

The Africa Commission: A Critical Assessment

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Prepared by:

**Chris Landsberg, Centre for Policy Studies and David Kalete,
CIVICUS.**

1. Introduction

This paper attempts to engage two initiatives; first the *Commission for Africa (CfA)* which was launched by British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in March 2004 and second the 400-page CfA report, titled “**Our Common Interests**” which was officially released on the 11th of March 2005. The purpose of the CfA was to “examine Africa’s past, present and future” and provide an “assessment of the situation in Africa and policies towards Africa”. The Commission set out to generate increased support for the G8-Africa Action Plan and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The central question asked by the *Commission* was this: *What can the rest of the international community do to support successful African development?*

The report was preceded by extensive consultations and analysis of hundreds of written submissions to the commissioners in 2004. The report is comprehensive, and covers a vast array of issues. In some instances it makes some very bold recommendations while in others it exudes major weaknesses and omissions.

This discussion paper considers the major issues and recommendations of the report. It starts by situating the report in its necessary continental and international context, after which it unpacks the key issues that emerge from the report. The paper then discusses the key recommendations in the report, and concludes with a critique of the Commission for Africa findings.

The main purpose of the paper is to stimulate discussion on the CfA report. The intention is to raise some of the complex and interrelated issues that are brought to the fore by the report and some of the areas which were not exhaustively addressed by the commission.

The report has been viewed in some quarters as “a Marshall Plan for Africa”. It talks about spurring “Africa’s turning point”, presenting a “forceful response” to Africa’s vast challenges, based on “a partnership between Africa and the developed world that takes full account of Africa’s diversity and particular circumstances”. The report is presented as “a coherent package for Africa”. The paper will now consider whether the CfA report does present “a coherent” framework for Africa’s development.

2. The Context

The CfA report is based on the philosophy of trade-offs between Africa and the industrialised world. It seeks genuine partnership, based on genuine compromises,

give-and-take between the two worlds: the underdeveloped Africa and the developed industrialized powers.

What is refreshing in the CfA Report is the serious attempt to speak to the rich countries and urge them to live up to their side of the bargain. This has been the missing element in many proposed partnership plans with the continent, including the much-vaunted G8-Africa Action Plan. In most of these plans, the onus has been largely on Africa to live up to its side of the bargain, and to account collectively for its actions and progress. There was typically little emphasis on the developed countries to do the same. The new emphasis on joint action and joint responsibility should be welcomed.

A clear and over-arching strategy emerging from the CfA report is to give Africa a stronger voice in international fora and to build the capacity of the continent's premier Pan-African institution, the African Union (AU), and the most important sub-regional institutions, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and The Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the emerging East African Community (EAC), and others.

Another theme running through the CfA report is that of ending the *dialogue of the deaf* between Africa and the industrialised world. For long these two sides have not listened to each others positions; instead they have negotiated from entrenched positions. What the Commission for Africa report seeks to do is to lock the two sides – Africa and the G8 and EU – into agreements and pacts. An innovative theory coming out of the report is that of giving Africa a voice on the basis of mutual accountability and mutual responsibility.

The report seeks to win over support for, and interest in, Africa's development plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the G8-Africa Action Plan. Plans, recommendations and commitments in the context of the Commission for Africa would therefore serve as a barometer for commitment to NEPAD and the G8-Africa Action Plan.

3. Introducing the Key Issues

3.1 Governance

The CfA Report singles out governance as "Africa's core problem". Governance is in fact the major theme running throughout the report. It says that without improvements in governance, economic, social, cultural and other reforms will have limited impact. "Good governance" is about much more than sound policies, and the challenge of putting policies into effect. The report places a strong emphasis on capacity building for governance and getting systems right. Governance is viewed by the Report as the way states should answer to their people. The report states that the foremost responsibility for African governments and people's is to get governance right. African leaders must improve accountability, and they must do so by broadening the participation of people in governance processes; governments should begin to account to the people. Twenty four African states have already signed up to the African Peer Review Mechanism, and other states should be encouraged to do the

same. But African states face major capacity constraints, such as insufficient money to invest in technology, health and education systems, roads, power grids, telecommunication systems, affordable housing, and water supply and sanitation. Many states have poor data collection capabilities, and civil servants at local, provincial and national levels are in need of resources that would help to bolster their capacities. Africa has a serious problem with a shortage of skilled professionals, and the tertiary education infrastructure should be strengthened in order to help address this problem. There is also, according to the report, a need to strengthen institutions like parliaments, local authorities, trade unions, the justice system, and the media. But the report also makes a plea for resources and support to go civil society actors like trade associations, farmers institutions, business groups, trade unions, development agencies, women's organisations, faith groups, and community-based organisations.

