

Introductory Remarks  
CoDA Chairperson  
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Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA), African Land Policy Initiative (LPI)  
&  
ECA APRM Support Unit

ADF VIII pre-event on  
“Leveraging State-Society Dialogue for Improving Natural Resource Governance in  
Africa”

22 October 2012  
09:30-16:30

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Excellencies  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

On behalf of the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA), of which I am the Chairperson, I would like to first of all warmly welcome you all to this historic building, “*Africa Hall*”, the venue of numerous critical high-level dialogues on African issues, during the early days of the Organisation of African Unity, half a century ago.

Looking around the hall this morning, I am delighted that so many of you, leaders and experts in your respective fields, have accepted my invitation to participate in this policy forum, which CoDA is convening in collaboration with the “*African Land Policy Initiative*” of the African Union Commission (AUC), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the ECA’s “*African Peer Review Mechanism Support Section*”.

Today’s theme: “*Leveraging State-Society Dialogue for Improving Natural Resource Governance in Africa*” focuses on a topic that is essential to the socioeconomic transformation of the continent.

Why”

Because global economic history has long proven that the successful harnessing of natural resources is a key driver of economic growth in all regions of the world.

Africa should be no exception.

Indeed, Africa has no excuse not to, as the continent is currently surfing a wave of high prices and intense demand for its mineral resources.

This moment, termed “the African Moment” by some, offers a unique opportunity for transforming economies and societies, in many African countries.

Despite this fact, many African countries endowed with abundant resources are yet to effectively position themselves to fulfill the abundant potential of their natural resources.

I am not so naïve as to say that it is an easy task.

However, it can be done, if all stakeholders in a nation put their will together behind a common national vision and pledge to **“lift their own weight”** so to speak, and agree in an equitable sharing of the national resource revenues

The experience of my country, Botswana, over the past 45 years, is testament to that.

As today’s theme rightly suggests, one critical element to leverage these opportunities is successful, constructive stakeholder engagement.

There are already some best practices in Africa for state-society dialogue, out of which the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), as a home grown and African owned mechanism, is proving to be an internationally innovative tool that could be effectively applied to help improve Africa’s governance standards in the natural resource sector, as a whole.

The implementation of the LPI’s ***Nairobi Action Plan on “Large Scale Land Based Investments”***, which was the outcome of a meeting I chaired in October last year, similarly offers Africa an opportunity for dialogue and

knowledge generation to improve the governance of land resources, in particular.

We will hear more on the practical application of both these initiatives as core elements of the solution we seek, this afternoon.

Additionally, today's theme is also one which, by its very nature, calls for robust engagement between numerous stakeholders and the sharing of various perspectives on the best way forward.

In that regard, it complies fully with the mission of the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa.

Following the establishment of CoDA, here in Addis Ababa, a little over three years ago, my fellow board members and I agreed that the organization should place particular emphasis on promoting dialogue and debate that brings together the ideas of diverse groups of stakeholders.

CoDA therefore provides a platform for representatives from Africa's civil society, African policy makers, media and private sector organizations, as well as committed international "friends of Africa"; to regularly engage in rigorous and candid dialogue on crucial, and at times controversial, questions of vital interest to the future of the continent.

We strive, however, to be more than just another "a talking shop". That is why, as well as actively fostering our links to civil society and the private sector; we also nurture close links with African leaders and policy makers, and, our founding institutions: the AUC, ECA and AfDB.

This connection provides us with unique opportunities to promote, and advocate for the policy action that is proposed by the outcomes of our forums.

By bringing new ideas and concrete recommendations from meetings, such as this, to the attention of African leaders, we aim to quietly work to advance the agenda on the ground.

In summary, since its launch in March 2009, CoDA has now convened several forums, on a diverse range of themes, including:

1. *“Africa’s Response to the Global Financial Crisis”*,
2. *“Foreign Direct Investments in Land in Africa: “Risks, Opportunities, Challenges”*; and,
3. *“Two Decades of Democratic Transition in Africa”- From the National Conferences of the 1990s to the Arab Spring of 2011: Results and Prospects.*

Furthermore, we have organized an expert seminar, in collaboration with the **Economic Commission of West African States and the UN Office on Drugs Crime**, on an issue which continues to be a serious cause for alarm:

**“Transnational Trafficking and Political Instability in Africa”.**

(This is a subject, which we plan to explore further and advocate action on next year.)

I am pleased to inform you that the reports of that CoDA seminar, as well as last year’s democracy forum are available here today.

I encourage you to take copies.

Overall, I have been satisfied by the interactive nature and focus of all the CoDA discussions I have participated in so far.

I am certain that today’s dialogue will be just as perceptive and that the outcomes from this discussion in “Africa Hall” will provide substantial “food for thought” and concrete ideas on how best to improve state-society dialogue regarding the management of natural resources in Africa.

I therefore look forward to engaging with you all.

Thank you for your attention.

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