



Information and Communications Technologies as Tools for African Self-Development

Towards a Re-Definition of Development

Towards a New Definition of Development

The quintessential dream of any group of peoples or nations is the pursuit of self-actualisation in a structure and context in which they are in full command of their destiny and own the means and processes by which they seek to attain that goal. The correlative responsibility and obligation of their leadership is to mastermind the strategies for such an effort, in close consort with the people. This involves identifying, defining and mobilising their combined talent and resources, creating a context and environment most conducive to the maximum realisation of the goal, setting significant targets and the indicators for self-monitoring, and systematically quantifying and highlighting cumulative achievements for the purpose of periodic review and reinforcement.

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The context of that dream, the compelling condition which the people seek to alter, the pursuit of the promise of new and better, more rewarding or simply more exciting conditions, is what constitutes society's challenge. The response to that challenge, the mobilisation of resources and the galvanisation of a collective genius in an effort to propel society over the hill of challenge to the valley or plain fields of resolution beyond, to new vistas and new conditions, is what I would call "development".

Cast differently, I would say that development is simply the process of problem solving or responding to new challenges with a view to mastering them. In this light, problems constitute a key and *necessary* ingredient of development. Without problems, there is nothing to solve. Without challenges, there is nothing to master, at least in the context of this discourse. Without problems and challenges, therefore, there can be no development, because the necessary ingredient for it is absent.

By this definition, development is a process, the very process of problem solving. Peoples and societies that do not engage in the process of problem solving can, *ipso facto*, not be said to engage in a development process. This holds true even if their condition, material or otherwise, undergoes substantial transformation in the relevant period in question. Because such material changes are, if you will, attributes or the outcome of a process essentially masterminded by people and institutions outside of the subject society, they constitute the development of those who undertook the process, not of those presumed to be the beneficiaries of the process, unless they themselves are the prime actors in driving the process. What this means is that if a group of people or institutions not directly involved in the problem to be solved, undertakes the process of developing a solution, it is those who undertake the process who have achieved development, not the presumed beneficiaries of the end result. Societies without problems or challenges are, almost by definition, intellectually moribund, guaranteed to decline in a process of incurable atrophy. The pace of such decline would depend on the residual intellectual reserve it had garnered from when last it was gainfully engaged in the process of its own

transformation, and the comparative condition of its immediate and global contexts.

In this regard, I am compelled to postulate that, to the extent that much of what has taken place in the development process as it pertains to Africa, has been masterminded and executed primarily outside the command and control of Africans, it is only these non-Africans who can legitimately be said to have experienced development because it is they who have undertaken and undergone these processes of development. Africans then, the inventory of the results of such processes notwithstanding, would have been little more than spectators at the arena of development, observers on the sidelines of history, watching the process of transformation to which they have lent their name, with little or no substantive intellectual, psychological or emotional gain or advancement from the process.

Problems and their close relatives, which we call challenges, if they constitute the necessary ingredient of the development process, then become, in their purest form, critical assets, strategic assets, top amongst the most important assets in the development of any group of nations or peoples.

Innovation, Development, Problem Solving and the Search for Knowledge

While I have postulated that innovation and development are a direct outcome of problem solving, there are those who argue that innovation and development need not focus on problem solving, but arise out of people seeking knowledge. We can close the seeming gap by simply understanding that even the search for knowledge is fundamentally an effort at problem solving. Whether the problem in question is material, critical, philosophical, artistic or seemingly esoteric, is simply a matter of specificity. The distinction between the “pure sciences” and “applied sciences”, “pure mathematics” and “applied mathematics”, which used to dominate the science curriculum in my school days, were an attempt to make this distinction. All pursuit of knowledge has a fundamental

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motive or motivation, and that motive or motivation, I would argue, is more often than not conceptualised as a problem to be solved.

The Right of Ownership of Problems

If problems are critical strategic assets, the response to which is the process of development, then the notion of the right of ownership of problems becomes a significant issue. If I need my problems to stimulate or compel me to engage in a problem-solving process, which constitutes my development, then I must, in some way, protect that right of ownership as a way of protecting my right to develop. The implications of this are potentially vast and inherently controversial. There is no room to detail this argument here, except to state that the right of ownership becomes a fundamental right in the realm of intellectual property rights.