The CfA report describes corruption as “a systemic problem facing Africa”. It is encouraging to note the proposal to target not only the bribe-takers but the bribe-givers as well. The report urges developed countries to encourage greater transparency in export credit agencies, and to take measures to repatriate illicitly acquired funds and assets held in their financial systems. This is a serious problem in Africa, with billions of dollars from autocrats and dictators like Sani Abacha and Mubuto Sese Seko lying in Swiss, British and other foreign banks.

In unpacking the pact that is suggested between Africa and the G8 and EU, Africa is urged and pressured to improve governance, to take its peacemaking and peacekeeping responsibilities seriously, and to live up to sub-regional, AU, NEPAD and APRM commitments. So African responsibilities are clearly spelt out in the report.

3.2 Peace and Security

The report makes a link between governance and peace and security by arguing that extreme breakdowns in governance result in war. Development can only take root and be meaningfully accelerated on the platform of peace, security and stability, and the report rightly states that conflict and war remain one of the greatest single obstacles to development. Ending violent conflict should therefore remain a priority in Africa. Some of the root causes of conflict which should be addressed, include weak institutions, authoritarianism, poverty and inequality and the exclusion of minorities from power. States with high levels of corruption, and low levels of accountability also seem prone to violence. There is a strong link between oil and other mineral wealth in the risk of conflict. Thus, conflict resources such as oil, diamonds, timber and other high-value commodities need new regulation regimes. The retort is made that the primary responsibility for resolving conflicts lies primarily with Africans. The report urges developed countries to help bolster Africa's peace support operations capacity by making resources available that would strengthen sub-regional bodies, strengthen the continent's negotiations capacities, make available peace-keeping equipment and other financial resources. After demilitarisation, demobilisation, and reintegration of former combatants, new challenges arise to conflict. This means that greater emphasis should be placed on post-conflict peace-building. The continent's peacemaking, mediations and facilitation capacities should be strengthened and donor countries have a key role to play. Prevention is key because it is necessary to try and arrest tensions before they spill over into violent conflict. Foreign companies in

conflict zones can fuel conflict, by resorting to measures such as private armies and mercenaries, and their behaviour should change. Foreign companies should accede to voluntary corporate codes of conduct, such as the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Companies.

3.3. *Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction*

The report states that Africa's economies are not growing fast enough. NEPAD has long argued that Africa will have to show sustained growth of some 7% per annum, and investments and resources of some US\$64 billion per annum. The public and private sectors are encouraged to work together so as to create jobs, promote entrepreneurship, and engage in foreign and domestic investment. Governance is again invoked and it is argued that without governance there will not be the requisite investments in African economies. The developed world should encourage and work with the AU and NEPAD in advancing public-private-partnership initiatives.

3.4 *Social Development*

On the oft-neglected social policy issues, the Commission calls for "no-one" to be left out. It challenges Africans to change the paradigm where Africa's poor and indigent are excluded from policy and governance processes. The Commission calls for participation and investments in schools, clinics, and other educational and health policies. It makes many recommendations on the funding of these social policy areas. The commission says its major concern has been over the poor people. Poverty is more than just a lack of material things. It is also about the poor being excluded from decision-making. People living with HIV/AIDS are being discriminated against, and we have a serious problem with orphans emerging in the continent. Women and young people are also being discriminated against. While women are Africa's primary carers and providers, they are routinely discriminated, excluded from decision-making and information, services and decision-making. Women are the backbones of Africa's rural economy, accounting for 70% of food production, most of the selling of produce, gathering firewood, fetching water, childcare, and care for the sick and elderly. Yet, women have less opportunities for income generation and to influence policy and decision-making.

The report calls for education for all, and says the overall numbers of students in primary school must be improved, there is a need for more teachers in classrooms throughout Africa, more girls should be afforded opportunities to go to school, and the curriculae must be made more relevant.

In terms of health policy, there is a need to revive Africa's health services. The health worker crisis should be addressed through the training and retaining of doctors, nurses and other health service personnel. Africa needs a predictable supply of medicines at prices that it can afford.

3.5 *Trade, Aid and Debt Eradication*

The report concedes that many African actors, including scholars, researchers and in recent years even Heads of State and Government, have called for better and more effective aid. They have advocated not only free but also fair trade, as well as debt

eradication as opposed to debt reduction. In a positive vein, the CfA Report elevates issues of trade, aid and debt eradication to important elements of financing Africa's development; thus, it states that unless these issues are addressed, Africa cannot meaningfully address its development challenges.

