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**“Parliamentarians in Africa and Arab regions: what should they do to enhance sustainable development in the two regions”**

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Sustainable Development

**Introduction**

Human beings must be the center in any sustainable development endeavor with stability of the natural system upon which the economy and society depend on. Sustainable development is, therefore, the practice of maintaining productivity without endangering the natural system.

The larger populace of African nations and the Arab world depend on agricultural produce, fishery, pastoralism, trade and employment as a way of livelihood system where peace and stability prevailed.

However, the combined factors of soil degradation, adverse climate change and drought have militated against adequate food production. The loss of soil and nutrients by erosion and the serious and worsening dissipation of moisture levels due to overall environmental abuse have increasingly eroded the productivity of agriculture, continues to yield principally no more than household level. The size of livestock that has been a prominent source of asset building for centuries has also declined owing to the disappearing grazing space, roughage, water supply and the various diseases that have cropped up from the consequent ecological disturbance and imbalance.

The lack of adequate energy supply for cooking and heating needs, has meant virtual reliance on natural forests adversely affecting the ecosystem. Women have particularly suffered from this situation, having to hunt for firewood from distant places with ever disappearing trees and shrubs.

Rich countries in Oil and gas could supply and realize communal benefits from this gap and play very important role in mitigating the problem of energy in the continent.

Industrialization in Africa is still in its growing stage, compared to the rising population size, should match the expected growing necessities. It is unfortunate that the continent and the Arab world suffer and pay the price, from activities which have not been committed, originated from air polluting emissions of the industrialized world.

Food processing and manufacturing could be important safety valves for the ever burdened environment as a livelihood option for the poor. The African nations could benefit a lot with the processing of sugarcane, coffee, cocoa, cotton, oil seeds, raw hide, herbal and spice products, flowers etc. Africa has abundant natural resources, minerals for export and yet remains the world's poorest continent.

The construction industry is another investment opportunity for partners in the Arab world.

Tourist attractions of natural and cultural heritage in Africa and the Arab world are opportunities to generate income in support of sustainable development.

**Objective**

Explore opportunities and challenges in sustainable development endeavors in Africa and the Arab world and come up with recommendations to ASSECAA retreat gathering for further consideration by parliamentarians of the respective nations.

**Opportunities**

The Arab world and African parliamentarians have a lot to do and accomplish to help exploit the opportunities within their reach to enhance economic cooperation and sustainable development in the two regions. Such cooperation could be in the areas of resource mobilization, education and cultural exchanges through their diplomatic channels and respective ministries.

The lack of adequate energy supply for cooking , heating and fuel needs in Africa could be bridged by rich countries in Oil and gas as well as hydro electric powers and could benefit, mutually, from this gap and play very important role in mitigating the problem of energy and stability of the world market.

Industrial development in processing of sugarcane, coffee, cocoa, cotton, oil seeds, raw hide, herbal and spice products, flowers etc, as well as heavy industries in extracting of mineral deposits and other natural resources, would be opportunities for the Arab world counterparts to import/export finished products to benefit citizens of the two regions.

The natural resources in both regions have to be wisely exploited in a coordinated manner.

**Challenges**

For sustainable development to happen, a sustainable peace and stability need to exist. Development can happen and show fruits for the benefit of the society, when there is relative peace. In some cases such development results continue to support the lives of citizens for reasonable period of time, but in most cases these development endeavors discontinued because of conflicts and disagreements and or because of natural calamities . Though, it is difficult to totally avoid natural disasters but could be possible to minimize it. Some of the internal and external causes that are hampering sustainable development may be listed as follows.

* Economic inequality and disparities of income in the society
* Communities denied access to resources , development opportunities and basic needs (food, safe water, health etc).
* Millions go hungry, children, women and elderly are suffering the most.
* poor scores of human development with poor backing of science and technology research.
* Lack of knowledge and proper information on issues affecting the lives of communities
* Corruption and greed are deep rooted, undermine economic development, democracy and human rights.
* Abject poverty, recurrent droughts and floods
* Natu

Such disparities and injustice further agonized the lives of the people resulted in hatred, divisions, lost interest in the national affairs and seek refuge and opportunities elsewhere or take action in a way of violence within. Because of such factors:

* High level of illiteracy observed
* Injustice and human rights violation take place
* Open door for instigators and ignorant to harm peoples' interests and their development aspiration.
* Ethnic divisions and hatred witnessed
* Tribal and armed conflicts further traumatized people's lives
* Guerrilla warfare to genocide
* Extremism in every direction created
* Talented, creative and highly skilled and qualified scholars leave their native land resulted in brain drain

**Conclusion**

There are enormous opportunities, in both regions, to be further developed for a sustainable benefit of the people. It should be noted that there are also challenges and threats like extremism, human right abuses, ethnic divisions and hatred, corruption and brain drain, which need closer attention to address them in a reasonable time frame.

**Recommendation**

Establish a science and technology commission to help catch up with the fast growing of economic advancement in the world. The commission's focus needs to be on practical researches to support industries, encourage high schools and universities students and researchers to help bring about changes through their research findings to maximize the benefits of their communities.

Fast actions must be taken to facilitate the utilization of the tremendous natural resources and cultural heritages at our custody in a coordinated manner, among the individual nations and as a group. For the coordination and partnership to happen a responsible body at the ASSECAA level needs to be established.

Sustainable peace is the prerequisite for a sustainable development and stability of governments to help release their responsibilities in a way good governance. Therefore, a support team of peace and reconciliation commission should be established.