I have argued elsewhere that the importance of the notion of the right of ownership of problems rests on the fact that innovation is derived from problem solving. The opportunity for innovation and creativity is inherent in problem solving. If, therefore, you take over my problem, you cause me two problems: you deprive me of the opportunity to be innovative, and you leave me with the residual guilt of incompetence. And in taking over my problem and proffering a solution, should your solution fail, not only do you blame me, but my problem continues to fester and become more debilitating because I would have lost much precious time in the interim.¹

The Value Inherent in Problems

The deduction, therefore, that having problems is desirable, would not be too far-fetched. This value inherent, in a generic manner, in problems is what problem-solvers see as opportunities. One need only look at societies in their phases of quantum development to see the direct correlation between such development and the enormity of the problems and challenges they had to solve. For example, without problems to solve, the

United States of America would never have been able to achieve the great leaps of development it did in its hey day.

In fact, the very essence of a Renaissance is the legacy of a new spirit of problem-solving and the search for knowledge, extreme self-confidence, and a shared feeling that nothing is really impossible, no problem cannot be solved with the right combination of intelligence, diligence, scientific excellence and relentless effort, all of this with an abundance of *joie de vivre*. The intellectual, social and cultural impact that all of this has on society is what gives Renaissance that quality of boundless outburst of talent, energy and creativity. It is not accidental that America and Americans often refer to their nation as “the land of opportunities”.

“Response Capacity” as the Key to Self-Development

But problems can overwhelm nations and societies much in the same way as they do individuals, families and communities. How then do we position ourselves with regard to the potential trauma of problems, which can overwhelm society? Although there is not sufficient space to exhaustively answer this question here, suffice it to say that the challenge in such problem situations comes not from the fact of the existence of the problems, but the shortfall in the response capacity of the society to meet them. Such response capacity would be the composite of society’s technological, intellectual, historical, psychological, religious, political, material, knowledge, and information capacities, and other capacities of specific relevance to the problems at hand. This would include the level of faith, self-confidence, drive, ambition and such other intangible assets and resources that society can draw on, and the extent to which its environment is conducive to problem solving.

This last component, the conducive environment, would include internal synergy, coherence and common purpose, support systems nationally and within the regional, and continental and global environments. It would include the potential impact of enabling or debilitating international treaties, controls or practices, biases and prejudices.

In this paradigm, our perception and conceptualisation of the development process, of development assistance, take on a different outlook. This new definition, I humbly believe, is far more accurate in assisting us to understand the challenges of development. Furthermore, it holds much greater efficacy and prospects of realisation in a process which offers more respect and acknowledgement of the talents and resources of the concerned peoples, and their permanent and continuous capacity to not only effect self-development, but also to make their fair contribution to the development of all society and mankind.

Notions of Poverty and Wealth and their Impact on Self-Development

The notions of poverty and wealth take on a very different meaning and configuration in this new definition of development. This, in turn, has serious implications for how we prosecute the process of improving the quality of life for all the world's peoples, and increasing the opportunities for the pursuit of self-actualisation.

In listing some of the components of a people's response capacity for solving their problems earlier, I included faith and self-confidence amongst the intangibles. These fall into what we might refer to in general as psychological response capacities.

The very use of "rich" and "poor" nations as the dichotomous delineation of the world's peoples has an inherent debilitating effect of incapacitating the so-called "poor", which is a majority of the world's population, through undermining their self-confidence, however inadvertent the process might be. The fact is that the labels *do* tend to stick, and with that comes the psychological impact on both those so labeled and those outside the category who observe or respond to them. It affects the ability to fairly and accurately identify and quantify the resources and capacities of those on the receiving side of this dichotomy; it suppresses or depresses their competitive capacity; it detracts from the authority of their opinion, even on matters that directly concern them or that any balanced assessment would have shown them to be the most

competent about the nature of their life's challenges, for example, and how best to solve them.

Overall, it produces a skewed perception of the world, its challenges and opportunities, and distorts the efficacious solutions to its problems, and the competencies and expertise required to address them. At the end of the day, this flawed paradigm leaves a majority of the world's people as outsiders to the prosecution of human progress, including the prosecution of their own lives and legacies.