Specifically in terms of Trade, the report places the problem in perspective, and notes that Africa's share of world trade has slumped from 6% in the 1980s to a measly 2% today. The report is adamant that this should be reversed, and makes the case for greater levels of intra-African trade as well as being afforded better terms for trade for the continent. It calls not only for free trade but also fairer trade regimes for Africa. It favours mechanisms that would enhance Africa's trade negotiations capacities.

In terms of Aid, the report calls for a concurrent and "continuing strong improvement in governance" in Africa, and a move away from tied aid on the part of donors. This will, according to the report, make aid much more effective. In other sections of the report however, an emphasis has been put on donor behaviour. The Commission calls for aid to be 'untied, predictable, harmonised, and linked to the decision-making and budget processes of the country', adding that aid to Africa should be mainly in the form of grants, not loans. Again, what is refreshing here, and in tune with the theme of mutual accountability and mutual responsibility, is the reference to both African and donor countries. The Commission clearly took a strategic decision is that there is need for mutual straight talking.

Moving to Debt relief, the Commission sees debt as part of unsustainability of Africa's bilateral and multilateral debt burden, and that unless this issue is addressed, Africa will not make progress on its development challenges. The report boldly proposes for the establishment of a transparent debt compact to provide 100% debt cancellation for all Sub-Saharan countries that need it to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It also strongly argues for the reduction of policy conditionalities associated with external assistance.

4. The Key Recommendations

The Commission for Africa report makes such radical suggestions in the areas of continental and global governance and how these impact on Africa. The report is an attempt to galvanise the G8 Summit to be hosted by Britain at Gleneagles, Scotland on 6-8 July, and the EU that will be chaired by Britain. It seeks commitments to Africa on capacity building, aid, trade, market access, debt eradication, and removing unfair trade subsidies, amongst others.

4.1 Governance and Social Policy

The report makes a call for developed countries to provide political and financial support to African efforts to improve governance. A key recommendation is for the international community to "commit in 2005 to provide \$500 million a year, over ten years, to revitalise Africa's institutions of higher education". It also calls for an additional \$3 billion over the same period to develop technology centres of excellence, reflecting African concerns as lagging behind.

The report recommends that African media, both public and private, form partnership consortia with international media groups to create and finance an African media development facility.

The Commission calls for investments in schools, clinics, and other educational and health facilities. Donors are urged to provide an additional US\$ 7-8 billion a year to finance African plans to deliver better education. The Commission also encourages African governments “to remove school fees for basic education”, with a call to donors to fund the costs of such development projects until African governments can absorb the costs themselves.

Turning to health proposals, the report asks donors to provide \$7 billion over a five-year period to back the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Health Strategy and Initial Programme of Action.

In terms of training, the Commission recommends that an additional one million health workers in Africa be trained by 2015. Donors are urged to increase their funding for health systems from an additional \$10 billion a year in 2006 to \$20 billion by 2015. It is recommended that most of the new money is to go directly to national budgets. Although little is said about strengthening the absorptive and management capacities of African states, some donor countries often advance the argument that Africa is not in need of more aid; that the challenge is one of absorbing and spending the aid that is currently on offer. The answer is surely both. The continent needs massive injections of funds if it is to address its vast socio-economic challenges, and there is also a need to strengthen the institutional capacities of African states, and programmes like NEPAD, as well as sub-regional institutions and the AU, to effectively absorb and manage aid.

The report proposes another specific idea: that donors should make a long-term commitment to fill the financing gap in cases where African governments are unable to provide fees for basic healthcare.

The report calls for top priority to be given to services needed to scale up HIV/AIDS treatment with existing systems to tackle HIV/AIDS treatment being strengthened. Donors are asked to help address the \$3.2 billion shortfall for 2006 for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Donors should also be urged to “develop incentives for African-led research and development that fits the health requirements in Africa”, and set up purchase agreements for medicines and increases in direct funding for African-led research.

The Commission also addresses the issue of children, and calls on donors to commit \$2 billion a year in 2007, rising to \$5-6 billion by 2015.

4.2 Peace support operations

The Commission urges developed countries to “honour existing commitments to strengthen African peacekeeping capacity”, as well as to “increase investment in more effective prevention and non-military means to resolve conflict”. Donors are asked to agree to fund 50 per cent of the already-existing African Union Peace Fund.

The Report calls for greater co-ordination and financing of post-conflict peace-building in Africa; this issue is however not clearly spelt out. One of the perennial problems in Africa is the fragility of peace deals to end wars and conflict. Peace processes need to be reinforced and consolidated through post-conflict peace building efforts, such as putting in place strong institutions, managing, appropriating and distributing power, and creating avenues for peoples to participate in governance and policy processes.

