



Tolerance and Development in the Continent of Africa

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The desire to experience peace, tolerance and development in her continent birth the topic **“Tolerance and Development in the Continent of Africa”** for The Asian Tolerance and Understanding Conference 2020, with a call to awakening for all African leaders to work together to enforce all effort geared towards achieving Tolerance and Peace in the continent. Peace is development and without peace there can be no development.



Tolerance and Development in the Continent of Africa

ABSTRACT

Across the 54 countries that make up the African continent: Algeria, Angola, Benin Republic, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is my earnest desire that we all experience peace and express outmost understanding, leniency, liberality, magnanimity, acceptance and tolerance across all sphere of life irrespective of religious, cultural, economic or social status. Development can only occur in the African continent when there is absolute tranquillity, fairness and tolerance for everyone. Where there is continuous strife, religious war or cultural intolerance, there can be no development.



INTRODUCTION

As I view Africa being one of the most endowed continent in the world, I discover that we can do more, achieve more if only we are united. One of the problems that has plague many countries in Africa is instability. It is either we are recovering from war or resolving one crises or the other with issues of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). War separate us, crises divides us, violence and lack of understanding mar our effort towards development. Various resources that are channelled towards settling dispute and the aftermath of war and crises can be used to spur revolution and industrialization in various countries in Africa.

I am certain that various countries in other continents have had their share of hard times. Some are not so blessed by nature with the necessary raw materials to recover and stir development but through collective effort, their break records of development. If African countries are not united, even if we continue to receive assistance from developed countries, International Organizations, there will be nothing to show for it. We will keep depending on the North Pole for assistance and importation while our own continent struggle continuously.

