

## YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a particular pleasure and privilege for me to have this opportunity of coming to Cyprus. Perhaps you will remember that your own President has visited Kenya on two occasions. I hope that my President will have an opportunity to return this gesture of goodwill between Kenya and Cyprus.

I have been asked to speak on "Youth and Development in Africa". In Africa, as you are aware, countries have emerged from colonial rule and within the last seventy years many changes have taken place. Africa has progressed from the days in which it was labelled the Dark Continent to the modern days of industrial revolution. The traditional African culture, based on the kinship system, has been transformed from subsistence economies into a modern industrial society. From both the individual point of view and the national these changes have brought about a dislocation of the many ties which existed before colonial rule. On the political front new institutions have been created. Education has cut across the tribal boundaries and institutions have defined new concepts of justice, law, civic and political responsibilities, parliamentary procedure, government administration and democracy. These developments took place at a time when there was a shortage of trained manpower and a shortage of social and political means. On the economic front, as you are aware, the monetary sector, marketing organizations and the price structure are all factors which have a bearing upon a subsistence economy, on the rural peasant farmers and on the workers in the rural areas. Economic development also brings with it the organization of trade unions. These can be a hindrance if their efforts are not properly channelled towards the goal of national development.

The rate at which these changes have taken place has naturally put a great strain not only on individuals but also on the society as a whole. Furthermore, Africa has emerged in the international context. Earlier there had been communication between Africa and the Americas, Europe, and to a certain extent the East. Africa is now, however, in the mainstream of

international opinion and is involved in such co-operative bodies as the United Nations and the Commonwealth. A niche in the international field has been found by Africa mainly through the adoption of policies of non-alignment.

This is a crucial time in African history and young people are facing problems not only from within their own society but also from outside - some political, some economic. They are living in two worlds, the old and the new. We have not had time to develop our own education system. Our education system was transplanted from Britain and it was made part and parcel of our national development. In the course of the post-independence period we have had to re-think the principles on which education should be based if national development is to be promoted. This is no easy task and will take some time. It must be remembered also that, however much the education system is changed for the age group 6-12 years, the results of this labour cannot be seen before fifteen or even twenty years have passed. The education of young people, particularly teenagers, who are the nation builders, and the people who are involved from day to day in the economic and political life of the nation, has been the subject of much discussion.

One problem we must remember is the extent of illiteracy, which is a major handicap in the development of Africa. In Kenya, for example, only 60% of the school age children are going to school and after they have completed seven years of education 30% of these drop out at secondary level, for one reason or another. This results in a barrier between the planners, the leaders and the led, and also acts as a brake on economic development. How can we utilise this manpower which is not sufficiently developed to be harnessed into the total effort?

In this context and with reference to the report of the Commonwealth Youth Seminar held in Nairobi we can now look at some of the problems which the Government of Kenya and many other African Governments have tried to tackle. One of the most popular approaches to solutions is the inauguration of National Youth Service schemes. In some countries these were started as political measures to contain the independent spirit which had developed in the young people. Some people felt that the youth were becoming a political threat and expressed a desire for the energies of young people to be channelled through an organization towards more productive ends. In other cases it was felt that an opportunity was needed to complement the formal education system by offering opportunities for vocational training.

Elsewhere it was felt desirable to prepare young people for employment openings in industry and in government. For whatever reasons National Youth Services may have been inaugurated, the most important aspect is that they help in shaping the ideas which young people acquire and make them more aware of African objectives.

The Kenya National Youth Service is in a way para-military in the sense that members wear uniforms, live in camps and are disciplined. They do not get a normal wage; they receive instead a token amount of £1 per month which is either paid in cash or saved for collection by the member at the end of his course. Initially it was intended that the course should be of one year's duration. This, however, was found to be inadequate and the course was therefore extended to two years. At present there are about 7,000 young men and women involved in the scheme over the two year period.

Employers, the Government, the Army and the Police Force have displayed great interest in the graduates from the National Youth Service. It has been regarded as perhaps the greatest contribution which Kenya has made toward channelling energies of youth into the development process.

Other smaller organisations, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, and the 4K clubs of the Ministry of Agriculture, aim at orientating young people towards rural development. Kenya is a vast country and covers an area of 235,000 square miles. If Kenya is to produce its own food and also to produce enough for export, the land has to be developed. The main emphasis is on trying to get youth interested in rural development through acquiring skills in agriculture and marketing. This is not the easiest of tasks but we have taken the plunge and hope that it will succeed.

Another problem which has to be dealt with when we talk about rural development is the actual meaning of the term. Does it mean building roads in new areas? Building more schools? Reorganizing the farm structure? The Government has made an effort to involve youth in long-term projects with economic implications rather than in short-term projects. It prefers to involve them in projects which young people can see for themselves as being an investment for their own future. Many parts of our country are extremely arid, and the Government has involved young men and women in irrigation schemes, in the construction

of dams and canals and improving water supplies generally. Such undertakings are a permanent investment in the infrastructure of the country. The Government has also involved youth in the construction of roads and communications. Members of the National Youth Service, for instance, are helping to construct the great road from Nairobi to Addis Ababa which will finally end in Cairo. This will be a permanent asset to the country's communications system. It is also believed that young people will feel more committed in projects which they can see will increase employment opportunities in the rural areas through the stimulation of development around the farms. Some parts of the country are as yet inaccessible and the cost of constructing roads in these areas is prohibitive. Young people have assisted in the construction of air strips, facilities which are desirable for the improvement of communication among the widely scattered communities.

These, then are the types of projects in which we feel young men and women should be involved as they not only generate employment within the immediate area but are something of permanent value. Some people have been sceptical in their assessment of the value of National Youth Services. Naturally a great deal depends upon the basic concept behind the schemes. Kenya is, at least, willing to give the Service a chance.

I have attempted to outline the part being played by young people in the development process in Kenya, largely through our National Youth Service. I shall be pleased to discuss any points with you in greater detail.