

GRIPS Development Forum WORKSHOP
How can Japan effectively support economic growth in Africa?
- The African Perspective -

Japan's support to Africa's economic growth in the age of global climatic change
- Challenges and opportunities -

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In recent years, rapidly growing globalization has enhanced fierce competition not only for power and wealth, but also for resources, food and space, between countries and companies alike, especially now under the threat of global eco-climatic changes. Under these circumstances, redefining one's geopolitics becomes a matter of survival for every country within this globalized world. Japan can find a way out of this by developing and deepening new types of relationships, especially with African countries, based on the acknowledgment of mutual merits for both parties. Japan has what Africa needs the most: the green and environment-friendly technology and knowhow needed to gear its own development. Africa has what Japan lacks the most: untapped natural resources and a big market of more than 900 millions people, of which more than half is in the twenties. Africa and Japan share a pristine past, not spoiled by historically sad memories. Chances for creating such relationship between Africa and Japan have been wasted so far. We focus on this new type of Japan-Africa partnership, based on mutually sustainable partnership, and discuss how this can lead to everlasting wealth and stability for both of them.

1. Introduction

By the end of the 20th Century, humankind had entered a new era of tremendously fast socio-economic changes on the global scale, following the end of the Cold War. This globalization brings forth both the large benefits of the new global order and the multitude of problems appending to it, as well. Harsh competition, not only among companies or developed countries for leadership and wealth, but also for dwindling resources and space, is becoming a daily commonsense.

Countries all over the world, big or small, are now involved in fierce "geopolitical realignments" in order to adapt, to remain competitive and or to survive in the new global order. Competition for resources and secured markets are pushing leading countries to creating "safety

zones" for their trades through new types of diplomatic and trade cooperation. The cases of the USA economic zone encompassing almost all the American continent, with Canada and Mexico as spearheads, the fast extension of EU membership to many countries formerly under the Soviet Union control, the new aggressive advances of China and India in Africa, etc, are just some examples of this global trend for securing resources, energy, water and even the space needed to sustain the economic growth.

2. The global eco-climatic change issues

A corollary to all this tremendous development is the high speed deterioration of climate and ecosystems on the global scale.

Voracious factories and all our modern lifestyle are

powered by massive use of fossil fuels as main source of energy (95%), leading to those global issues as the global warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, acid rains, and all their corollaries. Forests and land development for forest products, for large scale agriculture or ranching, or even recently, for biofuels production, are ripping away every single day vast portions of tropical rainforests, that are known to play a very important role in the global eco-climate as sinks of CO₂, sources of O₂ and plentiful rainfalls. Destroyed forests mean destroyed habitats for unnumbered living species that go extinct together with the forests, even before we had learned about their very existence or importance as food or medicinal resources.

Changes in the climate and the ecosystems often negatively impact on land productivity due to droughts, desertification and soil deterioration, leading to very serious concerns about hunger and famine for the poor and food availability for the rich.

Considerable efforts have been made to mobilize a global understanding on the issues, both still, very little has been done toward their sustainable solution so far.

3. Japan's role in the global village

One thing is certain: the climate and ecosystem change issues, as well all the new global order problems, are global scale issues and inclusive. They have to be solved from a global approach, with the full commitment to mobilize all the individual efforts in each country.

Sustainable development, involving the use of green and environment-friendly technologies, and adoption of environment-friendly life-style, is the key to all the issues. The future of the mankind, *and not that of the Earth*, is in the balance!

Japan, as a leading economy, with well-known and world-wide tested environment-friendly technologies in the fields of energy production and consumption, transportation and communication, etc... has now to come out onto the stage, and help developing countries leap frog straight into their new technological era, without the sad and erroneous steps of adopting transitional technologies for their development.

For this, Africa seems to be the most indicated place

where the Japanese technologies could be put at use.

4. Africa as a partner?

For many people, even for some dear sons of Africa themselves, Africa is a wasted land, prone to misery. Long lasting economic failures and political instability especially during the post-colonial era up to the end of the Cold War, are still living proofs for this. Moreover, within the present circumstances, Africa will be, more than any other place, negatively affected by the predicted changes in the climate for the years to come, if no steps are taken.

Therefore the urgent need for finding environment-friendly and sustainable solutions to its development issues as a whole, even before getting into the full-gear stage of intense economic development.

Africa needs environment-friendly technologies for its energy production, energy use for goods productions and transformation. Africa needs to directly jump onto the hyper-highway of global information and communication technologies, and secure highly effective transportation systems to move goods and people across its vast territories. Africa needs the appropriate technology to exploit and transform its untapped goods and resources, through mutually profitable partnerships.

In fact, Africa does have within its lands what is needed for this type of partnerships: untapped natural resources and renewable energy resources, vast lands for agriculture or other environment-friendly development projects, a young and active population ready to learn and participate in the country-building activities through human capacity building, and stable, accountable and democratically elected governments, eager for *bringing their assets to the international bargaining table*, for the better living of their people...

5. Concluding remarks

The role of Japan in helping Africa realize this smooth development is enormous, and very beneficial to both, if considered from the new perspective of *mutually profitable partnership*. By opening these new avenues to bilateral cooperation, Japan will also secure for itself a *stable access to resources and new markets* for the many decades to come!