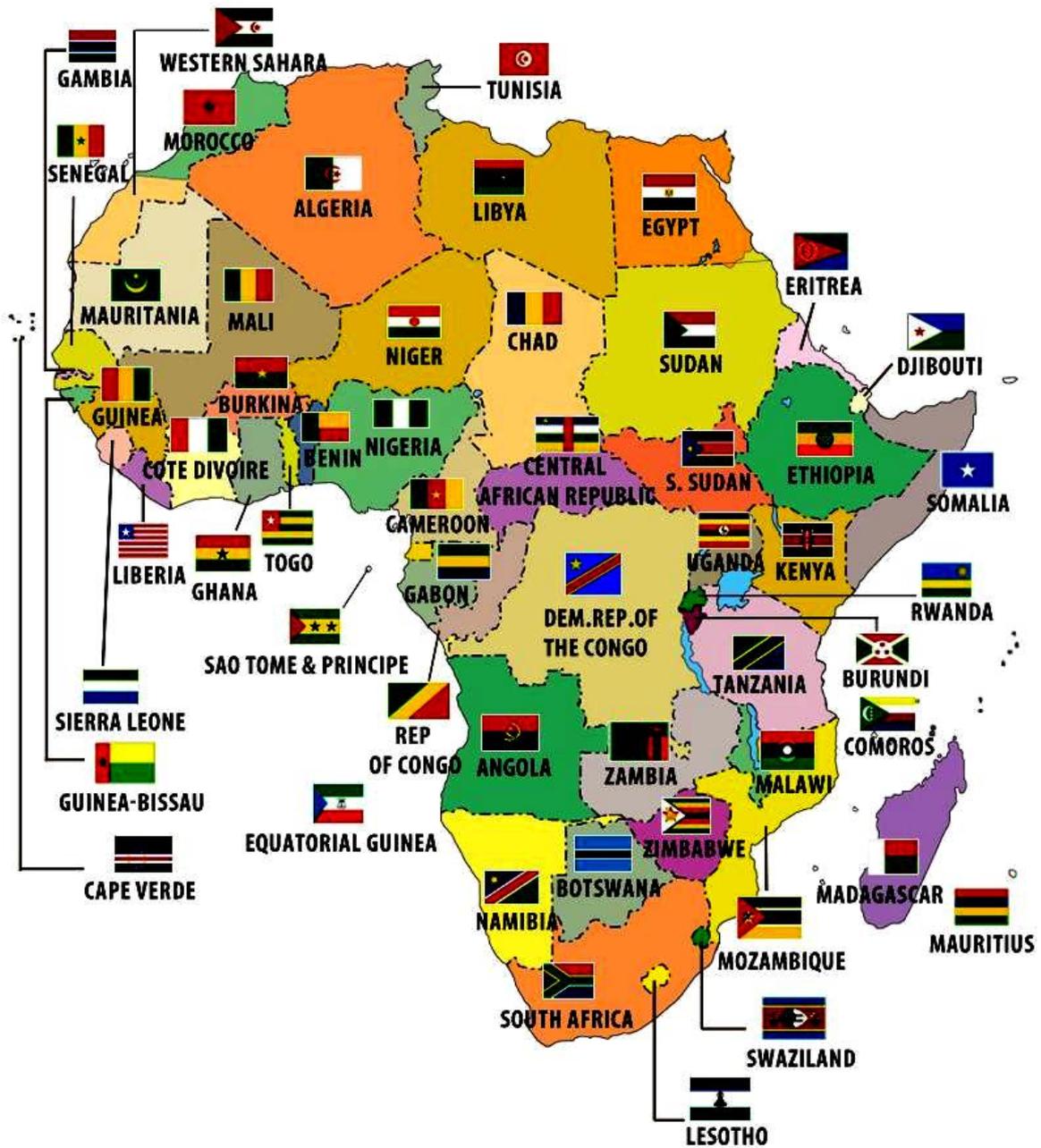


Figure 1.0 Map of Africa



Intolerance in African Continent

Africa is one of the continent in the world and like every other continent, sometimes experience crisis, issues of insurgency, intolerance, internal conflict. However, it is important that there should be a means to curb or curtail these problems for development to take place. Before religion, wealth, political status separated us, we were all created by One Creator with dignity and rights.

However, discrimination and intolerance which seems to go together has a way of slowing down efforts geared towards development. This could be reflected when a person is treated at a disadvantage because they do not hold the same or has not attain a status in the society. This is mostly common when an immigrant within an African sub-region is treated with disdain in another sub-region sometimes manifesting in total avoidance, intimidation, threat, violence and sometimes physical assault leading to severe injury or death of the victim.

Intolerance in Africa takes different form. It sometimes comes in the form of Xenophobia which according to Merriam Webster Dictionary means “fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or anything that is strange or foreign”. This is mostly base on the believe that people from other countries are a threat to the economy of the host country. Xenophobic attack could lead to crisis, internal conflict, immediate halt of economic activities, injuries and in severe cases death of both citizens of host country and foreigners. This ought not to be so as it could be avoided by both working together tenaciously for the development of the country. Nature has not blessed everyone equally. Every country or sub-region within the African continent needs each other to succeed. Humans were generally created to complement one another. Xenophobia, hatred for strangers and foreigners are not necessary. The individual rejected because of it nationality could contribute greatly to the host country if allowed.

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

There is a growing diversity in religion in Africa. However, it is our duty to respect other people’s fundamental belief as human being of intrinsic value. We must tolerate and respect other people’s religion as humans with right to self-determination, identities in spite of their religious belief and treating them right as they ought to be treated. People don’t deserve to



be killed or subjected to any form of brutality just because they do not believe or belong to a particular religion. Everyone is entitled to a choice of religion that should be practised with tolerance and respect to others' to ensure peaceful coexistence.

In Africa, according to a research statistics, Christianity and Islam is the most populated religion. They coexist and provide major development and relief to various community to make life better which include establishment of charity organizations to contribute to the betterment of humanity. However, there has been cases of attack in a Churches and sometimes in Mosques where many lives will be wasted. No religious belief deserve the death of any human. No religion is superior and none is inferior. Everyone deserves the right to peacefully practise his own religion without endangering the lives of others.

Freedom of religion or belief impact more positively rather than religious hostilities. The government has a role to play. Protecting and respecting freedom of religion or belief for all faith will reduce grievances that can lead to religious intolerance and violence. Protecting and respecting citizen's belief will also impact other social and economic aspect as well leading to freedom of speech and press. Religious tolerance leads peace that encourage collaboration, partnership and development in the country.

POLITICAL INTOLERANCE

Political tolerance will guarantee peace and harmony which is the bedrock of development. Political intolerance comes with hates, fear, and suspicion. Political intolerance is an issue which we all must be concerned and devote our attention to for the general good of all African nations. The continuous struggle for which party is the best will perpetually bring political strife among us, rather the credibility of the individual in the party should be a concern. One of the paramount cause of political intolerance and struggle is actually the hunger to taste power and not the interest of the people. Becoming a ruler is not a much a problem as becoming a competent ruler to ensure development in the nation.

