THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF AFRICA: A CHALLENGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM

By

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I. – INTRODUCTION

The growth record of the least developed countries (LDCs) of the world *(1)*, especially those of Africa, during the past two decades, has been very disappointing. Their plight has become so serious that it now represents a challenge of unquestionable immediacy to the world. Between 1960 and 1979, per capita income in 19 African countries grew by less than 1% per year, while during the 1970s, the growth of per capita income in the low-income countries of sub-saharan Africa averaged only 0.2% annually compared with 1.1% in the low-income countries of Asia and 2.9% in the developing countries in general. Indeed, optimistic future projections are equally grim. For instance, per capita income in low-income Africa is expected to stagnate at only 0.1% annually between 1980 and 1985 and 1.1% between 1986 and 1990, compared with growth rates respectively of 2.0% and 2.6% in low-income Asia and of 2.6% and 3.3% in developing countries in general *(2)*. The current dismal development outlook of the LDCs of Africa, though long recognised, has been blamed on a set of internal and external factors which militated against rapid economic growth. At the domestic front, structural problems associated with fundamental deficiency in physical infrastructure, lack of skilled manpower and administrative and managerial capabilities, the inadequate promotion of export industries, over-extension of the public sector and the continuing biases in the incentive systems against agriculture and faulty economic policies have combined to thwart recent efforts at modernization. In the same vein, a curious mix of unfortunate events in the external sector, such as the world-wide recession, inflation, sluggish inflow of foreign exchange attributable largely to the deteriorating terms of trade and discouraging growth of international aid resulted in financially weak economies in the LDCs at the eve of the 1980s. It is against this background that this paper examines the main features of the LDCs, the place of their domestic effort and the importance of external assistance in the global scenario for the development of the poorest countries of Africa with a view to making some policy recommendations.

II. – THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE LDCs

The LDCs of Africa share not only poverty but also certain basic economic disabilities which distinguish them from other more developed

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countries and which severely limit their ability to establish a sound basis for growth. The least developed countries face serious economic constraints in four key areas: –

(i) They need to achieve a high rate of domestic savings to be able to meet their investment needs. Capital accumulation necessarily precedes growth and development. For, as Arthur LEWIS notes, any country which saves and invests 20% or more of its GNP annually will break the vicious circle of poverty within the shortest possible time, irrespective of its ideological framework *(3)*. But, as Table 1 (Col.8) epitomises, only the Gambia and Lesotho out of the twenty countries under consideration maintained an annual average rate of investment of the order of 20% or more throughout the 1970s. Even so, to achieve a high level of investment is one thing and to invest in the right project at the right time and space is quite another. Aside from the fact that savings potentials are generally limited in the LDCs, the pursuit of wrong objectives and priorities would tend to reduce the impact of capital accumulation and investment. Indeed, the problem has not simply been under-investment in the aggregate sense per se but the productivity of investment. Conceivably, three factors tend to influence the impact of investments on growth more than other parameters. These are: unbridled population growth, political instability and infrastructural gaps.

Although low-income Africa has the highest death rates among major regions, its rate of population growth is higher than that of developing countries generally. This has immediate implications for increased productivity. Given that the traditional African agricultural systems involve extensive use of land, the increase in farm population without corresponding increase in arable land will lead to population pressures which now seem evident in Burundi, Rwanda, Lesotho, Niger and in the Mossi plateau of Upper Volta with its consequent decline in output. Also rapid population growth contributes to rural-urban migration, and to the increased demand for the provision of basic services, particularly schooling.

Since independence, most of the LDCs, including Benin, Burundi, CAR, Chad, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Upper Volta have experienced political and military turbulence of one kind or another which ultimately led to a change of government. This has in turn resulted in political instability which invariably affected the process of socio-economic development in several negative ways. For instance, it forced post-independence leadership to give high priority to short-term political objectives; it triggered large-scale displacement of people and induced a diversion of more resources to military spending.

Furthermore, the development of socio-economic infrastructures is necessary to realise external economies of scale and complementarities associated with investment of directly productive nature. In most of the LDCs, the transport and communications network and basic social services are generally inadequate. These infrastructural inadequacies erode their productivity and diminish the energy available for self-reliant local development.