4.3 Growth, Investment, the Private Sector, Aid and Trade

There is a call for various constituencies to “put pressure on companies to be more transparent in their activities in developing countries, and to adhere to international codes and standards for behaviour”.

The report calls for greater support for schemes such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The Report recommends that as a matter of priority and no later than 2006, international negotiations should be opened on the development of an International Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

Building on UN reports on the illegal exploitation of resources in Congo-Kinshasa, the Commission recommends the creation of a permanent Expert Panel to “monitor the links between natural resource extraction and violent conflict and the implementation of sanctions”, and propose enforcement measures to and by the UN Security Council.

On growth, the report seems to have a bias for urban development, and does not advance enough rural development programmes. Thus, the Commission estimates that Africa needs another US\$20 billion per annum to foster investment in regional, national and urban infrastructure. Africa's key donors are called upon to provide an extra \$10 billion per year for the next five years. The calls for this amount to be increased to \$20 billion between the years 2010 to 2015.

In responding to NEPAD’s call for a substantial contribution of US\$64 billion to be invested in Africa per year, the report urges co-ordinated donor and private sector support for NEPAD's Investment Climate Facility. This is part of an initiative to remove the barriers to business that will cost \$550 million over seven years. Donors are asked also encouraged to support a fund within the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency aimed at insuring foreign as well as domestic investors in post-conflict African countries.

One of the Commission’s proposals includes a \$100 million Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund to support small enterprise development initiatives. Small and medium size enterprise development receives scant attention in Africa; yet sustainable growth depends largely on strengthening this sector.

The Commission report than advances progress and action on three scores. First, that Africa’s capacity to trade and to negotiate more effectively must be enhanced. Second, that the trade barriers of industrialised countries should be dismantled as a matter of urgency. Third, transitional support to help African countries adjust to new trading regimes must be provided.

Other key proposals are specifically on market access. The report echoes widespread calls for the next round of world trade talks to focus on development as a priority. The report argues that rich countries “must agree to immediately eliminate trade-distorting support to cotton and sugar, and commit by 2010 to end all export subsidies and all trade-distorting support in agriculture”. These issues should all be put on the agenda of the Hong Kong round of trade talks in December 2005. The Commission also expects the WTO talks in December to end with an agreement on a progressive reduction of tariffs by 2015, and a commitment to reducing non-tariff barriers.

In terms of measures which could provide Africa with transitional support, the report recommends a removal by developed countries of all barriers to all exports from low-income Sub-Saharan African countries, and the extension of quota and duty free access. The Commission urges developed countries to cease applying Rules-of-Origin requirements, which hinder African exporters.

In terms of aid, the Africa Commission estimates that aid to Sub-Saharan Africa needs to increase by \$25 billion over the next three to five years. The Commission calls for “a radical change in the way donors behave and deliver assistance”. An International Financing Facility is proposed as a mechanism to double aid to Africa.

The report endorses the idea of raising additional finance from air ticket and aviation fuel tax, proposed by France's President Jacques Chirac. Additionally, the report calls on rich countries to meet the 0.7 per cent of annual gross domestic product aid target agreed to in 1970, a target many have so far failed to meet.

The Commission's proposals on debt relief are in line with Chancellor Gordon Brown's recent proposal for developed countries to help finance 100 per cent multilateral debt service cancellation for Sub-Saharan Africa. The idea is that the savings that would accrue from debt forgiveness should be channeled into education and health projects.

The Commission goes further and calls for a “new type of debt-relief compact” to cover “multilateral and bilateral debt, and reduce debt stock and debt service by up to 100 per cent”.

The Commission also supports calls for a new facility to help African countries address problems caused by natural disaster and commodity-related shock - a result of repeated complaints by indebted African countries that external shocks derail their debt rescheduling.

5. A Critique of the Commission for Africa Findings

The report rightly addresses the linkage between local contextual factors and the global socio-economic development policy regime, both being critical factors in the pursuit of poverty reduction. Africa's poverty complex is inextricably linked to problems in global trade, finance, and governance. These problems limit the region from developing effective systems of democratic participation for poverty reduction in the region, resulting in democratic structures without the ability to freely determine appropriate policy frameworks. Therefore, a development paradigm that focuses only

on local and national institutional development factors, without a corresponding focus on transforming the framework of the global economic policy regime would be ineffective.

This report makes noteworthy and significant proposals on a number of scores: capacity building, infrastructure, health, education, aid, trade, debt relief, and partnership. It is important, at the outset to make the point that it is important to take the report and turn it into clear benchmarks and indicators for measurement. We should see whether British Prime Minister Blair and the British government would be able to extract commitments from the G8 and EU, and what the levels of commitments and seriousness are toward Africa. We should also distinguish between rhetoric versus commitment, and thus not confuse the two.

