

## Editorial

# Africa at 50: Looking to the Future

As many West and Central African countries are celebrating fifty years of independence this year, CODESRIA and the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies of the University of Ghana, Legon, organised an international symposium to reflect on dreams and realities of African independence. Highlights of the symposium will be published in the next issue of CODESRIA Bulletin. In this issue, we publish sweet memories of one of Africa's most illustrious sons – Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana – through the inaugural lecture of Prof. Kofi Anyidoho, a member of CODESRIA Executive Committee, which he gave at his installation as the first occupant of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, in March this year. On behalf of the entire African research and academic community, CODESRIA congratulates Prof. Anyidoho on this well-deserved appointment and wishes him a very successful tenure in the advancement of scholarship in Africa and beyond.

The Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies was established at the University of Ghana, Legon, two years after the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Chair in Pan African Studies was established at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with Professor Issa Shivji as the first occupant. Hopefully, we will soon witness the birth of other chairs in pan-African studies named after great women and men of Africa and the African Diaspora such as Ruth First, Cheikh Anta Diop, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Amilcar Cabral, Tajudeen Abdul Raheem, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey. Such Chairs can help both in making the works of great pan Africanists known to the younger generations of Africans, and to also initiate critical reflections on the challenges facing our continent and its peoples in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Professor Anyidoho's interesting lecture takes us through the academic, philosophical, political and physical influences that clearly mark Nkrumah out as a pan-Africanist of distinction. Nkrumah's erudition, clarity of vision, courage, revolutionary spirit, and some of his successes and many other issues, are chronicled in the lecture. Kwame Nkrumah's story is that of an extraordinary symbiosis between visionary leadership and the will of the people as well as that of an individual and a nation inextricably woven together. The lecture, spiced with dramatic excerpts and anecdotes, posits that Nkrumah ended up being a controversial figure because 'he was too far ahead of his time', which made it difficult for his contemporaries to fully understand him. There is therefore a need to re-visit Nkrumah's legacy, as we re-conceptualise and work towards the free, united, respectable and respected, economically developed and democratic Africa that he envisioned.

The current debates on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that most countries of Africa are said to be far from achieving, are a reminder that the journey towards genuine freedom, peace and development has hardly begun in our conti-

nent. The setting of the MDGs was already, in itself, a kind of testimony that the goals of independence have not been achieved.

The Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development held in 1995 constituted a first attempt by the international community to make global and national development processes more inclusive. Fifteen years after the 1995 Copenhagen Summit, a cursory glance at social developments in Africa would lead one to conclude that important as it was, the summit's decisions have not led to inclusive social development for most African countries. According to Jimi Adesina, social development in this period has been hampered by various social and economic crises and the resultant 'adjustments' and reforms have further complicated the problems. His article, in this issue of the Bulletin, calls for a wider vision and a longer gaze on society and a move towards gender equality and social solidarity, and to make the reforms more relevant to quick recovery and faster social progress.

Indigenous African epistemologies and languages are inestimable treasures, and the fact that they were not integrated into colonial knowledge systems is not an excuse to relegate them to the periphery of the modern knowledge system and replace them by the so-called 'universal' systems which are, essentially, products of Western scientific traditions. These systems, established by the colonial administrations, have also succeeded in disconnecting the African academy from the various social institutions that could have enhanced endogenous knowledge production. One important consequence of all this is the partial alienation of some of the intellectuals of this continent, who are wallowing in a pool of 'borrowed' cultures. Indeed, the African knowledge system is a bifurcated one, and in the African intellectual community the 'non-europhone' intellectuals (Ousmane Kane) constitute a large marginalised group. Teboho Lebakeng's article calls for a shift from Eurocentricism which has severed African intellectualism and polity, and painted African knowledge systems negatively and as the root cause of the continent's contemporary problems of underdevelopment. Indigenous knowledge, she argues, is the key to sustainable social and economic development; it is through these that we can reverse what she calls the current situation of 'epistemicide' and 'linguicide' that Africa is currently suffering from. The major problems facing the African academy in this context are surmountable if only we would make conscious efforts to know ourselves and how much we have and are contributing to world civilisation.

This issue also contains an article calling for an appraisal of 'academic freedom'. The author, Philip G. Altbach, reveals that this universally practised right, which has become a core value for good quality higher education, has been much confused

with other issues of academic and institutional welfarism, politicking and accountability in contemporary times. It is time to re-think and re-define the term, especially in the context of internationalisation and other kinds of profound transformations going on in the higher education sector. However, it is not certain whether Altbach's call for a return to some kind of orthodox approach to academic freedom will get many supporters in Africa. The Kampala Declaration, whose 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in a major CODESRIA conference held in Oran, Algeria, in March this year, was informed by a broader view of intellectual and academic freedom (see brief report in this issue).

The present crises of legitimacy and management facing the Euro have attracted the attention of one of Africa's eminent intellectuals, Prof. Samir Amin. Underscoring the inseparability of a state and its currency for the proper functioning of capital, he submits that creating the Euro in the absence of a European state is an aberration, a decision deliberately taken to keep the oligopolies in power and forestall any challenge. This article suggests an alternative in what he calls a 'European monetary

snake' by which each European state would remain monetarily sovereign, managing its own economy and currency, but still operating within the limits of free trade.

The international economy is gradually shifting base, presently from Europe to Asia, and it is envisaged that it would reach Africa, making it the continent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will surely require some deconstruction and reconstruction, unprecedented changes and new discoveries. Africa must prepare adequately to face the challenges, so there is a need for a revival. This is why Thiam talks of an 'International Symposium on African Renaissance' in his article. He however warns against a Renaissance that takes after the European Renaissance of the 15<sup>th</sup> century which focused only on culture. Instead, the African revival must permeate the entire African community in all its ramifications. Recalling the black race revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the pioneering efforts of Cheikh Anta Diop, Franz Fanon and Aimé Cessaire, he outlines necessary steps to be taken to fulfil the dreams of Africa, past and present.

Ebrima Sall  
**Executive Secretary**

Alex Bangirana  
**Head, Publications**