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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON  
SOUTHERN AFRICA AND EASTERN ASIA:  
EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN DEVELOPMENT**

**THE 1993 TOKYO INTERNATIONAL  
DECLARATION ON AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTRIES OF SOUTHERN  
AFRICA**

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**R. L. MOTHIBATSELA**

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SOUTHERN AFRICA AND EASTERN ASIA  
EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN DEVELOPMENT  
25TH - 26TH JANUARY, 1996**

**THE 1993 TOKYO DECLARATION ON  
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTRIES OF  
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**BY  
LEKOMA MOTHIBATSELA**

**THE 1993 TOKYO DECLARATION ON**  
**AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT : IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTRIES**  
**OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The Tokyo Declaration on African Development is a major undertaking made jointly by African Countries and the international community to create a new, comprehensive and long-term framework for sustainable development in Africa. Consensus on the issues that are central to sustainable development in Africa, as well as the development priorities to be pursued, forms part of this new partnership. In addition, it is a partnership in which, on the one hand, there is agreement that African countries must assume full responsibility for putting in place necessary measures required to turn their economies back on the path of sustainable growth and, on the other hand, cooperating partners have undertaken to support such African initiatives.

Following the promising early post independence years, the economies of Sub-Saharan African countries began to experience dramatic down-turns, reaching a state of crisis during the 1970s and 1980s.

In a genuine attempt to address this deepening crisis, various programmes designed to promote economic recovery were launched, such as the Priority Programme for Economic Recovery in 1985, the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) from 1986 to 1990, the Lagos Plan of Action in 1990, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) in 1991 and the African Economic Community, known as the Abuja Treaty, in 1991. In addition, at the national level, many African countries adopted structural adjustment programmes. However, evidence on the ground is that limited success has been registered and African economies are to a large extent, still characterised by low economic growth rates, low productivity in Agriculture, skills shortages, high population growth rates as well as weak education and health delivery systems. Actually, Africa is still, by and large, outside the mainstream of global commercial and technological advances and decision-making processes.

**A much more imaginative and action-oriented approach for promoting genuine economic growth and sustainable development in African, therefore, remains an urgent requirement. The Tokyo Declaration on African Development attempts to provide this new approach, taking into account some of the following recent positive developments.**

**There now appears, for instance, to be a more genuine search for enduring political and economic reforms within Africa than was the case earlier when structural adjustment programmes were agreed upon, in most cases, simply to avoid imminent economic collapse. On the political front, there are encouraging movements towards participatory democracy and improved governance. At the same time, there appears to be more home grown initiatives to address macro-economic imbalances, to dismantle bureaucratic Government controls and excessive regulations, and to take other actions that are necessary to bring about market oriented policies with the view to improving economic performance. These evolutionary changes in perceptions are encouraging.**

**For this reason, closer cooperation with the countries of Eastern Asia is recommended, in view of the fact that, over some 30 years ago, many of them were at the same level of development as Sub-Saharan African countries then but have, in contrast, now achieved exceptionally high rates of growth and technological advancement. In this respect, the Tokyo Declaration on African Development offers an opportunity for Sub-Saharan Africa to explore the relevance of Eastern Asia development experiences.**

**With regard to this region, it is important to determine whether Southern African countries are in a position to commit themselves to initiating the kind of policy reforms that are required to achieve economic growth levels that have been enjoyed by the countries of Eastern Asia. Fortunately, the countries of Southern Africa have already made a commitment of this nature. As a regional grouping, they have also developed a common vision and pledged to work towards a shared future through the Southern African Development Community (SADC). They are actively engaged in a dialogue to address the economic and political issues that are critical to regional integration.**

In addition, the scale of domestic political and economic reforms undertaken by individual member states is such that there is increasing scope for mutually beneficial cooperation with the countries of Eastern Asia, within the context of the Tokyo Declaration on African Development.

However, it must be appreciated that mutual benefit is the most important factor which determines whether cooperation will take place in the long-term. That is, both Southern African and Eastern Asian countries must perceive real gains out of the proposed cooperation. In other words, it must be demand driven and involve as many economic agents as possible across sectoral boundaries. Based on recent general discussions and literature on the subject, I believe there is genuine interest in both Southern Africa and Eastern Asia for closer cooperation. Southern Africa is perceived in Asia as an emerging and potentially viable regional economic block on the African continent with which to explore economic ties, particularly since the installation of a democratically elected Government in South Africa.

On the other hand, because Southern Africa is embarking on a programme of social and economic transformation and regional integration, she is in the process of building bridges to secure assistance and share development experiences with other parts of the world, including Eastern Asia. The convening of this Conference on Southern African and Eastern Asia Experiences and Opportunities in Development is part of the process of building bridges.

The Tokyo Declaration on African Development is simply a political statement in which Africans and the international community commit themselves to doing certain things. Without mechanisms for follow-up action and a framework for reviewing progress made towards implementation, this Declaration would end up collecting dust like other resolutions on African development that have been made in the past. The task of following up implementation of this Declaration has been entrusted with the Government of Japan, the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa, which happen to be the three organisations that co-organised the Tokyo International Conference on African Development.