(ii) The export-based capacity of these countries to import is highly limited. This group has been hit by a radical worsening of their balance of payments which, in part, is due to the fact that the growth of their export volumes slowed down or went into reverse during the 1970s (see Table 1, Cols. 11&12). But the bigger problem recently has been a jolting decline in their terms of trade due partly but not entirely to the oil, food and capital goods price increases which were the traumatic factor in 1979 and 1980. Oil imports alone, which absorbed 10% of low-income Africa's export earnings in 1970, are now claiming 22% *(4)*. Even as a percentage of total imports, the figure for Uganda in 1978 stood at 30% (Table 1, col. 10). Similarly, food imports in the Gambia and Somalia during the same year amounted to 24% and 25% of their import bills respectively.

The consequence of this sad trend has been to force cutbacks in the quantities of total imports. They reduced their current account deficits by curbing imports (and hence growth in view of the small size of most of them) rather than by expanding exports. In spite of this, the combined current account deficits of the low-income African countries have risen from 1.8% of their combined GNPs in 1970 to 3% in 1977 and 5.4% in 1980 *(5)*.

These countries have little temporary cushioning against such shortfalls left: the few who could do so have already extended their commercial borrowing, and virtually all have run down their foreign reserves. Given that the trend in prices of imports of these countries, particularly oil, is likely to remain upward, their balance-of-payments situation, if not seriously tackled, will continue to worsen with further depletion of their reserves, increased commercial borrowing and the rocketing of their debt-service ratio.

(iii) Associated with the problem of slow growth of exports in primary products is the issue of low productivity in the group's agriculture. Agriculture is at the heart of African economies. It employs as high as 80% of the workforce in most of these countries and accounts for a major portion of the GNP. The transport, industrial processing and trade sectors depend on the production of agricultural commodities, and incomes earned in this sector provide markets for domestically produced goods and services. Therefore, increased agricultural output is the single most important determinant of overall economic growth.

But, with the exception of Malawi and Rwanda (and to a lesser extent Benin, Burundi, CAR and Upper Volta) the average annual growth rate of agricultural production in the 1970s was less than the rate of population growth throughout the area (Table 2). Consequently, agricultural exports stagnated, food production per capita fell, commercial imports of food grains rose and more people shifted their consumption to wheat and rice thereby increasing their food dependency.

There are specific explanations for the poor agricultural record of the last decade. These include: disruptions caused by wars and civil strife, drought and poor rainfall patterns during the 1970s, neglect of agriculture by government and development theorists and misallocation of investment through over-emphasis on large-scale government – operated schemes. Also agricultural and economic policies and institutional frameworks were not conducive to increasing output: official prices were often too low, marketing systems too uncertain, inefficient and uncompetitive; input supplies too irregular and participation of farmers in rural affairs too limited. The agricultural extension effort was weakened by unfavourable policies, deficiencies of the public sector agencies which were responsible for spearheading rural development. Because of its critical role, growth-oriented policies are urgently needed in this sector.

(iv) The question of over-extension of the public sector in the face of acute shortage of skilled manpower and administrative and managerial capabilities is another common feature of the least developed countries of Africa. After independence, the LDCs inherited unevenly developed economies with rudimentary infrastructures. Markets often functioned imperfectly and foreigners dominated trade and most modern business. To capture the commanding heights of their economies and speed up development, post-independence governments expanded the public sector by moving into commercial and productive activities previously reserved for the private sector. Conceptually, this was a sound policy option but its implementation left much to be desired.

Although skilled and managerial labour force was in very short supply, policy makers proceeded to involve the public sector in almost all aspects of economic activity. It is now widely evident that most public enterprises in the area have been found to be corrupt, inefficient and heavily subsidized by the tax payer. To the extent that certain public enterprises, like airways, state trading companies, manufacturing enterprises, service and supply agencies, constitute a drain on their economies, growth must have been slower that it might have been with available resources. And this accounts in part for the comparatively poor record of the 1970s.

III. – ACTION ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT

The problems facing the LDCs require a frontal attack on two major fronts: domestic and global. First, let us look at the domestic aspect of the question.

