

Farewell Message to Adebayo Olukoshi and a Word of Welcome to Ebrima Sall

When a house-builder has the task to construct a well-built house, he knows that the starting point is the foundation, which should be firm enough to withstand the full weight of the walls and the ceiling that such a building is supposed to support.

A historian, a sociologist or any other social scientist can begin his case study analysis by the present, go to the past and return to the present to state his/her thesis, or simply respect the chronological order - starting from the past to the present - depending on his/her research design and the way he/she would like to state or defend his/her main thesis.

However, a farewell message dedicated to a colleague, that is also a friend and with whom we shared joys and difficulties - although being an analysis or an evaluation of his work but at the same time being also a way to express our feelings such as friendship and gratitude - seems to me more difficult to express in written or spoken words. Where to place the starting point or what to say when words are not always good enough to express sentiments, and sometimes are even less strong than a gesture or even a simple smile?

As Habermas said when he was invited to speak about his biographical roots and motifs to his thought¹, "the written form disguises the stigma of the spoken". In the impossibility to be physically present today in this ceremony that celebrates Adebayo Olukoshi, the outgoing Executive Secretary of CODESRIA known fondly as 'Bayo', I will use this advantage and the recourse to the written word to express myself without compulsion and the 'inquisitive' vigilance of the public.

During the 12th General Assembly held in Kampala, Mohamood Mamdani, directing his words to Bayo's work as Executive Secretary, even if he used other words than mine, spoke of the Executive Secretary as being the 'soul' of CODESRIA, without of course ignoring the role of the organs of CODESRIA. In other words, he runs the day-to-day af-

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fairs of the institution and not only negotiates but above all guarantees the 'wellbeing' of the Council.

Adebayo Olukoshi assumed the leadership of the Executive Secretariat of CODESRIA in February 2000 under a situation of crisis, and leaves CODESRIA on March 31st 2009 in a stable situation. The crises that affected CODESRIA during his first mandate as Executive Secretary, was witnessed by some of the invitees and CODESRIA staff present in this ceremony, such as the current President Professor Sam Moyo - who happened to be the Vice-President of the Council when Bayo was appointed Executive Secretary, and Dr Ebrima Sall, who takes over from Bayo as the new Executive Secretary. Under Adebayo Olukoshi's mandate - and thanks to his ability, hard work and special sense of diplomacy to manage public relations with the donor community - the Council overcame a difficult financial situation and re-established the confidence of our partners, while maintaining at the same time the independence vital for its mission and role as pan-African facilitator of knowledge production by social researchers. For the very first time in the history of CODESRIA, an Executive Secretary finishes his mandate with no sign of crisis. We owe this stability to an enormous number of committed people, but above all we owe it in particular to the outstanding commitment of Adebayo Olukoshi, Executive Secretary of CODESRIA for the past 8 years.

In the course of his mandate, Bayo worked with three different Presidents and Vice-Presidents, and made a short transition to the fourth Presidency, meaning certainly also three to nearly four different characters, and different experiences and ways of thinking and working. Once again, Bayo had the ability to shift amongst the three to nearly four forms of

leadership and patiently, to deal with members of the Executive Committees, with maturity and wisdom. During Bayo's mandate all members witnessed the growth of the Executive Secretariat, in numbers, quality, gender, age and regional inclusiveness.

The membership of CODESRIA means a commitment with the principles of the CODESRIA Charter, and a commitment to the African academic community. To be a senior staff of CODESRIA means all the above-mentioned obligations, plus a leadership profile, added by the personal characteristics each one of us uses to work, communicate and build a team. More than commitment and leadership capacities, the post of Executive Secretary means also and above all, should involve a strong dedication, loyalty and a high sense of responsibility.

As Executive Secretary, Bayo also used his easy way to communicate and his human sensibilities, flavoured with a strong proportion of passion and commitment, to direct the Council's destiny. Let me borrow from his own words summing up his trajectory within CODESRIA, to say Bayo is a 'child of CODESRIA', whose dedication has generated and propelled his passion to contribute his modest best to the edification of CODESRIA. I can still hear Bayo's voice, in the course of our working closely together over the thick and thin of the past six years, reaffirming something similar to the following words: 'People can hurt me, touching some points of my professional life. It's not easy to accept and I will do something to revert the situation. But do not touch CODESRIA! Regarding this point, I can be very hard and implacable to defend the institution!!!'