The report has major weaknesses. The fact that only one G8 country (Britain) had to embark on this process of convening a Commission for Africa is testimony that there is great lack of will on the part of many industrialised powers. Problem is that there are no persuasive explanations as to how exactly the Commission will make its recommendations a reality. The report is full of moralistic tones where the west is seen as having a “moral duty” to respond to Africa’s needs. Scant reference is made of the idea that the west should also respond to Africa on the basis of “a powerful motive of self-interest”; there is not enough reference to power and interest considerations. We could argue that, for as long as Africa is viewed in moralistic terms, we will not see sufficient and urgent action over the continent.

Apart from the problem of interests, another key problem is that the report does not talk enough about that crucial but neglected ingredient of political will. Thus, when reading report it becomes abundantly clear that the outside world – the G8 and EU in particular – will not muster the will to respond to these sometimes radical proposals.

So, while the Commission for Africa no doubt represents a serious effort on the part of one G8 country and former colonial master, Britain, to give meaning and substance to the idea of a genuine and strategic partnership between the continent and the industrialized world, it is however no Marshall Plan. There is in current global politics not the will, nor the commitment, and neither the strategic import attached to the continent for the outside world to commit to a Marshall Plan for Africa. The west in general is too shortsighted to see the significance of such a great idea.

It is suggested here that this report is far from a Marshall Plan; it is instead a serious attempt by British politicians and African commissioners, to get the outside world to take Africa more seriously. It is an attempt to get the industrialized world to take African challenges seriously. While in recent years there has been a lot of positive rhetoric about Africa, there have been no real tangible commitment to make Africa a priority. Africa remains at the bottom of the priority lists of the industrialised world. The outside world is preoccupied with their own strategic issues like fighting terrorism, restoring their own alliances, stabilizing their European backyards, address the problems of trade amongst them, and the like. The rhetoric is all pro-Africa, but the substance is not.

The biggest challenge for the Commission for Africa, and for its report is that Britain will find it exceedingly difficult to persuade fellow G8 countries to abandon trade

subsidies and open their markets, effectively control arms traffic and finance a massive expansion of development aid. For very long, the world has just not been serious about Africa; there appeared not to be the realization they that it is in the west's strategic interest to help stabilize the continent and live up to their historical commitments toward Africa. For many in the world Africa has lost its strategic worth. Thus, the real test is to see whether the Commission and its recommendation can realize that addressing underdevelopment and poverty in Africa is not just a moral responsibility, but ultimately in the strategic interests of the west and the world more generally.

Calls for a restructuring of international financial institutions, and to include broader African representation on the governing and decision-making boards of key institutions like the World Bank and IMF, may not enjoy enthusiastic response from other powerful actors.

The calls for the establishment of "an independent mechanism, which reflects the consultative approach of the Commission", to "monitor and report on progress on implementation of agreed commitments", is not enough. The Commission will have to encourage and support NGOs and civil society actors to do critical monitoring and evaluation work. A "small unit within and existing African or international institution, that is led by two senior international figures, one African and the other from the donor community, may lack the independence and capacity to do monitoring and evaluation. This is too serious a dimension to be left to officials alone. Indeed, the authority of this mechanism, and how it is to be operationalised, is not clearly spelt out.

The report says remarkably little about advancing human security in Africa; it seems to be heavily focused on state security and state-centric notions of security. Yet, human security is vital to the continent; while the report focus on issues of quality of life, the need to address poverty, underdevelopment, HIV/AIDS, and others, it does not locate these in a strict human security paradigm.

The idea of "African solutions for African problems" is touted, but in the past this has become a convenient cop out and burden shift. We should be careful not to allow "African solutions for African problems" to mean foreign actors shirking in their responsibilities to the continent. For example, the UN Security Council and the international community should not be allowed to renege on their peace-keeping and peace enforcement responsibilities to Africa.

Peacekeeping capacity also requires that the UN Security Council deploy peacekeepers in Africa; we should not condone a peacekeeping apartheid and aristocracy of death where the Security Council keeps peace everywhere but in Africa.

The proposal that an international regime should, under the ATT, focus on issues beyond small arms to monitor and regulate all arms flows is a contentious proposal; this is likely to meet strong resistance from arms manufacturers and traders, many of them based in Britain.

The report is bold in putting the question of powerful outside interests and actors in the exploitation of Africa, on the agenda; it makes bold recommendations in terms of new global governance demands, regimes and structures that can deal clearly with mandates and pressure on this issue. However, we could anticipate major resistance from major multilateral corporations. Britain, the G8 and the EU will have to consider putting in place regulation regimes to tackle this problem.