In the course of political struggle and the urge for political position, a lot of lives, private and public properties have been destroyed. This obvious during violent election when a certain party will go as far a throwing a blunder on another party just to condemn the party or engaging in kidnapping, killing of citizens just to discredit a candidate or the people's choice



from winning. There is a parlance “You need not bring others down to get to the top”. If truly intending rulers are more concern about the needs of the people, then it is needless throwing tantrum or blunder or driving the opinion of the people against a certain candidate just for a political position. Although, this is not only limited to Africa but for development to take place in the African continent, leaders of various political parties must learn to tolerate one another for peace in the African continent. Politics should not be made a DO OR DIE affair but the interest of the people should be held high above individual interest and the hunger for power. This is only when development can thrive.

Another reason for political strife and intolerance in Africa is Sit-tightism. In most African countries and perhaps generally in the world, every ruler is entitle to rule for a specific period and after which hand over power to an incoming government to rule. However, not every leader in Africa adhere to a specific period given to rule. Some elongate their political tenure against the will of the people, perhaps, for greedy purpose. This causes political unrest, struggle and strife in some African nations. Change is necessary for development and growth to take place. Rulers should understand that the people need to periodically assess their perform and hold every right to vote out an incompetent ruler.

Parties or individuals, to be specific, who won election should be allowed to rule. It is needless wasting the lives of citizens because of political power. No political position or ambition is worth the lives citizens. In several elections, there has been cases of violence during election. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the establishment of effective and legitimate electoral institutions and electoral framework to ensure peace during and after election. In the past few years, several act of violence has happened during election leading to chaos, harassment and intimidation of citizens both candidate and voters. This act of violence, clashes and political intolerance occur as a result of lack of courage to accept defeat after election. However, it should be noted that in an election, there is no looser and no winner as both individual could collaborate to work for the collective good of the people.

Election and political position should be viewed as a call to service and an opportunity to serve the people but where there is an ulterior motive of embezzlement of public fund, political candidate seems to display intolerance towards their opponent.

Political intolerance although sometimes occur as a result of failure of incumbent government. When the government fail in fulfilling it campaign promises to the people, there

is bound to be outrage among the people and in extreme cases a coup d'état to overthrow the sitting government. If we must attain development in every nation in the African continent, government must fulfil and perform its duties. The government must ensure the provision of the basic needs of the people to ensure peace and tolerance. This will save from casualties that comes with opposing and overthrowing an incumbent government. A typical example is the coup d'état stage during and prior to the election in both Guinea Bissau and Mali in April 2012. All these to advance the interest and achieve a specific goal caused by poor governance and intolerance of opposition.

SOCIAL INTOLERANCE

Social intolerance is a threat to development as division destroys rather than build. Social intolerance revolves around interpersonal hostility that tear people apart. Jealousy, bitterness especially to people of diverse race, religion and ethnicity mar every effort geared towards development. Positive relationship leads to higher productivity and less attrition. Anger is never a tool to build a modern society. Anger and hatred provoke violence between and among people, groups and nations. One effective way to reduce social intolerance is to reduce aggression and certain ideologies that stir up anger and hatred for fellow. There is a wind of change sweeping across Africa as barriers to gender equity are challenged by a growing number of women leaders across Africa. Across Africa, traditional norms which speculate total control of every sphere by the masculine gender is gradually losing its gripes. There is a new wave and strong investment in social sphere, education and gender equity. This could be seen in some African countries like Rwanda where over 60 percent of members of parliament are women and other African countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Senegal where good percentage of women are in position of the parliamentarian. This is a development that has encouraged other women in other African countries to expect their horizon.

As opposed to social intolerance, Social tolerance calls for a courteous disposition towards other members of the society and accepting the difference and uniqueness of each person in the society. It is the ability of citizens to act in politeness, affability and respectful way towards other citizens. The tolerance implies for others, their feelings, being empathic, sensitive and values the worth and dignity of others. Social tolerance requires all members of



the society to walk among each other without fear of physical or emotional assault or violation. The United Nations enacted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance in 1995. The United Nations Charter states: “We, the people of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person...and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours...”

To distinctively make it clear, social tolerance demands that citizens of a given society recognise differences in individuals and allow those who are different to co-exist and cooperate on a daily basis. Thus, social tolerance simply implies social acceptance and integration. For social tolerance, no member of the society is permitted to bully others or force them to accept their view whether religious, economic or social view. Social tolerance is very important in ensuring peace and development in African nations. However, it is noted that although there is high social tolerance in the continent, there is exception in homosexuality.

