The obstacles of leadership and prospects for the future

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Several epithets are used to characterize the situation in Africa. For instance: continent without hope, continent agonising, continent without future, marginalized continent, etc. These epithets, with their exaggeration and abusive generalisation, give a caricatural vision of the continent and demonstrate that the leadership in Africa is not an easy task.

The African Leaderships are facing tremendous challenges which are proportional to the difficulties that our continent is confronting. These challenges are multiform and presented in terms of emergency. Indeed, the daily of million of africans continues to be of enormous difficulties, injustices and serious problems. Many families didn’t have the minimum considered indispensable to a dignified life. Many children are condemned to live in mendicity and abandonment due to the absence of a home, a daily bread and the love that only a household can proportionate. Many young people take refuge in drugs and delinquency, result in dissatisfaction, frustrations and a complete lack of perspective of life.
The life of many women gain a countour of nightmare in the face of constant violation of their basic human rights, being, above all, victims of physical and psychological abuse.

On the other hand, one should mention two big and deadly conflicts which subsist: Darfur and Somalia. The Darfur conflict began in 2003 when rebels took up arms, saying the region was being neglected by the Government.

According to the United Nations 200,000 people have died; and around 2.5 million people displaced.

Unfortunately the perspectives of peace are uncertain.

In Somalia, the conflict between the Somalia’s transitional government and the Somali Islamic Courts Council gained an international dimension with the intervention of Ethiopia supporting the Government and the Eritrea supporting the Islamist militia. The situation is chaotic and peace seems difficult to reach.
Over and above some armed conflicts which persist, a great number of African countries is hardly attained by another type of violence: AIDS, the plague of modern times which has already killed millions of men, women and children. While the number of people infected with HIV is increasing rapidly.

The rate of maternal and infantile mortality continues to be unacceptable, happening the same with the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis and malaria. The life expectancy is progressing on all continents excluding Africa, where it is regressing in the last twenty years.

A primary education programme for all is far from becoming a reality. We can say the same towards the promotion of equality between sexes in the primary and secondary schools.

However, it is necessary to recognize that some African countries have made considerable progress on the way to accomplish some of the United Nations millennium goals.
But a few of them have done what was necessary to reach all the goals of the millennium.

This Shadowy situation, can’t, in anyway, lead us to become pessimistic. The difficulties we are facing today must be considered as a step that we can overcome soon.

We mustn’t forget that a few years ago the international public opinion considered the apartheid regime unvanquished due to its internal power and the strong support that it benefited on an international level. So, many people foresaw that the black South African people were condemned to be dominated forever or for a long time coming. But thanks to the struggle of the black south african people and the support of the international community the apartheid regime was defeated and the Republic of South Africa is now an exemplary anti-racial democracy.

Equally nobody could descry that the Angolan conflict could know an end this soon. Today, Angola lives in peace and worried with the consolidation of its democracy and developpement.
The armed conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, by their extreme cruelty didn’t allow to predict a durable peace, but fortunately, the weapons are silent in the two countries which, are leading, painfully, a process of national reconstruction. We can say the same concerning Rwanda that, despite of the genocide, has got a certain stability in its process of reconstruction.

At the moment we are writing these lines, Côte d’Ivoire which was drawn in a violent armed confrontation, followed by a situation of complete blockage, seems to have opted for peace.

Significant steps have been made in the sequence of the negotiations established between the parties in conflict.

To put an end to the armed conflicts, to overcome illness and vanquish the under development, we must continue making efforts for the establishment and consolidation of democracy, for the achievement of peace and acceleration of the development process.

As a matter of fact, democracy is a factor of development and peace. It is the corollary of a learning process geared by general interest, tolerance and acceptance of differences.
Democracy is not compatible with the law of the strongest or violence as a resource. It requires the existence of a just equitable state that promotes cohesion and energy; a state that adopts transparent and rigorous rules of administration and management and strict respect for human rights.

Nowadays, we have already in Africa a number of states which practise good governance, with free and transparent elections; independent justice; efficient and impartial administration, and strict respect for human rights.

Therefore the practise of democracy in Africa is not a miracle since it depends exclusively on the good will of African politicians. In fact, the responsibility to develop our continent is in our hands. History doesn’t register any case of an underdeveloped country which has overcome the barrier of the underdevelopment figuring only on the foreign aid. In my opinion, the foreign aid only produces the desired results if inserted in an internal process of gestation of development. Therefore, we have to collectively find forms to potentiate the internal capacities and the available resources in the context of a new strategy of development. In fact, development can’t be
considered merely a question of arithmetic, measurable only by economic growth. It must have as the main objective the social justice, good governance and the respect for human rights; it requires bulky investments not only in physical infrastructure, but also in human resources; it urges an energetic action in the fields of health and education, the fight against poverty, as well as policies to aim at the promotion of equality between men and women.