The burden of this dichotomous delineation is not new. Before "rich" and "poor" nations, the dichotomy was "the haves" and "the have-nots". The history of this is extensive. "Developed" versus "Developing", "First World" and "Second World", and when the evidence stacked up on the side of "Developing" became too unmanageable, a modification was made into a tripartite system in which the "Third World" emerged. The troubling discomfort of the over-crowding of this new category led to a new device, the "Least Developed Countries", or LDCs. It is as certain as night follows day that new dichotomies are in the works. The Information and Communications Technologies sector of the development industry already has a handful, including "the connected" and "the unconnected", the "digitally what-have-you" and the "digitally what-have-you-nots".

Self-Confidence, Development and African ICT Experts

To the extent that the most critical resource combination required for self-development is a common shared vision backed up with self-confidence, self-esteem, commitment, and the determination to make it no matter how daunting the obstacles, any structure or approach that undercuts that self-confidence or self-esteem of a people invariably militates against their ability to develop, no matter how subtle the effect may be. This would suggest that the very construct we use to define the development challenge and how we portray the subject society and its people are integral and important components of how we position the prospects of success. This issue calls for attention, because a vast

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number of highly qualified and capable Africans who would otherwise be key to the continent's quantum development process remain outside the organised effort, either kept out of it by default, or keeping out of it themselves because the definition and portrayal of Africa, the African condition and the African challenge are anathema to their self-perception, and self-esteem.² There are complex aspects of this issue, but this should suffice.

Development Assistance and the Dynamics of the Development Industry

Development assistance, then, becomes the disposition of that regional or international context and the impact of its systematic and systemic intervention to jumpstart, enhance or advance the internal process of problem solving by the societies in question. As such, it is a *second-tier* phase of intervention in the problem solving process, not the primary or *first-tier* phase, which, of necessity, must be designed and managed internally by the society seeking to develop itself.³ The creeping recognition of this compelling need to re-arrange the pecking order is the right and responsibility, indeed the authority, to mastermind Africa's development, is suggested in the process by which the notion of "stakeholder" has entered the lexicon of development assistance.

The content or substance of such systematic second-tier intervention would be the plethora of resources, which include funding, expert advice, investment, market opportunity, skills transfer, shared intellectual property and, above all, and most relevant to our preoccupation here, access to, and the exchange of, knowledge and information, and the intellectual processes that drive them, what we otherwise call intellectual property.

The Intrinsic Benefits of Development—Defining the Horizon Map

It is axiomatic that before embarking on any major enterprise such as would require tenacity and possible sacrifice, we should have a reasonable

idea of where we are going, what we are looking to achieve, and how to recognise both when we find them. In engaging in the development process, the potential benefits are diverse. Besides the material impact on the extent, range and quality of the amenities of life, such as improved infrastructure and utilities, increased income and the greater access which that brings, there are new or increased capacities resulting from the process of problem solving itself, which are very critical to creating the foundation for sustained and sustainable development.

These outcomes resulting from engaging in the development process are what we essentially call intellectual property, in the broadest sense. They include new knowledge or new configurations of old knowledge, new or increased awareness, new ideas, innovation, artistic, literary and cultural expression and output, new technologies or applications, a heightened enthusiasm and self-confidence for driving the process farther into new and unknown territories, and more. All of this contributes to vastly improving the collective quality of life of the people, the collective competitive capacity, and, above all, a new level of equanimity, which forms the ingredient for peace and stability. This is the path development takes, one which is the way to creating domestic economic and political stability. An important product of this process is renewed and increased self-esteem and self-confidence.

Information and Communications Technologies for Development

Central to all of these issues are knowledge and information, their capacities, both inherent and catalytic to other capacities, and their extensive scope and versatility. For good or for bad, or even in-between, knowledge and information hold incredible potential for propelling the development process with reasonable promise of quantum achievement. The engine that drives the deployment of knowledge and information is what we collectively call Information and Communications Technologies, or ICTs. They are the pipes and mechanisms through which knowledge and information are packaged and transmitted, to be unbundled for deployment at the receiving end. By virtue of the vast

technologies and applications which have come to be (and are continuously being) developed through innovation, ICTs have become so important to virtually all aspects of life, activities and operations, from research and development to industrialisation, from health services to entertainment, from education to systems of governance, that they have become fundamental to basic life. In short, they have become a utility. It is this utility nature of information and communications technologies that makes them most critical to any strategy or configuration for Africa's quantum development.