Bayo is also a man, and a human being. All of us had a chance, more than once, to witness his human sensibility to approach members of his staff with a familiar problem, or facing any kind of difficult situation in his/her private life. All of us had also many opportunities to witness his human face, particularly in special occasions where we had to share joys or

moments of affliction and loss of members that are by themselves the history of CODESRIA. And all of us certainly experienced the way he seduced us with his smile while persuading us to give a bit more of ourselves, or simply to calm us at difficult moments, or transmitting a sense of confidence.

It is clearly not my intention to undertake an assessment of Bayo's work. This occasion is reserved for paying tribute and expressing my gratitude to what he has achieved for CODESRIA. Even then, I cannot avoid underlining how difficult it is to measure Bayo's qualities in words or even numbers, due to the incalculable value of his work and dedication to the growth of the Council and the African research community.

I served the Executive Committee of CODESRIA during six consecutive years, three of them in the Presidency, while Bayo was the Executive Secretary. I want to thank you Bayo, not only for your outstanding commitment during this period, but also for your advice, support and friendship, as well as for the way we walked side by side in the interest of CODESRIA. As your 'compagnons de route', I am proud of the understanding we built together, to overcome the daily challenges of being in charge of the destiny of CODESRIA.

Dear Bayo, even when the 'written form disguises the stigma of the spoken' and allow 'the better argument to win the day', to quote Habermas once more (as the written word is clearly always short and limited to express sentiments such as friendship), let's just say as many times as we can, 'Thank you very much indeed, Bayo'.

Now permit me to turn my attention to Huseina, your dear wife and mother of your beautiful daughter and lovely son.

Huseina, I also have a word of thanks for you, for the understanding and support you gave Bayo during his eight long years of total commitment as Executive Secretary of CODESRIA. Words are all we've got, so allow me to say: Many thanks for the many hours where you had to play the role of mother and father, while your husband was away from the family intimacy you and your children provide, working for CODESRIA. My gratitude goes also to your two children. And with these simple words, full with friendship, allow me to send you and your children, my sisterly embrace and the best of wishes.

To finish, I would like to address a short message to Ebrima Sall.

In doing so, I would like to say the problem one faces in saying farewell is similar to that which you face when you have to welcome a colleague that is also a friend,

especially one who comes from within the ranks of (CODESRIA), and has shared with you and colleagues over the years the day-to-day mission of managing the affairs of CODESRIA, an institution he knows better than most of us here present.

During the last six years I spent as an Executive Committee member, I had a chance to know Ebrima better, whom I met for the first time, if I'm not wrong, during the 90's. I have to pay my respect to his qualities, particularly his commitment, professional honesty, and profound loyalty to CODESRIA. Ebrima is also to me one of the most important pieces of the memory of the institution during the last ten years. Above all, Ebrima is a friend for whom I owe my esteem. His profile and qualities gave all of us a vote of confidence in his leadership of the CODESRIA secretariat as the next Executive Secretary. Ebrima, let me welcome you as Executive Secretary of CODESRIA and wish you abundant success in your new position. You can count on my total support to your work, anytime!

Although this is your day, Bayo, my fraternal embrace goes for both of you, Bayo and Ebrima

Notes

1. Jur gen Habermas Public Space and Political Public Sphere-the biographical roots of two motifs in my thought, Commemorative Lecture, Kyoto Nov 11, 2004.



Africa Development (ISSN 0850 3907) is the quarterly bilingual journal of CODESRIA published since 1976. It is a social science journal whose major focus is on issues which are central to the development of society. Its principal objective is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among African scholars from a variety of intellectual persuasions and various disciplines. The journal also encourages other contributors

working on Africa or those undertaking comparative analysis of developing world issues.

Africa Development welcomes contributions which cut across disciplinary boundaries. Articles with a narrow focus and incomprehensible to people outside their discipline are unlikely to be accepted.

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