While the report calls for the poor to be included in policies on poverty eradication and investment, questions of citizen participation is typically on the back-burner in Africa. Governments are just not serious about empowering citizens on the question of participation. It is clear that report places great emphasis on “good” governance and not enough stress on democratic governance. While good governance speaks to the health of institutions and systems, democratic governance speaks to the oft-neglected question of state-society relations. Specifically it speaks to the question of the role and empowerment of citizens to influence and help shape policy and governance. What is not often realized is that provisions for public participation are already contained in the Charter for Popular Participation for development and transformation in Africa, adopted by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 1990. This Charter calls for the creating of more enabling conditions in Africa for increased participation of women, the youth and civil society organizations. However, given the continent’s poor record with implementation, and the problem with the lack of will by many African leaders, little came of this landmark document over the past decade-and-a-half.

There is need to go beyond the idea of measuring poverty in terms of the \$1 dollar a day threshold. Poverty is not just addressing the conditions of material deprivation. So while the report is right that we have to continue with seriousness and vigour to focus on poverty, there is need for very serious work which advances, and infuse into the policy debate, the idea of poverty also arises because people do not have a voice. Poor people are typically excluded from decision-making and helping to shape the paradigms and solutions proposed for them by powerful actors. Service delivery is also about human rights and social justice.

Citizen participation in governance is very important; national governments still play a dominant role in articulating and representing the interests of their citizens, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. But it can no longer be credibly argued that governments are the exclusive representatives of their people. The old view of exclusive state representation is no longer consistent with the practice of global governance. Democracy at local and regional levels must provide opportunities for multiple actors to play a role in articulating the best interests and judgements of the public. To earn public confidence and legitimacy, therefore, African governments must engage their publics directly, and demonstrate that they are responsive and accountable to public concerns.

Democratic participation have also been shown to be critical in enabling societies to avert catastrophies such as famines, proving governments with information and political incentives necessary to craft appropriate policy responses. We have to promote the idea that increasing people’s abilities to participate in public decision-making is a key “constitutive component” of development, and continue to put on the continental and global radar screens that development is now a multidimensional

challenge that is broader than alleviating income poverty. It now includes improving the capacity of the poor to exercise voice and political power to gain equitable access to resources and opportunities. There is also broad recognition that voice alone is insufficient for leading to better development outcomes; it must be accompanied by opportunities for the poor to impose sanctions on decision-makers for poor performance. Expanding the ability of the poor to influence the decisions that will affect their lives is therefore a critical dimension of their development.

The educational and vocational training opportunities of the continent must be improved if people are to have more successful voices. Adult training is as important as primary and secondary education. Governments must become more accountable to the people, but overseas donors must also live up to their obligations.

It should also be stressed that proposals are not balanced carefully enough between mainstream and orthodox macro-economic growth theories, and a new developmental paradigm that places social policies and social development at the heart of poverty eradication. While no one can dispute the need for faster economic growth, it is crucially important that substance and meaning is given to the idea of the democratic developmental state.

Thus, not enough is said in the report about the development orthodoxies of structural adjustment that are being foisted on Africa. The report says almost nothing about economic and fiscal sovereignty, and for Africa to be allowed to develop economic policies that speaks to its own realities.

Finally, on the question of an International Finance Facility, we should remember that in 2004 already, some G8 countries were lukewarm about the idea. Britain should therefore carefully spell out how they will go about getting buy-in into the process, or propose what alternatives it has if the idea should fail.

The report proposes the phasing out of some subsidies in the developed countries in order to address the unfairness of the current system of trade. It should be noted however that addressing market access limitations are not the central problem for Africa in the global trading system. Only those African countries with stronger export capacities are likely to benefit from better terms of trade. Even then, large monopoly agribusiness interests are better placed to benefit from these changes than small-scale farmers who produce primarily for local markets, thus providing basic levels of community food security in the region. The emphasis on market access is intended to facilitate export-oriented growth. This strategy does not give sufficient attention to the need to reorient production from export agriculture led by big corporate interests to small-scale production primarily for the local market and protected from unfair competition from subsidised Northern products by tariffs and quotas.