Information and Communications Technologies for African Development

Assessed in terms of its global reach, Africa's existing capacity in ICT as represented by established skills and expertise is vast, much more vast than the world, and especially African policy makers, can imagine or dare to quantify. In its present form, it is diffused and dispersed, and essentially unquantified. This deficit in accurate information on Africa's knowledge capacity in ICT has led to serious under-estimation of the substantial capacity in the hands and knowledge bank of Africans, which is more than sufficient to form the core of Africa's strategic response capacity to the challenge of problem-solving; namely, their self-development capacity.

One result of this presumption of the absence of substantial existing African capacity is the incredibly disproportionate percentage of ICT initiatives for Africa aimed at relatively low-level targets, actually at subsistence. Such a low-level target only sustains societies at that level and deprives the people of the true benefit and promise of ICTs, which is the opportunity and resource to undertake major development efforts which, in turn, would more than guarantee the quality of life for even the most deprived, as the forerunners at the forefront of that process cruise with confidence, purpose and focus towards the cutting edge. It is at this cutting edge, the venue for substantial innovation and the development of its corresponding intellectual properties, that the major wealth and

new capacities necessary for Africa's irreversible transformation can be achieved.

Every single African ICT and development expert knows this. Sadly, nobody else seems to (or cares to) know. Herein lies the strategic divide between African experts and the global development industry with respect to how to develop Africa. More often than not, African leaders and bureaucrats for a set of reasons too complex to analyse here, have in the past tended, by default, to end up on the side of the development industry, with disastrous results.

If we follow the continuum of the development process that I have outlined above, the undesirable internal dichotomy within Africa, between the middle and professional class, on the one hand, and the masses on the other, begins to blur desirably, concurrent with the assumption of responsibility for the entire society by those who, through expertise and opportunity, can make the most use of ICTs for the good of all. Such a model is not only more efficacious, but is more truly representative of the norm in African society and culture. To a large extent, wealth has a vertical structure in African society, with most families consisting of the entire range, from the well-off to the most needy. The structure of family obligations in traditional Africa makes the pursuit of the collective advancement of the entire community a norm. The disruption of this model, through "modernisation", has been a threat to reaping the benefits of this tradition for contemporary African development.

Masterminding Africa's Development

Africans in all spheres, especially the private sector, must not just be equal players, but lead the strategic partnerships in all aspects of ICT development and deployment in Africa, including the following:

- problem identification, definition, diagnosis and solution;
- needs assessment;
- resource identification, mobilisation and deployment;

- concept development, strategy and policy;
- technology development (especially research and development);
- testing;
- manufacturing;
- applications and software development;
- content development;
- systems design and integration;
- the building, maintenance and management of infrastructure and their operation;
- the selection of appropriate technologies to meet each specific demand situation; and
- the development of new technologies to provide more, better and more dedicated solutions that are more appropriate, utilise local materials and intellectual resources better, are cheaper, faster, and more durable and robust, and which create an advantage and competitive edge for Africa in the global industry and market.

This is the only model that can generate the massive levels of resourceful and innovative self-development energy and collective commitment to communal self-actualisation necessary to eradicate the constraints and disabilities that hamstring Africa and Africans, and hold them back from achieving the quality of life and global competitive capacity necessary to take their rightful place in modern society.

Towards an African Renaissance

Only such a model will unleash, with sufficient thrust, the critical mass of African genius necessary to initiate and propel the Renaissance, which I have advocated for many years. It is the only level of popular mobilisation and self-expression capable of transforming Africa the way it must be, to free the talent and genius of its people to take flight into the far reaches of human possibilities in all spheres of existence.⁴

Crafting the engine of such a Renaissance will require a complete revision of the entire spectrum of social, economic, intellectual and

political development strategies. We will have to revise our educational policy and curriculum, the way we live and the way we see the world and interact with it, engaging it more vigorously with equal ownership, right and responsibility for its sustenance and its future. We will have to revise our visionary construct. We will have to support and promote our scholars, intellectuals, experts, as much in science and technology as in the arts, social sciences and the humanities, as our first tier team with the right and responsibility of first call on our strategic and business opportunities *at all levels and in all sectors*.⁵ This calls for a strategic paradigm shift in even the very way we govern ourselves, replacing the discredited governance of millions by a handful, with a more desirable and more mutually gratifying and sustainable governance of millions by millions, in a system in which everyone, even the youngest and the most frail, have a central and eminently recognised and acknowledged role to play in the development, protection and sustenance of all.

