

14. We shall content ourselves with setting forth a few salient ideas as these could not be reproduced fully in this synoptic document:

- **audacity is the only challenge for a new Africa;**
- for the sake of this truism, we dare confess that Africa is doing badly, very badly. We have no other choice than to resolve **to make a last hour**

salutary leap, based on positive values that break completely with mediocrity and fatality. It is on this sole condition that our continent could escape from the chaos that besieges it;

- that is why today Africa should adopt new paths of freedom and development;
- like all the peoples of the world, **we too come from the depths and distant past of** human history;
- the most important thing in the future of a people resides in their capacity to enhance the value of the human person in all its dimensions;
- **the building of a united Africa into a federation of United States of Africa is a priority objective;**
- **the time has come to make the leap, to all intents and purposes, for the accelerated building of regional monetary zones in pursuance of an African monetary zone;**
- we would not like the torch which our fathers held so high, namely: **Sacrifice, Patriotism, the Values of Work and Discipline, Selflessness, Moral Ethics as a rule of life**, to extinguish in our hands.

2.2. The General Partnership Framework

15. The International Symposium on the Fiftieth Anniversary of African independence took a critical look at the cooperation agreements between African States and the rest of the world. For the agreements to be implemented in dignity and mutual respect for each party, the Symposium expressed the view that new bases for cooperation should be defined as a matter of urgency. To that end, it set out 10 guiding principles focusing on partnership, accountability and reciprocity of interests. Once again, the African Union (AU) remains the only competent African body likely to give a favorable response to these new proposals.

2.3. Youth Message to Africa

16. By requesting to be closely associated with the decision-making process, the African youth made the commitment to promote the emergence of a patriotic, visionary and competent leadership, endowed with fundamental values of development such as respect for the common good, equal opportunity, entrepreneurial spirit, promotion of

culture and civic commitment, all in a climate of peace. However, the youth made a clarion call for the elderly to serve as role models for them, as a prerequisite for achieving these goals.

III. PROSPECTS

17. The Cotonou Symposium yielded original and bold ideas which deserve rigorous monitoring so that fifty years henceforth, the same admission of powerlessness, failure and bitterness would no longer arise. To that end, it is necessary that a light structure be put in place to follow up on the Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto in order to maintain and fan the flame thereof. The youth networks present in Cotonou as well as those of the other participants should promote and perpetuate the ideals thus advocated. Since the Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto does not have the force of law, it will have the merit of being a directional compass which can be consulted from time to time as the continent forges ahead, to evaluate the deficits recorded and, where necessary, provide appropriate remedial measures. In this monitoring task, the African Union will be a vital player in the entire African continent.

Porto Novo, 03 December 2010

50TH ANNIVERSARY MANIFESTO

***“And if we’re going to climb out, don’t you see that we need tense muscles, clenched teeth, and cool clear heads – ah yes, heads!”
...Gentlemen, I’m speaking of a recovery the like of which has never been seen before and woe to he whose steps falter!***

This admonition by Aimé Césaire in “The Tragedy of King Christophe” reverberates in our ears today with particular urgency. It is akin to a call for new impetus in a world of profound changes, where Africa is a crucial centre of questioning, but also of hope.

50TH ANNIVERSARY MANIFESTO

1. Witnesses of the past and players of today, having come from all corners of Africa and the world, and meeting in Cotonou, Republic of Bénin, from 16 to 20 November 2010, at the end of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of independence, we maintain that **bold innovation is the only challenge for a new Africa.**
2. Like all peoples of the world, we also come from the depths and distant shores of the history of humanity.
3. We have known the tragedy of humiliation, then that of our own failures. But we have also known the triumphs of intelligence and victories over ourselves.
4. For fifty years, our mission should have been to fight for the emancipation of our society, the emancipation of men and women, and to build more equal human relations. The African intelligentsia has not always been up to the task.
5. The liberation struggles gave birth, in pain, to today's Africa, and in spite of the thousand and one reasons we have to lament over our fate, we acknowledge that this freedom, gained arms in hand or surreptitiously granted, has opened up new horizons for all.
6. Today, none of us is still living in the same world that our parents lived in. That is why, at the end of the commemorations that have marked this 50th anniversary here and there, we are making this stage a rendezvous for Africa with itself and with history, a moment of truth which concerns the Continent as a whole.
7. In the name of this truth, we dare to admit that Africa is doing badly, very badly. We have no choice but to resolve to take the last minute life-saving leap, based on positive values that do not brook mediocrity and fatality. It is the sine qua non for our Continent to escape from the chaos that threatens it.
8. For this reason, today, Africa must embark on new paths to freedom and development.
9. Building an Africa that is united in the Federation of the United States of Africa is a priority objective. Today, we will revive hope in international cooperation, a cooperation that is implemented and managed differently because it gives priority to major African groupings which were undermined by the independence "granted" to balkanized, divided up or fragmented spaces.
10. Our domestic market of over one billion consumers remains the first opening for the production of goods and remunerative trade for every State of the Continent. We should promote a cooperation that strengthens capacities to control this African domestic market. The private sector is the weak link of African economies. The time has come to do away with crippling public practices, and to support a strong and