Moving to the HIV/AIDS crisis, a massive global response is needed to tackle the HIV/AIDS crisis and this is crucial for Africa. Statistics show that Five Africans die every minute as a result of HIV/AIDS (ACTSA). Southern Africa for instance, where three-quarters of the 42 million known people infected by HIV/AIDS live, has average infection rates of between 20%-30%. The long-term consequences of concentrated HIV/AIDS prevalence for development in the region are grave, the implications of which we have yet to fully grasp. Hard-won development gains and

increases in life expectancy are being reversed across the region as a result of HIV/AIDS. The region requires a comprehensive strategy to manage this crisis. A strategy which addresses a range of short-term and long-term factors including prevention, treatment, palliative care, and special attention to the needs of vulnerable persons like women and children affected

The report should force Africa (and the international community) to have a fundamental rethink of our own development paradigms and strategies, which have up to now stressed private sector and trade led approaches. For instance, the UK 2004 Globalization White Paper states that “those countries which have achieved the biggest reduction in poverty in the recent years have been those which are open to international trade” The Commission report disagrees, observing that the Asian Tiger Economies show us that a mix of openness and protection provides a managed path to global integration.

We should also start with the basics, and see whether Britain and other G8 and EU countries could start with a basic idea such as living up to the 0, 7% of GDP aid levels. That will be a true sign of commitment by Britain and the west, and a breakthrough for mutual accountability and responsibility between Africa and the west.

It will be important to measure on a constant basis whether there is a movement on the part of the west towards a political and diplomatic culture of mutual accountability and mutual responsibility, instead of unilateralism and a gap between promise and delivery.

The report’s call that donors should give political and financial supports to the continent’s pan-African and sub-regional bodies and programmes, should be constantly monitored. But is also important to assess whether African governments, the African Union, and sub-regional bodies such as SADC, ECOWAS, IGAD and others are accountable and live up to their side of the bargain in terms of commitments made under the AU, NEPAD, APRM, sub-regional governance.

It is vital that there are constant assessments of whether key NEPAD actors like presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo, Bouteflika, Wade, Kufor, and others, are performing on their commitments, and whether they are making progress on gaining buy-in from other African actors on NEPAD. Similarly, British government and its G8 and EU partners will have to be assessed on the same terms, and we should constantly measure what progress the British are making in moving these powerful G8 and EU actors in the direction of progress.

Furthermore, we should weigh up and consider whether there is, on the part of the west and Africa, commitment to the politics of genuine partnership, and whether they remain stuck in the politics of donor-recipient relations.

It is critical to spell out in greater detail how people could participate in real and meaningful ways in politics. The report is for example silent on the crucial issue of meaningful gender participation, and addressing the gender relations of powering Africa. While it raises the issue as an important one, it is important to spell out in detail how this issue is to be addressed in the continent.

Another benchmark to advance is to measure Britain's own commitments and progress and see how they perform in terms of their own stated commitments. We should also assess, and try to galvanise the G8 Summit to be hosted by Britain at Gleneagles, Scotland on 6-8 July, and the EU that will be chaired by Britain, and clearly measure their commitments on capacity building, aid, trade, market access, debt eradication, and removing unfair trade subsidies, amongst others. It is important to specifically look at what specific commitments G8 and EU countries make on aid, trade reform, market access and debt eradication.

On governance, it is important for all of us to develop indicators that spell ways of holding both Africa and the west to account for commitments made and actions undertaken. As in other areas, we must watch out for a gap between promise and delivery. In short, the Commission for Africa report makes such radical suggestions in the areas of continental and global governance as it affects Africa. We must specifically be vigilant to whether actors on both sides of this divide – Africa and the industrialized north – will live up to some of the radical governance provisions. We should remember that some of these provisions on governance speak directly to the powerful vested interests of powerful governments and private sector actors. Also, in Africa, some local governments and private sector interests benefited greatly from corrupt and unaccountable practices; many thrive on bad governance. To turn the governance tanker in Africa will not be easy. Moving from unaccountable to accountable governance speaks directly to foreign interests and global governance. Here is the question: will overseas governments really freeze funds looted from Africa, and will African governments comply, or is this just some veiled threats that will not go very far?

An interesting departure in a report like this is that the private sector comes under inspection and the spotlight, and there is great talk about the responsibilities of developed countries and shareholders to make the private sector more accountable. There is even a call for various constituencies to “put pressure on companies to be more transparent in their activities in developing countries, and to adhere to international codes and standards for behaviour” If this were to happen, it would be tantamount to a real cultural and behavioural change of the way the industrialized world engages Africa and the developing world.

On the recommendation for greater transparency in the Extractive Industries, it would be interesting to see whether powerful foreign governments and companies from the industrialized north will live up to these far-reaching proposals.

It would be interesting for example to see whether Britain will chastise British-based companies accused of resource exploitation. The issue of resource exploitation in Africa is a serious one; it is not sufficiently on the agenda. Yet the question of transparency and accountability of multinational corporations is an important one. The Commission's recommendation for the creation of a permanent Expert Panel to “monitor the links between natural resource extraction and violent conflict and the implementation of sanctions”, and enforcement measures to the UN Security Council, should be taken seriously.

