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AFRICA DAY

Forget old slogans, reinvent new future

THE annual commemoration of Africa Day which has been described as a fuss about nothing, must be changed to rid itself of this negative perception. Attention should be shifted to creating an enabling environment for fundamental social and economic change.

The day should not merely be one for pontificating empty sloganeering but should provide a platform to engender a desire for the development of insightful strategies for the continent to be better prepared to deal with challenges. In light of the Covid-19 fallout, it is more pressing that solidarity and unity of the continent take precedence over everything else.

Africa faces profound challenges: widening of the divide between rural and urban communities – opportunities are skewed towards urban areas.

Lack of infrastructure in rural communities hampers development and persists to confine rural communities to an economic quagmire. The link between infrastructure and the creation of job opportunities to improve livelihoods cannot be overemphasised.

One of the priorities facing the continent today is to find a nexus between infrastructure development, food security, sustainable access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation. The sooner concerted efforts find a connection between these key instruments of development, the more likely the continent would be able to speed up the march to improved living conditions for everyone.

Given the magnitude of the deterioration of water resources, there should be a much closer co-operation between African states for sustainable and co-ordinated management, protection and use of shared watercourses. This will assist in ending underdevelopment and reducing the high levels of unemployment and poverty.

Africa Day should serve to elevate the threats to water quality, fresh water security and ecosystems to a point where all African states work together to devise an integrated and coherent plan to ensure that these threats are effectively addressed.

As water forms an integral part of the vision for Africa's development, the situation dictates that African states maintain and sustain collaborations among riparian states on the basis of the equality of rights and community of interest and the applicable principle of international law. This will go a long way towards helping to lessen the threat of the danger of water scarcity and conflicts on the continent.

Organisations like the AU should not be emasculated but strengthened to play a vital role in advancing developmental issues on the continent.

Through such co-operative institutions states on the continent can share and exchange knowledge and expertise on water-related challenges. The AU is uniquely placed to play a significant role in assisting African states to implement collective strategies.

These strategies become even more important when taking into account the dynamics relating to erratic weather conditions such as drought that is playing itself out in some parts of the continent. And, this happens while some of the destructive phenomena like floods and cyclones are a source of frustration for African states with limited resources to deliver basic services to their citizens.

As the AU continuously strives to create better societies, efforts must be made to meticulously identify the challenges that weaken the ability of the continent to provide unimpeachable services to communities. Through such recognised institutions, there should be collective actions for the continent to unleash its full potential.

Despite remarkable progress in different states of Africa to provide basic services and to create employment opportunities, there is still a great deal of co-operation required between them to attain the goal of stronger, more prosperous and thriving states.

For this reason Africa Day should be more forward-looking and used as a springboard to carve out a shared strategic vision to improve the lives of the continent's citizens.

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