competitive private sector that is capable of withstanding competition in the present context of globalization.

11. We believe in an independent, sovereign and united Africa. We believe in its unique place in the world. We believe in the major stakes that it represents in the world through its exceptional wealth of mineral and natural resources as well as the cultural diversity that characterizes its immense human potentials. We believe in the singular utterances it has to pronounce.

12. This 50th anniversary of independence is also an occasion to collectively affirm, all generations and all African countries taken together, that essentially, the future of a people lies in its capacity to enhance all aspects of the human personality. On this road to development in the 21st Century, no region of the world can claim to lecture Africa. Africa is singularly endowed. Despite our wounds, our fragilities and our doubts, the men and women, the fabulous wealth we have and our culture, constitute resources that match our commitment to become a powerful continent. We will thus contribute, for ourselves and for humanity at large, to the building of a civilized globalisation with a human face.

13. We have drawn on the cultures of the West and the East. In our turn, we offer the possibility to all other peoples to draw on ours. There would be everything to gain for human development so that traditional cultures, science, arts, spiritualities, literature would be enhanced in the diplomacy of States. Africa can provide a multicultural dimension to international bodies. By the words of Alioune Diop, Black writers and artistes were already inviting us to this idea during their congress in 1956. "We are concerned by the global culture no matter the level of our modern facilities....It is important that the major problems are accessible to all consciences and that all the cultural originalities are accessible to each and everyone..."

14. For Africa to truly take off economically, it is urgent to establish regional blocs. Development is dependent on an economic and monetary environment conducive to investments. In Africa, during the last fifty years, numerous analyses, assessments and studies have evaluated currency experiments carried out here and there on the continent. Today, we say that the hour has come to move forward, with full knowledge of the facts, for the accelerated establishment of regional monetary zones in a bid to create an African monetary zone.

15. The classification of countries into categories known as Least Developed Countries, (LDC), Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) results in specific aid conditions which we cannot consider as a panacea to be maintained but rather as a subordination mechanism which should be abandoned. Most countries thus classified are African countries. The new course of the 50th anniversary will set one objective: to cut down, as soon as possible, the number of African countries thus stigmatised, through a vigilant economic discipline and enlightened governance.

16. The challenges to be addressed are still formidable. Vast areas remain open: security and peace, health, education, scientific research and technology, management

of our cities and countryside, development of our lands through an appropriate agricultural policy which would restore to Africa its food self-sufficiency, environmental protection, reform of the judicial system, training and employment, culture, promotion of African languages etc.

17. Regarding governance, the performance of our countries is, on more than one account, distressing. Falsehood, manipulation, corruption, murder, dictatorship, the most serious infringements of public freedoms, violations of human rights, impunity, nepotism and its excesses, and other stupefying abuses are established as order of the day. Civil society itself is worn down by reprehensible practices such as, cheating, fraud, reckless pursuit of personal advancement. Regarding the media, the temptation to yield to the power of money is big, likewise the attraction for quick profit by sacrificing the right of the public to fair and balanced information.

18. Solutions will come mainly from us, men and women of Africa, determined to assume our responsibilities. At this beginning of the 21st Century and half a century after the accession to political independence, we wish to build a bold, just and prosperous Africa nurtured by the peaceful dialogue of its multiple identities and fully aware of its rightful place in the globalization challenges.

19. In the global geopolitics being redefined, our continent has to depend on itself, with the construction of its own modernity. The dual issue of democratization and sustainable economic progress is posed at a high historic and strategic level for Africa which possesses all the resources to occupy a key position in the international community and assume, with dignity, the responsibilities incumbent upon it in relation to its history, material resources and mobilization of its human capacities.