We need monitoring mechanisms to see whether the outside world lives up to peacekeeping commitments, and whether donors would commit to 50 per cent of the already-existing African Union Peace Fund. The AU and sub-regional bodies have in recent years shown great willingness to keep the peace in Africa. Problem is that they lack resources, finances and equipment to do so.

So while in the report the international community is urged to help bolster Africa's peace support operations capacity, reality is that there has been over the past years peacekeeping disengagement from Africa.

The Commission's calls for investments in schools, clinics, and other educational and health facilities are key elements of the developmental state; yet the issues of social policy are not given enough attention in the report. While the report speaks of combining "people's participation in growth", it still locates it too much in neo-classical economic orthodoxies, underpinned by market economics. The proposal for a \$100 million Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund to support small enterprise development initiatives clearly suggest that more resources are needed, and we should be surprised if the developed says that it has other financial priorities, such as addressing budget deficits in European countries. The western powers are likely to make the argument that they have limited resources, and can thus not respond to all these extra demands. Some are likely to see these proposals as extra burdens. The US is likely to make the case that Africa does not need extra resources; that the question is rather that of capacity, not resources.

In spite of these dynamics the report goes further and urges donors to provide an additional US\$ 7-8 billion a year to finance African plans to deliver better education. The Commission's encouragement for African governments "to remove school fees for basic education", and for donors to fund the costs of such development projects until African governments can absorb the costs themselves, is a radical departure from World Bank and IMF orthodoxy, which called for African governments to levy school fees.

While the Commission recommends that an additional one million health workers in Africa be trained by 2015, it says remarkably little about the need for attracting health workers from the continent stationed abroad back to the continent. It does not spell out the responsibilities of African and overseas governments in this regard.

The report proposes another specific idea: that donors should make a long-term commitment to fill the financing gap in cases where African governments are not able to provide fees for basic healthcare. This is important, and we should be vigilant to see how these are met. But it is also important for us to see how African states scale up HIV/AIDS as a policy priority.

So the call by the report for top priority to be given to scaling up HIV/AIDS treatment should be taken seriously. Existing systems to tackle HIV/AIDS treatment must be strengthened. In recent years there have been much talk of the Global Fund for Aids. Yet we know that progress here is also uneven at best. As such, donors are asked to help address the \$3.2 billion shortfall for 2006 for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Donors should also "develop incentives for research and development that fit the health requirements in Africa", and set up

purchase agreements for medicines and increases in direct funding for African-led research.

The Commission report call for capacity to trade and to negotiate more effectively to be enhanced, and that the industrialised world's trade barriers should be dismantled as a matter of urgency, are important, but they will be the result of taxing negotiations between the developing and developed world's. Third, transitional support to help African countries adjust to new trading regimes must be provided. These again are far-reaching proposals that speak to the core interests of the west; and would be interesting to see whether the British government will succeed in even modestly moving its G8 and EU partners along this path.

It would be a surprising, but major breakthrough if British banks can take the lead, followed by other US and EU banks, could start to repatriate some of the resources pillaged from the continent.

The key proposals that rich countries “must agree to immediately eliminate trade-distorting support to cotton and sugar, and commit by 2010 to end all export subsidies and all trade-distorting support in agriculture”, and that, with the Hong Kong round of trade talks in December to end with an agreement on a progressive reduction of tariffs by 2015, are likely to be met with a lot of resistance from fellow G8 members. They are just not serious about removing debilitating trade barriers and farming subsidies. We will likely find that implementation of these proposals are far more difficult than articulating them.

The Commission's proposals on debt relief is in line with Chancellor Gordon Brown's recent proposal for developed countries to help finance 100 per cent multilateral debt service cancellation for Sub-Saharan Africa, is a far-reaching proposal. It will take massive doses of political will, and this appears in short supply in western quarters. The idea that the savings that would accrue from debt forgiveness should be channeled into education and health projects is a sound one, but we have to first get agreement on debt eradication before we can think about what to do about the proceeds that would accrue.

The Commission's idea for a “new type of debt-relief compact” to cover “multilateral and bilateral debt, and reduce debt stock and debt service by up to 100 per cent”, coincides with changes underway in the leadership of the World Bank; as such there is little prospect of this proposal enjoying full support.

As stated in the introductory part of this paper, the intention was not to provide in depth analysis of the report but rather to flag the issues raised, as useful entry points for a discussion by participants in this forum. It is our hope that this discussion paper will contribute to the development of a united vibrant continent where progressive governance is guided by the ideals of participatory collective decision-making, justice, gender equality and the respect for human rights.