(i) To start with, it is important for the LDCs to realize that the responsibility for their development rests entirely on their own shoulders. Even with all the external assistance possible, there can be no substitute for domestic effort. Undoubtedly, there is evidence to believe that there is a considerable level of excess capacity and under-utilisation of productive resources in many parts of the LDCs due mainly to inappropriate methods of production, distribution and consumption. For example, borrowed automated technology has encouraged investments in capital-intensive projects, which in our African labour surplus economies, has in turn aggravated the unemployment problem.

Apart from the use of appropriate technology, there is an urgent need to determine how the resources and energies of all economic agents can be better mobilised for developement. The efficient use of known natural resources – human and material – reduces wastes and facilitates the attainment of accelerated growth. Many of the LDCs have not been geologically surveyed, yet it is believed that there are traces of mineral deposits in some of them. Although some are less fortunate than others, governments of the LDCs should as a matter of deliberate policy encourage prospecting for minerals in their areas of jurisdiction.

(ii) The problem of neglect or inadequate promotion of export industries is another issue that deserves serious domestic attention. As noted earlier, the main cause of rising current account deficits and shortages of foreign exchange in the 1970s was partly the deterioration in terms of trade and partly the decline in aggregate volume of exports and the acceleration of imports. As a corollary, some combination of export expansion and import substitution might be the best policy option. Such a strategy would necessarily entail the increased production of exportable primary products and manufactured goods.

World trade in the 22 nonfuel commodities of greatest export interest to the group under review is projected to increase by 2.9% per annum during the 1980s as against an annual average increase of 1.5% in the same product group. Moreover, the weighted price of Africa's nonfuel commodity exports is expected to rise slightly so that the average value of world trade in these commodities will increase by 3.4% per year *(6)*. There is no reason why the LDCs of Africa should not try to step up their domestic production of exportables to take advantage of these encouraging forecasts.

Increased productivity in the agricultural sector in the LDCs, of course, will require that certain basic structural difficulties be overcome. These include: climatic and physical conditions, deep-seated problems of production, infrastructure and incentive. Much more work is needed on local adaptation and delivery of appropriate new-varietal technologies. Irrigation must not be neglected but concentration on it to the detriment of dry land farming is equally inadvisable. Improved management of water resources, and a review of key elements of their agricultural policy, including food pricing and the role of small farmers would enhance positive results in the LDCs' agricultural productivity.

With respect to manufactures, increased output is one thing and market access is another. Surely, the key question of the decade is how to achieve easy access to markets (i.e. open world trading system) in the face of slow growth and mounting protectionist pressures in the industrial countries.

A set of promising trade negotiations was concluded in 1979 under the aegis of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Three major results appear to have been achieved: a substantial reduction in tariffs; a refinement and improvement of international rules on non-tariff measures; and the adoption of a framework of procedural arrangements on the part of signatory countries. On paper, these results look like major achievements but in practice, they have dismally failed to allay the fears of the third world as a whole as regards the current rising tide towards protectionism. The LDCs expressed keen disappointment with the results on three grounds: First, that the tariff reductions on products of special interest to them fell short of expectation; second, that the most-favoured-nation (MFN) reductions implied an erosion of the margins of preferences enjoyed by the developing countries under the general system of preferences (GSP); third, that tariffs are relatively of little importance compared with non-tariff barriers to trade (i.e. subsidies, technical regulations such as health, safety and protection, customs valuation, import licensing, quotas etc.). Taken together, these affect volume and value of trade more than mere tariff charges.

Despite these obstacles to trade, the LDCs can still increase their export of manufactures not only in their trade with the rest of the world but also among themselves. While the existence of trade barriers is recognised, it must be noted that a general lack of industrial skills and capacity still remains a problem.

(iii)The other item on the agenda for a push in the LDCs turns on the development of critical manpower. The skilled manpower bottleneck should be the chief medium and long-term target for domestic-centred acceleration programme. The impact of education extends beyond the traditional production sector into the household. Educated women, even if they do not participate in the labour force, can have a significant impact on the country's economy through lower fertility rates, health information and more efficient household management. Furthermore, education does not relate only to the modern wage sector. Farmers and self-employed people in the urban sector are now thought of as contributing more to the country's economy if they have a higher level of education. Nor is the impact of education on development limited to economic growth; its effect on distribution and social equity is increasingly being recognised.

