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## Developmental state imperative in Africa

Pretoria, South Africa 28 July 2015 (ECA) -An academician at the University of Botswana has underscored the importance of Africa building democratic developmental states, citing the Southern Africa diamond endowed nation, Botswana, that was able to graduate from underdevelopment by adopting a developmental state.

Prof. Emmanuel Botlhale, from the University of Botswana, on Tuesday told a regional conference here on Building Democratic Developmental States for Economic Transformation in Southern Africa, that Botswana's case demonstrates the fact that developmentalism is an imperative in Africa.

Botswana, alongside others such as Mauritius, has demonstrated that a successful developmental state in Africa is possible, Botlhale stated.

Emerging as one of the poorest nations in the world in September 1966, Botswana adopted developmentalism to graduate from underdevelopment.

It was crucial, Botlhale said, that the ruling political party then, the Bechuanaland Democratic Party, through its election manifesto, decided to direct the trajectory of economic development in Botswana and decided on a developmental state.

"It decided to nationalise mineral wealth and extracted rents from the mineral sector to found a developmental state. Furthermore, it founded a sound development planning and budgeting regime and institutions and trained a bureaucratic cadre."

While resource extraction was fuelling conflict in Africa, Botlhale said Botswana has demonstrated that resource blessings need not degenerate into resource curses, saying that the country did so by developing a sound legal - institutional framework of mineral wealth management and that this model can be adopted in existing and emergent resource-rich African countries.

He, however, observed that while Botswana is one of the few successful states in Africa, it is afflicted with myriad development challenges such as poverty, unemployment, income inequality, mono economy and middle income trap.

"These are pathologies of developmentalism, not its essentials. Therefore, moving forward, there is a need to develop policy responses as Botswana is doing," Botlhale added.

Africa, with wealth resources countries have failed to translate into equivalent wealth for the people which should have enabled Africa to be amongst the world's most developed regions by now and regrettably, the continent's development has lagged all other regions.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, Southern Africa Trust and Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, has called for a regional conference to explore the opportunities and challenges that Southern African countries may confront in their efforts in constructing democratic developmental states.

The three-day conference in Pretoria, ending Wednesday, is expected to come up with a policy document on building developmental states that outlines key policy issues, possible policy options and roadmap for Southern African countries.

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