20. We do not claim to impose a new development model. However, we will ensure that nothing will hinder the strides in democracy, scientific advancement, economic and social progress and cultural values which constitute the essential human aspirations and ultimate aim of any development.

21. The deadlock created by the conflict between the prevailing growth models of the 21st Century also in turn create conflicts between the human and social dimensions of life. We will not avoid, in our turn, the obligation of providing our solution to this problem. We will have the intelligence to integrate the issues which are not tackled by the dominant economies by recomposing our knowledge, certainties, heritage on a new day, in a bid to add to all our economic and political development initiatives, the capacity to always create human values.

22. We will be very keen to reconsider our own wealth, question our conformism in relation to the prevailing model, assess our partnerships by taking into account all the paradigms involved. This assessment and the ensuing breaks should enable us to map out our singular path in the concert of nations. Other formerly colonized and dominated continents have effected these breaks. Therefore, that is possible, by dint of vision, work and persevering will.

23. We cannot pass over in silence the appearance of new players and new decision making poles with increasing influence which have changed the geopolitical order and which force their entry on the international scene. These new players who expand our horizons massively besiege our continent in quest of raw materials and new markets. Concerning this new challenge, it is worthwhile defining intelligently a concerted governance strategy for all our partnerships.

24. The internal priority to create jobs in millions and produce goods should determine inter-African relations as well as relations with the Northern countries and these new players. This priority, which is of the vital interest to Africa should also be formally adopted as governance strategy and effectively included in the daily practice of our States.

25. We consider the solidarity of the past and recent Diaspora as one of the leavens of the endogenous development policy of Africa. Today, the African Diaspora represents the sixth region of the Continent. The significance of its financial contribution, in particular, is inevitable for the development of Africa.

26. For our own sakes and in the interest of our populations, we have to do everything possible to achieve the Millennium Goals. For it is less a question of achieving a standard of development, than enabling individual and collective aspirations to be realised in concrete terms.

27. In this respect, the quest to improve the quality of life is a fundamental challenge. As such, health and environmental protection must be placed in the forefront. Our respectful relationship with nature, our cultural heritage, our sense of community are exceptional wealth which need to be protected. Likewise, Education for All, girls and boys, remains a priority. Better still, it should henceforth asserted loudly and clearly that everyone must enjoy the advantages of education, individually and collectively. In the same line of thought, we strongly request that all the women of Africa, tireless builders, day in, day out, of our Continent and of the world, have the respect of their physical integrity that comes from their status of the mother of mankind and humanity; that they find the place that enhances their role; accede in great numbers to decision-making responsibilities and enjoy the fruits of a governance that makes their condition more humane.

28. African languages are the very base of Africa's human heritage. We want them to be systematically included in the school programmes and taught in all the academic cycles and that they act as vectors in Information and Communication Technologies. Their appropriation by Africans will also affect the influence Africa exerts throughout the world.

29. In 2010, proclaimed the "Year of Peace and Security" by the African Union, we will mobilise, the political and social forces, economic, intellectual powers, cultural and media role players, through a culture of dialogue, and take all the necessary measures for the prevention, early warning, mediation and resolution of interethnic conflicts and political clashes. The priority is to put an end to the harmful and criminal explosion of the

violation of rights and the repeated tragedies which, in paralysing the continent's progress, seriously undermine our credibility.

30. We call upon our political leaders, in power or in the opposition, to increase their consultation, negotiation, reconciliation and decision capacity by encouraging a diversification of the centres of power. This demand would bring together the conditions of a real solidarity contract among all the social partners, from the very top to the bottom. It is the ownership and acceptance of development policies by the concerned populations are that is at stake here.

31. Ethics should be re-established in our society and mark a departure from the public action carried out in the last fifty years. We need to place Africa's second fifty years of independence and its development under the banner of ethics and responsibility. The economy will no doubt need ethics in the fight to eradicate the extreme poverty and to achieve the common social minimum for the poorest populations.

32. Africa, as a whole, has not made the essential technological and scientific leap for its positioning in the modern competition arena. The brain drain, aptly qualified as haemorrhage, feeds exogenous scientific endeavours and deprives our continent of a major asset. We would like that at the continental level, this bleeding should be checked by an audacious and coordinated science policy. Such a policy calls on the authorities and particularly the Heads of State, to finance training and research initiatives which could keep our scientists in Africa, create favourable conditions for the return and integration of our students sent or kept abroad, as soon as they finish their studies.