(iv) Finally, the uneconomic size of many of the LDCs imposes severe constraints on their development. Of all the 20 countries of the group in Africa, only four (Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) with a population of up to 13 million or more each, can set up any heavy industry (such as engineering and chemical plants) based on the home market. The technical and economic optima for many kinds of plants are necessarily large and the extent of individual national markets in the remaining 16 countries is generally too small to efficiently sustain such plants *(7)*.

Similarly, there are certain economies of scale in government. Micro-states like Botswana, CAR, the Comoros, the Gambia, Lesotho and Seychelles cannot, for instance, by themselves, individually, support efficient economic and social services (like airways, universities and medical schools).

Political fragmentation creates an a priori case for a great deal of batching of industrial, commercial, training and other activities in contiguous sub-regions. It creates many landlocked countries with problems and insecurities vis-a-vis access outward. It also puts a premium on transnational transport and communication linkages. Indeed, small size increases the horizontal interdependence among African countries and this makes the formation of one kind of economic integration or the other an inescapable strategy of economic development. Fortunately, some of the LDCs of Africa already belong to one form of grouping or another (like ECOWAS for West Africa, UDEAC for Central Africa and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference for Southern Africa). These regional groupings should be consolidated and those not already associated with them should join one.

IV. — AGENDA FOR GLOBAL ACTION

The international environment in which Africa's least developed countries are required to sustain their economies has been extremely oppressive and indeed exploitative. The LDCs neither get fair values for their products nor receive any protection for the accelerating cost of technology and essential imports, including the cost of importing oil.

Based on a report of experts appointed by the UNCTAD Secretariat in accordance with a decision taken in UNCTAD V, a Comprehensive New Programme of Action for the development of Africa's LDCs was hammered out and endorsed by the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government in 1980 *(8)*. Among other things, it recommends:

1) that the volume of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to African Least Developed Countries should immediately increase substantially, in real terms, so that these countries can realize economic and social changes and make real progress in the present decade. In that context, donors should:

   a) make commitments to give financial and technical assistance to individual Least Developed African Countries on a continuous and automatic basis and on highly concessional terms;

   b) streamline procedures of aid in order to reduce delays in approving projects and in disbursing funds;

   c) adopt criteria for project evaluation and selection based on the conditions and needs of African Least Developed Countries;

   d) refrain from using non-economic criteria in the allocation of aid;

   e) create mechanisms to control the implementation by donor countries of their aid commitments;

   f) cancel all debts so far contracted by member states, without any discrimination; and

   g) make greater efforts in granting aid in favour of the Least Developed member states;

2) that appropriate mechanisms be created urgently, at the international level, in order to finance the oil requirements of African Least Developed Countries and to reduce the existing heavy burden on their balance of payments and the uncertainty in oil supply.

The ECA was assigned the responsibility for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the new programme of action on behalf of the Least Developed African Countries.

The recommendations further emphasized the idea of world economic interdependence as a basis for supporting African development. The assertion that developing-country growth, through its spillover effects, can directly affect developed-country well-being is supported by a report prepared for the UNCTAD by economists at the University of Pennsylvania. The report concludes that a 3% increase in the growth rates of the non-oil-exporting developing countries could result in an annual increase of 1% in the growth rates of the OECD countries; and that this 1% increase would, for the industrialised countries, amount to the equivalent of about $ 45 billion plus its job creation and other secondary effects *(9)*.

To this end, the rich countries should see aid to the LDCs as an international responsibility. For, as Lester PEARSON succinctly put it, «international development is a great challenge of our time. Our response to it will show whether we understand the implication of interdependence or whether we prefer to delude ourselves that the poverty and deprivation of the great majority of mankind can be ignored without tragic consequences for all» *(10)*.