MEASURES TO CURTAIL INTOLERANCE IN AFRICA

Eruption and sudden outbreak of intolerance happens as a result of accumulated which political leaders are directly responsible. So many African nations have witnessed unjustified killing, escalation of attack on citizens leading to loss of lives and properties, severe poverty, malnutrition, violence, harassment, brutality, extraction of tax without transparent accountability from the political class. All these could lead to political unrest and intolerance. A clear evidence can be viewed from the recent peaceful protest in Nigeria which started October 8, 2020 calling on the government to put an end to abusive police unit called the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). As the protest continues, the citizens further protest for an end to bad governance. To some, a revolution has started in Nigeria as the citizens are tired of having a minimum wage of ₦30,000 (\$78.53) while a Senator in Nigeria receives approximately ₦14,287,500 (\$37,500) monthly and still loots and embezzles funds meant for public use. Children of political class school abroad in sophisticated and well-equipped schools while the children of other citizens learn under uncovered roofs not well equipped. This culminated in the October peaceful protest.



However, there are constructive measures which can be adopted to ensure peace in the African continent so that development can thrive. It is possible to achieve lasting peace and protect the stability and well-being of every nation in Africa. Diplomacy plays a significant role in addressing the problem of intolerance in Africa. Sometimes, what citizens demand for is simply a listening ear and a leader who works for the interest of the people. Few measures that can be taken to maintain peace in the continent of Africa include:

First, Security for citizens should be the top priority of the government: There is nothing like having assurance of safety in a country. Development can only thrive when people are sure they are safe. Lives, properties, investment must be safe for development to thrive. It should however be noted that the issue of security is not just the responsibility of the government, the citizens also have to be responsible for the safety of their own lives and properties and that of their fellow citizens. This involves reporting and returning of stolen goods or properties to authorities and owners. This will not just bring peace but happiness and a sense of belonging in the continent.

Second, Differences in Religious, Political, Social and Economic belief should be approached with diplomacy: There is a proverb that says “**Win People by Virtue**”. Negotiating our way out of a political, religious, social or economic strife can bring peace and that is tolerance. We might not agree on everything but it is possible to still maintain peace while we maintain our belief system.

Third, When Leaders lead the way positively, people follow voluntarily: It will be a futile effort if citizens strive to maintain peace and ensure tolerance while the leaders leave the country in a mess. You cannot sleep in a burning house. The 2020 nation-wide protest in Nigeria and some other African countries exemplify this. If a country is on fire, even the leaders won't have peace. To ensure tolerance, the leaders have to lead by example and the people will follow willingly.

Fourth, People should be educated: It will be an effort geared towards the right direction if citizens of the countries in the African continent are educated on the issue of Tolerance and the need to maintain peace so that development can thrive. A public education on this very context will bring awareness and reawakening among citizens. There is a proverb that says “**If you think education is expensive, try ignorance**”. Ignorance on this very particular



topic can be costly. It can delay the development of a nation and of course continuous dependence on the developed country for help.

Fifth, to crown it all, one significant approach to ensure tolerance in the continent of Africa is a positive mindset: People should maintain a positive mindset towards the beliefs and culture of other people while allowing them to practice them peacefully. Negativity, hate and vehement bitterness towards other people, their belief, background and ethnicity in the continent of Africa will only breed intolerance. This can be curtailed by thinking and acting positive towards other people.

CONCLUSION

There is a close link between tolerance (peace) and development. No investor will risk investing in a chaotic environment, therefore peace is paramount and a necessity to the development of African nations. The chaotic state of Africa both economically, socially and religiously can be curtail through a collective effort to salvage and save African nations through tolerance. People should be educated on the need to live together peacefully so that development can take place. A public knowledge on tolerance and peace will save Africa. Also, political leaders should endeavour to fulfil their promise to the people. Embezzling public fund, betraying the trust of the people will never bring peace because “An hungry man is an angry man”. Starving the people, denying the citizens their fundamental right has proved disastrous, it simply risking the citizens to be used for terrorist activities with a promise for a stipend for daily meal. When the people are happy, there is bound to be peace. This is a call to all African leaders to wake up and live up to their promise and citizens should learn to live peacefully with their neighbours irrespective of social background, political ambition or economic status. Ubuntu parlance has it “I am because we are” Development can only thrive if there is understanding, togetherness and peace among us. No citizen deserves to be harassed, threatened molested or killed for his or her political, religious or cultural belief. I belief in Africa and together we can achieve this.

UNITED WE STAND!

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