33. We dare to dream like the great figures of the historic Black Diaspora, fathers of scientific inventions that have revolutionised the world, that Africa brings science and technology back home. In order to do this, a network must be set up of African women and men of science spread across the world, who have already embarked on a technology-sharing experience with their continent, or such networks must be strengthened where they already exist.

34. The successes and efforts of Africa have up until now been hardly noticed. Africa raised its head without being seen. Yet, it has tremendous technical, scientific and technological knowledge and know-how capacities on its soil, where the populations show on a daily basis, even under the most precarious material conditions, renewed aptitudes to adapt traditional knowledge and scientific innovation, particularly, by the rapid breakthrough of Information and Communication Technologies and in the exploitation of biodiversity resources.

35. We call for the establishment or continuation of the honouring of inventors, innovators in all fields of development, by giving them national, regional and continental awards.

36. The Continent of symbols, Continent of art, Africa is present on the international scene in all Art and Culture fields. Contemporary African art has established itself in the great galleries of the world.

37. History has always been written and illustrated by the victors. Africa has begun to write and illustrate its own. We call for the establishment, wherever they are not yet to be found, awards to encourage and reward literary and artistic creations so that at last Africa can tell her own story.

38. Africa's fate is linked to the fate of the world. Having gained our independence, we must build and manage our interdependence more intelligently so as to enrich humanity.

39. We have not forgotten where we came from nor the ordeals our predecessors had to go through, illustrious or anonymous Africans, trampled underfoot and often summarily executed; this is the fate of those to whom we owe our independence.

40. Impertinent dreamers that they were, our fathers were not taken in by the ambiguous circumstances under which our countries achieved independence. But they saw in the independence not an end in itself but an impetus, the first step towards achieving a higher purpose. Without them decolonisation would never have taken place.

41. We must always remind ourselves that the march towards independence was not by any means easy. It is essential today to remember that it was for us and our children that Sylvanus Olympio, Patrice Lumumba, Felix-Roland Moumié, Ernest Ouandié, Dedan Kimathi, Amilcar Cabral, Diallo Telli and many others died under atrocious conditions.

42. Fifty years of independence is also an opportunity to express our immense gratitude to great thinkers and courageous men of action whose names are forever engraved on the hearts and minds of Africans of all generations: Sheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Alioune Diop, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Agostino Neto, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Nelson Mandela, Mongo Beti, Wole Soyinka among dozens of others including those companions in misfortune, humanists committed on all sides and of all nationalities, even former colonisers, all those whom we can no longer even hear, in these times of inertia where the lack of daring seems to have put a lead seal on our memories and souls. Inter-mingling their voices into an incredible hymn to the dignity of the African person, they gave body to the dream of an upright Africa, fully itself, bringing its word and genius to the development and humanisation of our planet.

43. We undertake to make sure that this History is taught to all the children of Africa, as from primary school, and generation to generation.

44. The inheritors of today, it is up to you, the youth, to take up the flame, to carry it high over the highest peaks, to let it warm your hearts, mould your intelligence, feed your willpower.

45. All the heroes of Africa's independence are today handing the baton over to you with instructions to get over the hurdle of their first steps. You are the ones who will bring to Africans, in the very near future, tears of joy to finally see their dreams come true.

46. All leaders are accountable to History for their actions. In this regard, you have the right to demand accountability. But the fleeting time and the urgencies of this time already summon you to work. Your elders may have bequeathed to history less bravery and self sacrifice than the heroes of the Black man's liberation from slavery and colonization.

47. You say "no" to exploitation to which you are subjected. You demand the right to speech. You search for your place and an identity between modernity and the ancestral practices which you wish would liberate you. You aspire to a fruitful cohabitation with the elders in order to tie a new and solid rope around the old one.

48. We do not want the torch which bore the names Sacrifice, Patriotism, Work Values and Discipline, Self Sacrifice, Ethics as a rule, to go out in our hands.

49. "Our time has come". This means that we make the commitment to work, with everybody so that what appeared to us unbearable yesterday would no longer be considered today as insurmountable.

50. We are suddenly appearing, resolutely on our feet from the darkness of the last fifty years. Men and women of Africa and the Diaspora, meeting here on the African soil of Bénin, We proclaim this Saturday 20 November 2010, our commitment to take bold initiatives, to pursue in the coming fifty years, the culture of peace, discipline and sustained work, for an accelerated development focused on our humanity in progress.

51. We decide to put an end to the fate of obscurity and eclipse. We reaffirm the boldness of our unity and rebirth.

Cotonou, 20 November 2010