It is too early to say anything about the success of the new programme of action but one thing is certain. The development of the LDCs requires something more than the provision of aid, which unfortunately has been declining. Effective aid programme would help in the short – and medium – run, but in the long-run, radical restructuring of the world ecosystem appears to us to be inevitable. Consider much fundamental issues like: access to knowledge and technology which is at present restricted by the establishment of patents; the control of the creation and distribution of international reserves by the advanced countries through the expansion of their own national reserve currencies; the distribution of the value added of the products traded between the developing and the developed countries which is heavily weighted in favour of the latter; the existence of a formidable protective wall around the economies of the rich through tariff and non-tariff barriers and restrictive immigration practices; the inability of LDCs to influence important international institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the UN General Assembly and the overwhelming exploitative power of the multinationals. Surely, the solution to these problems requires the restructuring of the present world economic order *(11)*.

The attainment of this goal calls for a gradual but determined approach in view of the existing lukewarm attitudes in the advanced countries. First, all countries have to accept the urgent need to restructure the present economic order and back it up with political commitment to the idea. Second, a world summit at the highest economic decisions through existing international political level will be arranged to plan and identify the respective responsibilities of developing and developed countries in a joint endeavour to achieve the desired goal. Finally, a series of action-oriented decision-making conferences will be programmed to deal with various aspects of the entire gamut of international economic problems facing mankind.

One may enter a caveat here. Any new arrangements based firmly on the concept of equality of opportunities both within and among nations could involve certain short-run costs to some sections of society in the hope of realizing long-term key mutual benefits. Historically, acts of great politico-economic courage – like the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe or the New Deal for the United States – generally paid off, and the institution of a new international economic order will be in the long-term interest of all *(12)*.

V. – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The development problems of the poverty belt of Africa are real. The first step towards the solution of these problems is for the LDCs themselves to realize that their development is first and foremost their primary responsibility. International assistance – though very important and needed – cannot be a substitute for domestic efforts. Although the cards are stacked against the LDCs, the nature of mutuality of interdependence between the North and South demands close co-operation between them. The development gap between the rich and poor, if left to widen, will some day bring the world to crisis. Fundamental structural changes rather than marginal adjustments are required to correct existing inequalities. The quest for a new international economic order, despite inevitable short-run costs, should mobilise politicians and awaken public accross the globe to support the worthy goal.

NOTES

1. Developing countries are generally classified under two broad categories: Middle-income and low-income countries. But within the latter group, a third category currently made up of thirty countries known as the least developed countries (LDCs) has been identified and recognised by the United Nations for the purpose of special development assistance. These countries are defined as «countries with severe long-term constraints on development assessed on three basic criteria: viz – per capita GDP of $ 100 or less at 1970 prices, share of manufacturing of 10% or less of GDP, and 20% or less literate persons aged 15 or more». This paper focuses primarily on this group of countries in Africa which includes Benin, Botswana, Burundi, CAR, Chad, the Comores, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Upper Volta. The remaining ten others which are not specifically considered here are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, Maldives, Nepal, the People's Republic of Yemen, Arab Republic of Yemen, Haiti and Western Samoa. All the LDCs are of course considered also by the UN to be among the 45 countries «most seriously affected» (MSA) by recent adverse world economic conditions.

2. See *The OECD Observer*, No. 108, January, 1981, p. 22; and the World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*, 1981, p. 2.
3. W. Arthur Lewis, *Development Planning*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1966, pp. 115–120.
4. *The OECD Observer*, No. 108, January, 1981, p. 28.
5. *Ibid.*
6. See World Bank, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
7. For the minimum market size for heavy industries see Uka Ezenwe, «The Rationale of Integration in West Africa» in *Intereconomics*, No. 4, April, 1975, Hamburg, p. 107.
8. *OAU, Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980–2000*, OAU, 1981, pp. 99–103.
9. See Uka Ezenwe for further details, «Trade and Growth in West Africa in the 1980s» in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, September, 1982 (forthcoming).
10. Lester Pearson (Co-ordinator), *Partners in Development*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1969, p. 11.
11. See Willy Brandt (Co-ordinator), *North-South: A Programme for survival*, Pan Books, London, 1980. This important report focuses principally on the inadequacies of the present system and how to effect changes. It is highly recommended for further reading.
12. See *Ibid.*