Unfortunately, the African leaderships were not always up to the mark of the challenges of the continent.

Definitely we haven’t had true reformers as leaders.

Many eminent intellectuals and experts were marginalized or persecuted. The excess of the elit in power merited the compliant approval of the two sides in the context of the cold war.

On the other hand, the drastic measures imposed to the African countries, during the eighties, by the Breton Woods Institutions, in the context of the structural adjustment, accompanied by the decreasing of public aid and foreign investment, have had
catastrophiques consequences in the socio economic field. The poverty increased exponentially which provoked everywhere a climate of instability and social tension. We can say that, in certain measure, it caused many armed conflicts.

Fortunately, our continent is currently the object of much attention of new actors in the international scene, like China, India, Brasil and South Africa, which opened new opportunities for Africa.

For instance the interest of China in Africa grew exponentially.

In the sixties and seventies, China had established relations with Africa on an ideological basis, helping some countries considered friends and the movements of liberation fighting against colonialism.

In eighties, Beijing started to be interested in promoting its investment and its external trade. At this time, the Chinese economy was beginning to take flight.
The interest of China in Africa became more pressing since 2000 with the first China-Africa Forum which assembled 44 heads of State and many businessmen.

The second Forum took place in Addis-Abeba in 2003. During the meeting 250 agreements were signed and the total volume of exchanges doubled passing from 10 to 20 billion dollars. And reached 37 billion dollars in 2005.

China is now the second importer of african oil after the US (25% of its importation comes from Africa) and in 2005, China replaced the US as the first client of Angolan oil and started to build a refinery in Sudan.


Important decisions were taken by the Chinese Government:
- doubling aid to Africa by 2009
- provide concessional credits to Africa totalling US$ 5 billion by 2009
- cancel concessional credits to highly indebted low-income countries
- lift tariffs on 440 goods from low-income countries.

In the same way, India, Brasil and South Africa are investing heavily in Africa.

For their turn United States are making a big effort towards Africa.

The Bush Administration created an excellent development programme called “Millennium Challenge Account”. This programme was conceived to fight poverty around the world. It benefits a number of African States including Cape Verde.

According to some observers, Africa did not start the XXI Century in a bad way. This assertion is being confirmed by several facts. The African Competitiveness Report 2007 released on the 13th of June by the World Economic Forum, the African Development Bank and the World Bank revealed that “after years of economic starvation, Africa is experiencing an economic resurgence. Between 2001 and 2006, growth in gross domestic
product (GDP) on the continent averaged 4.9 percent annually. In 2006, the continent grew by the impressive 5.5 percent, and in 2007, this is expected to increase even further to 6.2 percent, the highest growth registered for decades”.

It is obvious that the reduction of conflicts on the continent is to account for these positive changes. From the peak number of 16 in 2002 there was a decrease to 6 in 2007. One should also remember that the remaining conflicts – those in West Sahara, Ivory Coast, the Niger Delta or the boundary skirmishes between Ethiopia and Eritrea – are not intense so the number of deaths is small.

Africa has enough material and human resources to take the qualitative step that we all desire.

It is true that the situation of our continent is not brilliant, but the challenges we have to face can be overcome. This is a hard task, no doubt about it, but is not impossible. The path to be trodden is long, but Africa can do it with success, especially if we continue making efforts for the establishment and consolidation of
democracy, for the achievement of peace and acceleration of the development process.

In terms of natural resources our continent is extremely rich. It lodges appreciable reserves of ore at world wide level: 76% of phosphate, 73% of diamond, 80%, of magnesium, 20% of iron and 40% of gold. And it has enormous natural deposits of ores to indentify. Our continent supplies the international market with other ores, such as: bauxite, chromium, cobalt, platinum, titanium, uranium and vanadium.

One should mention the existence of many hydrological basins with enormous hydric potential.

In terms of human resources, besides the existent capacities in the continent, we can count not only on the experts who left Africa in pursuit of better conditions of life and work, but also on the african diaspora that the slavery spread across the world.

For that, it is necessary to create adequate conditions for their return.
The African Union and the african governments must place this question in the agenda of its priorities.

As much as the materials mean, the human materials must be mobilized and utilized rationally. This essentially depends on the will of african leaders.