

International Conference on Transforming Africa: Potentials & Challenges 11-13 January 2019 Department of African Studies University of Delhi

Concept Note

Africa is undergoing tremendous change and transformation and has been able to overcome multiple political, socio-economic and other development challenges. It is registering substantially high growth and continues to grow in economic and strategic importance, by virtue of its geographical size, population, natural resources and the number of states. This transformation in Africa is evident through the shifts in its polity, changing economies, morphing societies and evolving perception about it. The last decade of the twentieth century brought remarkable political changes to Africa. The whole continent was swept by a wave of democratisation. Government after government was forced to compete in multi-party elections amidst new or revitalised opposition movements. Africa can boast of a growing number of leaders passing power peacefully after elections. Also, public backlashes against leaders trying to prolong their tenures become a reality. Equally, women leadership has emerged in African governments and politics.

During the decade of 1990s, many African countries undertook political, economic and social reforms with far-reaching implications for the long term development of the continent. In the recent past African countries are showing positive economic growth rate which is well over 5 percent for many African countries. The continent is expected to grow by 3.2 percent in 2018 and 3.5 percent in 2019 (World Bank). It is surging ahead and has set out a vision for its own development through the African Union's *Agenda 2063*. It has witnessed economic growth resurgence since the mid- to late 1990s. Africa's GDP growth has exceeded the world's over the last decade and a half. Africa's growth outpaced that of Asia during the 2000–2010 period, with most of the ten fastest-growing economies around the world being African. The signs of Africa's transformation are visible with quantum increase in trade with the rest of the world and inflow of FDI, reduction in infrastructure gaps, significant remittances by African Diaspora and above all, decrease in poverty. The share of Africa's population in extreme poverty has fallen from 57 percent in 1990 to 41 percent in 2013.

Women in Africa make a sizeable contribution to the continent's economy according to AfDB. They are economically more active as farmers and entrepreneurs than women in any other region of the world. It is the women who grow most of Africa's food, and who own one-third of all businesses. Furthermore, there have been many recent advances on women's empowerment in the continent, including many changes in laws to promote equal rights for women. Many African countries have closed the gender gap in primary education. In 11 African countries, women hold close to one-third of the seats in parliaments.

The transformation in Africa has an increasing global impact. African countries have gained importance over the years in world affairs with a high demand for its energy and other natural resources. Further, the business creativity and growing middle class consumers form renewed economic significance of the continent. The continent's importance in the structures of global governance has grown manifold and it has become imperative for external powers to secure Africa's support in advancing their agenda at global level. The old paradigm and patterns of engagement are no longer viable as the continent is being sought aggressively by many countries, the global powers as well as the emerging economies. They have reassessed and reformulated their Africa policies to underscore a new level of strategic engagement with the continent. The role played by them is significant for the development of Africa not only in economic terms but also socio-political as well as cultural.

The continent of Africa still faces huge challenges which in turn have implications for its sustainable development. Africa's rising population brings challenges to its governance and development, especially in providing adequate education, health, infrastructure and employment to the young population. More public and private investment is needed to boost growth and employment to minimize the youth displacement and emigration. Africa's population is young and growing, and a rapidly expanding number of job seekers will soon be getting into labour markets. By 2025, a quarter of the world's young people will live on this continent. The region has currently 11 percent of the world's population but carries 24 percent of the global disease burden. With less than 1 percent of global health expenditure and only 3 percent of the world's health workers, Africa accounts for almost half the world's deaths of children under five, has the highest maternal mortality rate, and bears a heavy toll from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The region lacks the infrastructure to provide even basic health care to many of its people. According to UNESCO, Africa is home to 43 percent of the world's out of school children and 10

million children drop out of primary school every year. About 38 percent of the region's adults, 167 million people, still lack basic literacy skills. More than six out of ten are women. Thus, the challenge of finding ways to build capable governments that would create economic, political, and social stability, which are critically needed to bring about long-term sustainable development in the continent remains for African countries.

In this context, the proposed seminar will focus on understanding transformation and development trajectory in Africa. It will also deliberate upon Africa's emerging global engagements and its interrelationship with development. It will focus on the following **sub-themes**, though not necessarily be confined to them:

- **Experiences of Political Transformation: Democracy, Electioneering, Human Rights**
- **Economic Reforms and Development: Natural Resources, Trade & Investment, Environmental Issues, Capacity Building and Human Resource Development**
- **Experiences of Socio-Cultural Transformation: Health, Education, Gender, Diaspora, Cultural Development**
- **Emerging Trends in Africa's Global Engagement: Traditional & Emerging Powers**

CALL FOR PAPERS/ABSTRACT

The Department of African Studies, University of Delhi, invites academics, scholars, policymakers, and others to present papers at the conference. The last date of abstract submission (300 words) is **26th September 2018**.

Abstract prepared as Microsoft Word document should include the presenter's name, title of paper, institutional affiliation, and contact information (mailing address, phone number, and email address).

The abstract selection will be communicated by **5th October 2018**.

All those whose abstracts are accepted need to submit a draft paper by **9th November 2018** and final paper by **10th December 2018**.

Please send your abstract to:- conferencedas2019@gmail.com