TABLE I – LDCs of Africa: Basic Economic and Social Indicators

	Population in (mns) Mid-1979	Area in 1,000 sq kms	GNP per capita in US $ 1979	GNP per capita Av. growth% 1960-79	Adult Literacy rate 1976	Life expectancy 1979	Urbanisation 1980	Gross domestic investment (Av.)% 1970-79	Food as % of total imports 1978	Fuels as % of total imports 1978	Average growth in vol.% of exports 1970-79	Average in vol.% of imports 1970-79
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Benin	3.4	113	250	0.6	n.a.	47	14	8.3	15	15	-11.4	6.3
Botswana	0.8	600	720	9.1	35	49	n.a.	5.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Burundi	4.0	28	180	2.1	25	42	2	16.5	23	11	n.a.	n.a.
CAR	2.0	623	290	0.7	n.a.	44	41	0.3	17	2	- 0.5	-5.0
Chad	4.4	1,284	110	-1.4	15	41	18	-0.5	15	14	- 3.4	-0.1
The Comoros	0.4	n.a	230	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ethiopia	30.9	1,222	130	1.3	15	40	15	-1.8	6	12	- 2.7	0.4
The Gambia	0.6	11	250	2.6	10	42	n.a.	25.5	24	9	n.a.	n.a.
Guinea	5.3	246	280	0.3	n.a.	44	18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lesotho	1.3	30	340	6.0	52	51	5	24.4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Malawi	5.8	118	200	2.9	25	47	10	2.3	5	12	4.6	4.3
Mali	6.8	1,240	140	1.1	10	43	20	3.2	19	14	6.7	5.5
Niger	5.2	1,267	270	- 1.3	8	43	13	6.8	10	12	11.7	6.5
Rwanda	4.9	26	200	1.5	n.a.	47	4	18.9	n.a.	n.a.	1.6	10.5
Seychelles	0.1	n.a.	1,300	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Somalia	3.8	638	n.a.	-0.5	60	44	30	8.5	25	7	5.6	7.7
Sudan	17.9	2,206	370	0.6	20	47	25	8.0	19	1	- 4.4	4.5
Tanzania	18.0	945	260	2.3	15	52	12	3.0	11	19	- 6.6	- 0.5
Uganda	12.8	286	290	- 0.2	n.a.	54	12	- 13.1	8	30	- 7.0	- 10.5
Upper Volta	5.6	274	180	0.3	5	43	9	1.2	19	9	3.1	5.2
20	133.9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Sources:

The World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action, 1981; ECA, Survey of Economic and* *Social Conditions in Africa*, Part II, April, 1981 and *The United States and World Development, Agenda 1979.*

TABLE 2 – LDCs of Africa: Growth Rate of Agricultural Production 1969–71 to 1977–79
(Average annual growth rate in volume %)

4 +	3–4	2–3	1–2	0–1	<0
Malawi	Rwanda	Benin	Botswana	Ethiopia	Uganda
		Burundi	Chad	The Gambia	
		CAR	Lesotho	Guinea	
		Upper Volta	Mali	Somalia	
			Niger		
			Sudan		
			Tanzania		

Source: World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action,* p. 50.

RESUME

Les problèmes de développement de la «ceinture de pauvreté» en Afrique sont des problèmes réels. La première étape vers la résolution de ces problèmes est la prise de conscience des pays les moins développés du fait qu'ils sont d'abord et avant tout responsables de leur propre développement – L'aide internationale – bien que très importante et nécessaire – ne peut pas se substituer aux efforts nationaux. Bien que les dés soient pipés en défaveur des pays les moins développés, la nature de la mutualité de l'indépendance entre le Nord et le Sud exige une étroite coopération entre ces deux factions. Le fossé en matière de développement qui sépare les riches des pauvres, et qui s'agrandit, entraînera un jour le monde vers une crise terrible. Plutôt que des réaménagements marginaux, des changements fondamentaux dans les structures sont nécessaires pour supprimer les inégalités existantes.

La recherche d'un nouvel ordre économique mondial, en dépit des coûts inévitables à court terme, devrait mobiliser les hommes politiques et secouer l'opinion public à travers le monde, pour soutenir les efforts visant à atteindre ce but méritoire.