This may also require that our leaders regain confidence and reliance on their own African experts. For African experts are truly all we have. At the end of the day, they will have to turn to their own Africans to build the partnership for self-development. The limelight of home is the light that matters. Home is where, in fact, it all matters, as, when the chips are down, it is to Africa and African experts in particular, that African leaders can count.

Ironically, constructing such a new model Africa should not prove extraordinarily difficult, because it is little more than a return to the original structure of African society based on the pre-eminence of the extended family and its mutuality of care, concern and support. All we need to do, primarily, is to assign our scholars and intellectuals (both academic and non-academic) to revisit our centuries-old culture and tradition and strip away the crusted layers created by years of disuse and the cultural and social hemorrhage of the colonial experience and its not-too-noble aftermath. We can then modernise that old legacy to take advantage of new ideas and means, such as the facilitation of information and communications technologies, as tools for their definition and diffusion.

Knowledge-Based Empowerment

There is no better time to undertake this act of self-development than at a time like this when the globally ubiquitous nature of knowledge and its enabling information process and system have intrinsically weakened the approaches and created the basis for a more widely distributed and shared information and knowledge for the empowerment of the weak and poor.

Africa must act urgently, with measured, informed and enlightened deliberateness, relentless focus and determination. The window of opportunity is short. The increasing awareness that “knowledge is power”, a proclamation that is proving to have truth and efficacy, especially in some of the traditional societies, is beginning to gain strategic significance through the capacities of information and communications technologies. This growing freedom of choice of a path to self-actualisation, this promise of a new and refreshing world of knowledge-based empowerment, is already creating the early makings of break-through and leap-frogging capacities.

Africa must act swiftly, smartly and strategically because, if indeed knowledge is power, and information (its creation, ownership and control) is the ingredient which fuels that power, then Africa must focus on this window of opportunity for knowledge-based self-development.

Towards a Knowledge-Based African Renaissance

In this context, and for these reasons, as far as Africa is concerned, we must take the Millennium Development Goals as set by the historic United Nations Millennium Summit convened under the leadership of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H. E. Mr. Kofi Annan, as a baseline development targets. Because, for a people for whom much of contemporary history has been a feat of human endurance, in spite of their enormous talent and resource, Africa’s Millennium Goal must be the quantum transformation of our continent into a wholesome modern society, with an eminently noble, gratifying, enriching and perpetually

reinforcing quality of life, for all its people, with the freedom to dream and the right of reasonable expectation that such dreams can indeed come true.

If we succeed with the model I propose here, as we must, for the African radar must be pointed one-dimensionally to see only success, as failure is not an option for Africa, the Millennium Development Goals should become beacons on the plains of our African achievements, guiding us in our much greater and more equitable accomplishments. Such a successful African Renaissance will engender and consolidate the healthy and conducive political, social, economic, intellectual and creative stability we have all so craved, in a dynamic not static mode, enabling Africa and Africans from all places and all works of life, to build their lives and pursue their self-actualisation with relaxation, creativity, innovation, leisure and cultural wholesomeness, and with the enrichment of our culture and society for the benefit and enjoyment of all.

The Downside of Information and Communications Technologies

In a slight shift of tone, it would almost be sacrilegious to suggest that ICTs have their limitations or, for that matter, their outright downside, which Africa must diligently strive to avoid. I have discussed these in detail in the past, but it would suffice to mention a couple of them here.

For me, the most hilarious (if not appalling) downside of the ubiquitous spread of ICT, especially the Internet, is its direct denudation of the proper use of language in our contemporary society. Computer literacy has created literary illiteracy, so much so that many today are unable to craft a complete sentence, and if they finally struggle through one, butcher the language so devastatingly that we might simply have abandoned the use of language or resorted to the use of pure symbols. The mixture of tenses and numbers, and the abbreviation of expressions, which either create, compel or reflect the abbreviation of thought or the attenuation of its clarity, are direct products of computer literacy. In fact, it seems that in seeking to adjust our language use to accommodate the limitations of computer and information technology, we have crushed

spoken and written language as we squeezed it into this new and rather limited language mold.

