Sam Moyo: Speeches from the Archives

We are proud that CODERIA has Sustained itself over the Decades

Acceptance Statement by Sam Moyo after his election as CODESRIA's President at the 12th General Assembly in Yaounde, 2008

I would like once more to thank all those represented at the 12th General Assembly of CODESRIA held in Yaounde, for placing the confidence in me by electing me the new President of CODESRIA for the coming three years. Having been involved with CODESRIA over the last 30 years I am extremely honoured to be able to serve CODESRIA in its support to the various generations of African scholarship in the social sciences. I will always remember that it was through the CODESRIA that some of us were first able to publish an article, under the mentorship of its then leadership, and drawing inspiration from the vitality of the emerging and growing community of African scholarship. I am gratified that many of our senior scholars are here to witness the broader base of younger scholarship that has evolved from their vision of establishing CODESRIA.

We are proud that CODESRIA has sustained itself over the decades, through successive executive leaderships. In particular, I want to reiterate my personal gratitude, as well on behalf of the General Assembly, to the out-going Executive Secretary, Prof. Adebayo Olukushi for his sterling work and dedication to CODESRIA, over the last eight years. His was a complex challenge, at times highly conflicted, of managing the most recent leadership and organisational transition that CODESRIA has undergone. For, it was not too long ago that the institution faced the threat of division and loss of direction or even collapse!! We recognise his efforts towards resuscitating the COSEDRIA Secretariat's tireless service to African scholars whose vision remains to sustain a flourishing social science intellectual community, and to develop effective systems of promoting knowledge production and disse-.mination on the continent.

I wish also to congratulate the other 9 scholars who were elected, from Africa's 5 regions, to the present Executive Committee of CODESRIA. We thank them all for accepting the onerous but honourable task of serving the social science community for next 3 years. Together, the new Executive Committee is committed to fulfil their primary responsibility of overseeing the effective implementation of CODESRIA programmes within the framework of the CODESRIA Charter, policies and procedures. Indeed, it has been emphasized here that we will need to strengthen the accountability of CODESRIA, not only in terms of the use of its resources, but also in terms of improving its inclusiveness, reporting to and communication with the membership, as well as by mobilising wider participation in a broader range of programmes. Fortunately, this specific task, as pronounced here by participants at this General Assembly, of consolidating the new de-established governance system, while refining and streamlining the scope and quality of the planned programmes has been underway for a few years.

It will however be important in pursuing this task to adapt to the emerging dynamic context of change. First, there is growing interest in the work of and knowledge produced through CODESRIA by a broader base of African scholars and civil society activists, as well as by some governments and Pan Africa institutions. Second, there is greater attention being paid to the social science research and publications emerging from Africa, among scholars and analysts outside of Africa, particularly in the 'west', and more recently in the 'south' and 'east'. These tendencies place greater demands on CODESRIA to promote the capacity of African scholars not only to meet by the adequate (quantitatively and qualitatively) needs of these constituencies, within a focus and direction led by the African scholarship, but also to consolidate the critical African perspectives, within the wider hegemonic world of knowledge production.

Third, the material and social circumstances which we live in have in the last few years been changing dramatically. The unfolding financial and economic crises, following on the back of the earlier food and energy crises, within the context of relentless wars and conflict, are rapidly undermining the social and political conditions of Africa's growing poor. Indeed, the structural changes and the reconfiguration of state and international poor relations which are underway, are so significant that the very premises of knowledge making and the nature of knowledge required by African societies and the rest of the world, have a *per force* to be adapted. This will require that CODESRIA revisits most of the dominant conceptual frameworks and epistemological perspectives, as well as the phenomena or issues, that it has focused on over the last 15 years, and lead the production of alternative knowledge. Thus, as we redefine and streamline the existing intellectual agenda and programmes, CODESRIA needs to innovate.

Therefore, the second major task of the Executive Committee and Executive Secretariat is to design new programmes that can consolidate CODESRIA's position within the social science community and in society. Various speakers at the 12th General Assembly suggested a range of initiatives which CODESRIA could pursue in response to the above changing context, and create the basis for future work. One is that CODESRIA may need to ensure that African scholars are at the centre of articulating the nature of the current world economic crisis and its configuration in Africa and, lead the intellectual redefinition and of the developmental agenda and

social adaptations required to withstand the crisis, in order to sustainably reproduce African society in the world context. Related to this, CODESRIA may need to more innovatively address the perennial specific socio-economic problems which affect Africa. A case in point is the need to resolve Africa's agrarian questions, *vis-à-vis* various models of agrarian change, which have recently been placed on the agenda by external actors. In particular, the African food issue, within the fragile context of a deficient world food production, trade and energy system, and the threat of climate change, requires our attention, as do other specific issues.

Furthermore, it has been argued here that African social scientists will need to create adequate fora through which to lead the debates a variety of these 'ground' themes. Another pressing issue for instance is promoting an understanding of the nature and and sources of the conflicts faced by the continent, as well as the strategies required to manage these. The idea of regional integration, including the experiences of Pan Africanism and sub-regional economic cooperation, as vehicles for moving the continent out of poverty and underdevelopment, as well to influence politics at the world stage, also need to be thoroughly re-examined by scholars and debated in position.

CODESRIA on the one hand faces the challenges of facilitating and grooming young social science scholars and of nurturing change within the academe, while promoting the rebuilding of the appropriate institutions responsible for university training and basic research. On the other hand, CODESRIA needs to mobilise the whole range of scholars (from the first to the latest generations) to engage at the world stage in debates on the major social and political issues facing the continent. This requires promoting more rigorous research and the more effective organisation of the sound knowledge which is being accumulated on and about the continent.

A critical dimension of such innovation will be to find more effective and flexible tools, which can be used to attract and mobilise a wider range of middle to senior African scholars on the continent, as well as abroad, to play a more meaningful role in the execution of COSEDRIA's wider mission. All of this will mean deepening the CODESRIA membership, reforming or refining existing tools and widening the instruments used to implement the programmes.

In addition the Executive Committee and membership of CODESRIA will need to intensify their support to the Secretariat's efforts to create a stronger basis for the institutions financial and organisational sustainability. This will include strengthening the Endowment or Development Fund of CODESRIA on the one hand. On the other hand it requires serious efforts to re-invigorate CODESRIA's relationships with relevant African institutions, particularly through initiatives which contribute to promoting the rebuilding of the capacities of African universities and related research initiatives. Altogether, the consolidation of CODESRIA as an institution is necessary not only to ensure its continued relevance and sustainability, but also to engender the creation of strong and independent African voice.

In conclusion, l wish to commend CODESRIA's search process for its appointment of Dr Ebrima Sall as the incoming Executive Secretary. I can not think of a more suitable person for this job, in terms of commitment, diligence and dedication to the ideals of CODESRIA. As a deep repository of the CODESRIA experience and institutional memory the efforts of the Executive Committee in support of the Secretariat can be expected to be less daunting.

From left: Bonaventure de Santos, Ebrima Sall and Sam Moyo at the General Assembly