

Africa is new global growth pole, but continent must not rest on its laurels, says Janneh

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Malabo (Equatorial Guinea), 27 June 2011 (ECA) - UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Mr. Abdoulie Janneh said yesterday in Malabo that while Africa is increasingly being recognized as a destination for foreign investment and as a global growth pole, the continent should not be “too sanguine” about this because its growth rate of 4.7% in 2010 and projected at 3.7% in 2011, is far below the minimum growth rate estimated to achieve the MDGs.

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[Janneh calls for more youth mobilization initiatives on climate change, development](#)

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In an address to the 17th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, Mr Janneh said the downward revision of Africa's growth rate is partly due to global events like high food and fuel prices, the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan, troubling fiscal conditions in Europe and political developments in North Africa.

[Statement by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh](#) to the 17TH Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council

He said Africa's commitment to improved governance since the adoption of NEPAD and APRM was not misplaced and might even have provided a safety valve in some countries by helping to maintain political stability in the face of severe economic shocks.

“Indeed, I see the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and changes elsewhere in North Africa as evidence of the desire to upscale and improve governance. While youth unemployment was a factor, the desire for greater freedom, demands for greater accountability and distaste with the scale of corruption also played a significant role in the demand for change,” said Mr Janneh.

Stating that current economic and governance conditions were merely a snapshot, he said: “We now need to begin to connect the dots of several emerging trends which indicate that we are on the cusp of a new era whose final shape is yet to emerge. Globalization has changed the nature of the world and we now have to contend with recurrent economic crisis, worsening environmental degradation and inadequate and jobless growth. When we factor in the rise of the emerging economies, faster ICT enabled flows and changing global demographics then it is obvious that we have to find new ways of coping with the world that we now live in”.

Mr. Janneh said the choice of the theme of the Summit, “*Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*”, is apt because of the worrying truth that Africa's young people lack adequate preparation and guidance to cope in a rapidly changing world.

“The life experience for a majority of them is of joblessness, poverty and instability aggravated by conflict, displacement and health pandemics such as HIV/AIDS,” he said, adding that “Africa's youth live in such despair that they are vulnerable and likely targets for recruitment into militant activities”

The obvious solution then is to channel their energies into positive and productive activities by empowering them in a manner that promotes sustainable development, said Janneh.

He said a good starting point would be for African governments to provide a compelling vision and realizable plans for the future that would give hope to Africa's youth, recalling that the continent's Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in March 2011, had pledged to develop inclusive policies to address widespread poverty and youth unemployment while continuing to mainstream related gender concerns.

“We must at the same time invest in the education of Africa's youth and equip them with skills for coping in today's world. With only 5% of our populations enrolled in universities, every effort must be made to enable Africa's youth to become good entrepreneurs, managers or workers,” said Janneh.

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