A second and related downside of our information society is that we speak so much more and say so much less that we expend a lot more energy to accomplish equally much less communication and understanding. In piling so much information and data on our senses because of our increased technological capacity to do so, we have so inundated the human mind with what I would like to call “data and information junk”, that its reflective capacity has become increasingly overwhelmed, reducing the ability of the most connected to understand the complexities of simple human conditions. I have argued in the past that we have now reached the point at which, subjected to the deluge of undifferentiated data and information, our reflective capacity has become inversely proportional to the degree of raw data, which attack our intellect.⁶

The Dialogue, the Debate, the Challenges and the Response

This volume, *Information and Communications Technologies for African Development: An Assessment of Progress and the Challenges Ahead*, has been conceived to capture the dialogue and debate on the promise of ICTs for Africa’s quantum development, the definition and configuration of the problems and challenges that call for solutions, the ownership of the process, and the enabling environment, both internal and global, for maximum accomplishment. As such, it is a high-level analysis of the challenge, and one that is designed to help advance the strategic paradigms as well as the actual process of development of Africa through the empowering capacities of these technologies.

Under the auspices of the United Nations ICT Task Force, this volume could not find a better platform for congregating leading expert opinions under one umbrella, enabling those who read this book to enjoy and utilise leading-edge analysis on the subject. The contributors to this volume consist of a distinguished array of leaders who, in one way or the other, are directly involved in the common mission of exploiting ICTs to address Africa’s handicap, thus freeing the continent

and its people to unleash their genius not only for their self-development, but for the advancement of the quality of human life and existence worldwide, including the peace and equanimity that money alone simply cannot buy.

The creation of the UN ICT Task Force is a worthy testament to the vision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, that “seizing the opportunities offered by the Digital Revolution is one of the most pressing challenges we face”.⁷ The Task Force itself, by virtue of its composition, which draws together leaders from both the public and the private sectors, as well as from civil society and academia, as much from the industrial nations as from their global counterparts, brings together the key players in the sector and in the arena of targeted deployment for development. This configuration allows for maximum collaboration, synergy and consensus in achieving the coherence of policy, strategy and programme necessary to get the best and the most effective and durable results from all combined effort and resource.

Information and Communications Technologies for African Development: An Assessment of Progress and the Challenges Ahead reflects precisely that scope and versatility. The group of contributors to this book represents global leaders (political, industry and intellectual) who hold between themselves, substantial capacity to provide leadership for the catalytic impetus to help harness the opportunities and positive benefits of information and communications technologies to drive Africa’s quantum development and self-development. The high-level African representation amongst the contributors to this volume lends special and substantial relevance and authority to the dialogue captured in this book.

The contributors to this book include President Abdoulaye Wade of the Republic of Senegal, who is responsible for the Information and Communications Technologies aspects of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) on the Heads of State Implementation Committee, NEPAD’s governing body, President Alpha Oumar Konaré, former President of the Republic of Mali, a leading advocate of ICT for development and the Chairman of the eAfrica Commission of NEPAD,

José María Figueres, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, Chairman of the UN ICT Task Force and former President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and the guiding words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H. E. Kofi Annan, himself. Together, they help set the political agenda in this volume.

From the Task Force Secretariat, we have contributions from Ambassador Sarbuland Khan, the Director of the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and Dr. Pekka Tarjanne, the Executive Coordinator of the United Nations ICT Task Force and former Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Together, they articulate the mission and vision of the Task Force and, in a way, that of the international development community.

The African ICT private sector, which combines the industry and academic credentials quite typical of the overall African private sector, one which has carried on its shoulders the main burden of the struggle for significant ICT development in Africa, is solidly represented by leading experts, including Dr. Nii Quaynor, Chairman of Network Computer Systems (NCS), who sits on the Board of Directors of ICANN, the international body responsible for the management of the global Internet; Mike Jensen, who is a respected curator and virtual custodian of data and statistics on ICT in Africa; and myself who, besides being the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Telecom Africa Corporation and a founding member of the African Advisory Group on Information and Communications Technologies (AAG-ICT), the select group of African ICT experts from around the world who advise African Ministers of Information and Communications on high-level strategic and policy issues, also serve as an adviser to the UN ICT Task Force.