**In this regard, it is pleasing to note that follow-up action is already in progress and three meetings concerned with the operationalisation of the Tokyo Declaration on African Development have been convened so far.**

**The first meeting entitled "Asia-Africa Forum" took place in Bandung, Indonesia, from 12th to 16th December, 1994. The second meeting entitled "Regional Workshop for Eastern and Southern Africa on the Operationalization of the Tokyo Declaration" was held in Harare, Zimbabwe on 26th and 27th July, 1995. The most recent meeting entitled "Core Group Meeting of African Experts on the Operationalisation of the Principles of the Tokyo Declaration on African Development" was held in Seychelles from 19th to 21st December, 1995. These meetings brought senior African officials and experts together with their Asian counterparts for the purpose of working out a concrete plan of action based on the Tokyo Declaration.**

While evidence has been documented to show that there is no single Eastern Asia development model which can be grafted on to other developing countries, it is indeed widely agreed that there is a common thread of policy factors whose application is attributable to success in the high performing economies of Eastern Asia. The Tokyo Declaration on African Development upholds this view and provides a list of such policy factors for the purpose of exploring the relevance of lessons of experience from the countries of Eastern Asia. The meetings on the operationalisation of the Tokyo Declaration have therefore relied on this list of policy factors as a point of reference and, consequently, recommend the following special areas of focus around which mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries of Southern Africa and Eastern Asia should be based:

- (i) Human Resources and Institutional Development;
- (ii) Agriculture;
- (iii) Financial Intermediation;

- (iv) Private Sector and Industrial Development;**
- (v) Trade and Foreign Direct investment;**
- (vi) Infrastructure Development.**

**These special areas of focus have also been given priority within SADC as well as in the strategic plans of individual countries in Souther Africa. There is therefore consistency between policy focus being recommended for regional cooperation between the countries of Southern Africa and Eastern Asia and that which is already agreed at national and regional levels in Southern Africa. What remains to be done, however, is how to apply policy instruments in such a way that the countries of Southern Africa can achieve rapid and equitable growth at levels that are being recorded by the rapidly growing economies in Eastern Asia. This factor is the most fundamental aspect on this subject because it has been said that there is nothing "miraculous" about the development experiences of the countries of Eastern Asia but simply that they have performed the essential functions of growth better than most other countries.**

Within the framework of SADC, the countries of Southern Africa are determined to make the fundamental and far-reaching policy changes that are necessary to transform this region into a strong economic bloc, in accordance with global trends. In this respect, the Tokyo Declaration provides an opportunity for the countries of Southern Africa to learn how to perform the essential functions of growth as successfully as the countries of Eastern Asia. Some of the proposals emerging out of meeting on the operationalisation of the Tokyo Declaration address issues concerned with modalities of cooperation. This calls for new approaches in managing development cooperation, based on two-way flow of experiences instead of the traditional North-South or donor-recipient type of relationships. It is therefore recommended that, while calling upon the international community to augment resource commitments in support of activities arising from implementing the Tokyo Declaration, modalities of development cooperation between the countries of Eastern Asia and Southern Africa should reflect dynamism and be structured along the following mechanisms:-

- exchange of information and experiences;

- developing Asian-African networks;
- transfer of technology and know-how.

The expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries of Southern Africa and Eastern Asia will take place only if there is effective exchange of information and experiences. In particular, more information must be obtained by all concerned economic agents in Southern Africa and Eastern Asia on relevant experiences from special areas of focus that have been identified for cooperation. This means that, for instance, with regard to enhancing productivity in the Agricultural Sector, the policy factors which influenced dynamic growth in the food and agricultural sectors of countries in Eastern Asia must be studied and understood by relevant role players in the field of Agriculture within Southern Africa. Likewise, the Asian counterparts must gain deeper appreciation of the dynamics of the sector of Agriculture in Southern Africa. It is only through such exchange of information experiences by individual farmers and institutions, through meetings, workshops, training courses and attachments, that relevant experiences can be shared and usefully applied.

**Networking of institutions is also recommended as an appropriate modality of developing cooperation and as a powerful mechanism for exchange of information and know-how among relevant economic agents in the countries of Southern and Eastern Asia. Networking arrangements can be established in various fields including, Macro-economic Networks to facilitate exchange of policy related information and experiences in economic management; Human Resources Development Networks to promote exchange of information and experiences between management institutions, training organisations and Universities; Research Networks to facilitate exchange of information in the areas of scientific research and technological developments; and Trade and Investment Networks through regional and national Chambers of Commerce, joint business and economic councils and fair exhibitions.**

**Africa trails far behind other parts of the world in technological advances. The transfer of technology and know-how must therefore be regarded as one of the greatest challenges for African development and deserves to be given top priority within the context of implementing the Tokyo Declaration. This particular modality of cooperation must therefore be granted a special status in the programme of cooperation between countries of Southern Africa and Eastern Asia. In addition to promoting research networks referred to earlier, basic long-term training in science and technology related subjects will have to be embarked upon.**

**The Tokyo Declaration on African Development offers enormous possibilities for mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries of Eastern Asia and Southern Africa. There are tremendous opportunities and challenges involved as it should be expected with any major undertaking involving people, institutions and other resources.**

However, the potential benefits of such cooperation to the countries of Eastern Asia and Southern Africa are such that once the initiative has been taken to launch the programme of cooperation, there are good prospects that it will grow and become mutually beneficial. What remains critical at this juncture is that imaginative and practical modalities of cooperation are developed based on proposals that are currently being development through meetings on the operationalisation of the Tokyo Declaration on African Development.

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