African regional institutions are represented in this book by contributions from Mavis Ampah Sintim-Misa and Emmanuel OleKambainei, respectively the past Chief Executive Officer and the current Program Director of the African Connection Centre for Strategic Planning, the continental institute set up by African Ministers of Communications to

serve as a platform for the development and collation of Africa's strategies for the maximum exploitation of ICTs for Africa's development, and Dr. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director of the Development Information Services Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Dr. Gillian Marcelle from Trinidad and Tobago, a leading expert on ICT and gender issues, and ICT in Africa, Crocker Snow, Jr., the President of The Money Matters Institute, Akhtar Badshah and Justin Thumler, both of Digital Partners, represent the non-African ICT private and intellectual sectors.

Dr. Nii Quaynor, Dr. Gillian Marcelle, and Dr. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane are themselves members of the UN ICT Task Force.

The contributions of these esteemed personalities offer an exciting reading for all those who seek to know the key challenges to not only ICT for African development, but ICT for development in general, and the issues at the cutting edge of the subject.

This volume also offers an appendix of on-going ICT initiatives with respect to Africa and provides invaluable sources of material for further exploration and reference.

Partnership for the Knowledge-Based African Renaissance

In the renewed bold effort to transform Africa, and inspired by Africa's renewed dream for a far better tomorrow masterminded in accordance with its own self-perception and worldview, partnerships, can and must play a critical role. Such partnerships, local, regional and global, public and private, partnerships built on mutual respect, recognised mutual capacity and adherence to basic tenets of equitable globalisation (which I have defined elsewhere as fairness and equity, mutual access to each other's market, comparative competitive capacity, in the absence of which there must be dedicated affirmation action plans in place) become more important and efficacious, not less so. Because, when a people know where they are going and take charge of their journey into tomorrow, it becomes much easier for others not only to join forces to assist

them, but also to possibly pick up their pack and join them in a common march of progress not only for Africa, but also for all humanity.

In this African-led and masterminded African future, there will be room for the active participation of global institutions, donor and development agencies, the private sector seeking legitimate opportunity and profit in return for meaningful and sustainable contributions to Africa's development and well-being, civil society, and people in general, all engaging in, and engaging Africa in a dynamic, exciting and beneficial cooperative and collaborative common human pursuit of ever-increasing excellence.

Key to all of this will be Africa's wisdom in crafting a fail-safe way to acquire, not only knowledge and access to information, but also the mastery of information and communications technologies which drive them, and what they can enable us to accomplish. This will enable us and afford us the necessary resource tools, space and freedom, to configure and package our own unique, rich and ever expanding information, knowledge, culture, experience and expertise, to share with others, within the context of a fair and equitable, and truly competitive global environment. That is my personal dream for Africa. That is Africa's dream.

NOTES

1. See Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr., *Ownership of Problems, Intellectual Property and the Digital Divide—The Enabling Challenge of Solutions*, WIPO Second International Conference on Electronic Commerce and Intellectual Property, Geneva, September 19–21, 2001.
2. See Chapter Fifteen: Towards a Road Map for Information and Communications Technology Development in Africa.
3. One recognises that this opinion could slightly rile some of the big players in the development industry. But if Africa's condition is as dire as everyone keeps saying it is, then risking some intellectual discomfort in the hope of finding the right formula for developing Africa once and for all is a nominal sacrifice which, I am sure, friends of Africa can afford.
4. Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr., *Creating a Desirable 21st Century Africa: The Role of Leadership and Governance*, *Futures*, Volume 26, Number 9, November 1994.

5. Nigeria's highly acclaimed major development strides in the early 1970s was driven by a bold indigenous business decree, which saw the emergence of major indigenous industrial and trade initiatives at all levels. Much of what sustains Nigeria today after years of painful indecisiveness, comes from those heady days. Unfortunately, the country was forced under tremendous pressure to abandon that decree by international financial institutions when its later reckless spending compelled it to seek concessions to refinance its debt. Nigeria still suffers from the loss of that major development phase fired by an enormous internal force fueled in part by Nigerians and other Africans abroad who rushed in from around the world in response to the opportunities offered under that decree. That experience may be worth revisiting.
6. See Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr., *E-Culture, Human Culture and In-Between: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century Digital World*, A Presentation to the Creating New Leaders for e-Culture Conference, Coventry, United Kingdom, August 20–24, 2001.
7. Comments by Kofi Annan while introducing President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal at the 101st Plenary meeting of the fifty-sixth Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 17 June, 2002.