

# Statesmen put heads together on Africa

**A high-powered group of former world leaders gathered in Cape Town recently to discuss ways of halting Africa's increasing marginalisation. Idasa's executive director, ALEX BORAINÉ, was one of the team of international and local advisors who aided their deliberations.**

'If Africa is not to be marginalised it will have to help itself rather than depend on handouts from the international community'. This was the essential message to come out of discussions held in Cape Town in January by the Interaction Council, an organisation of former heads of state and prime ministers.

The former leaders met to focus on the very real danger of Africa being increasingly

marginalised by the rest of the world. They will report back to their full council in Shanghai in May, and their recommendations will be passed on to their successors in countries around the world.

The three-day summit was chaired by the former prime minister of Britain, Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, and attended by several former heads of state including Olusegun Obasanjo from Nigeria, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo of Portugal, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Daniel Lisulo of Zambia and Lopo Fortunato do Nascimento from Angola.

It has been said that there is nothing more ex than an ex-politician! Why then take seriously former heads of state who probably no longer enjoy the influence they once had? Certainly this was the concern many felt when they first heard about the Interaction Council meeting.

Two points should be made in this regard: firstly, as one-time heads of state in powerful countries they have access to the present rulers and therefore their findings on problem centres throughout the world are conveyed to their successors. This means that their analyses and proposals are considered at the highest levels. Secondly, they bring a considerable amount of collective wisdom and experience to their meetings and studies.

Certainly my overall impression as I sat in the meetings was that there was a mood of real seriousness, a great deal of preparatory work had been done and, by having experts from different parts of Africa in attendance, they were able to arrive at the nature of the problem of the marginalisation of Africa and possible ways and means to overcome this.

International participants and advisors included Karen Brutens of Russia, (advisor to the President Gorbachov Foundation); Kenneth Dadzie from Ghana, (secretary-general of the UN Council for Trade and Development); Edem Kodjo, (former OAU secretary-general); Graca Machel, (wife of the late former president of Mocambique and president of the National Unesco Commission); Robert McNamara, (former World Bank president); Tim Thahane, (vice-president and Secretary of the World Bank); and Makoto Watanabe, (vice-president of Japan International Co-operation Agency).

In addition, a few South African commentators were invited to join the meeting and I was there in that capacity.

**F**IRST up on the agenda were issues of survival – conflict management, settlement and prevention; the population explosion; HIV and Aids as well as other health issues; and responses to acute/chronic disaster situations.

The second area of study was political and economic development, which had to be examined together. We looked at defining democratic systems appropriate to African circumstances, which would include good governance, accountability, a legal system open to all and the curbing of military expenditure. The core values of democracy, human rights, a free press and efficient and humane leadership was discussed at length.

Hand in hand with this discussion went the question of education and development and this involved looking at capacity building, including sound management. The point was made repeatedly that in the past Africa, in the main, had been able to feed itself and one of the major areas of concern



*Children collect water near Maputo in Mozambique.*

PAUL WEINBURG, Southlight

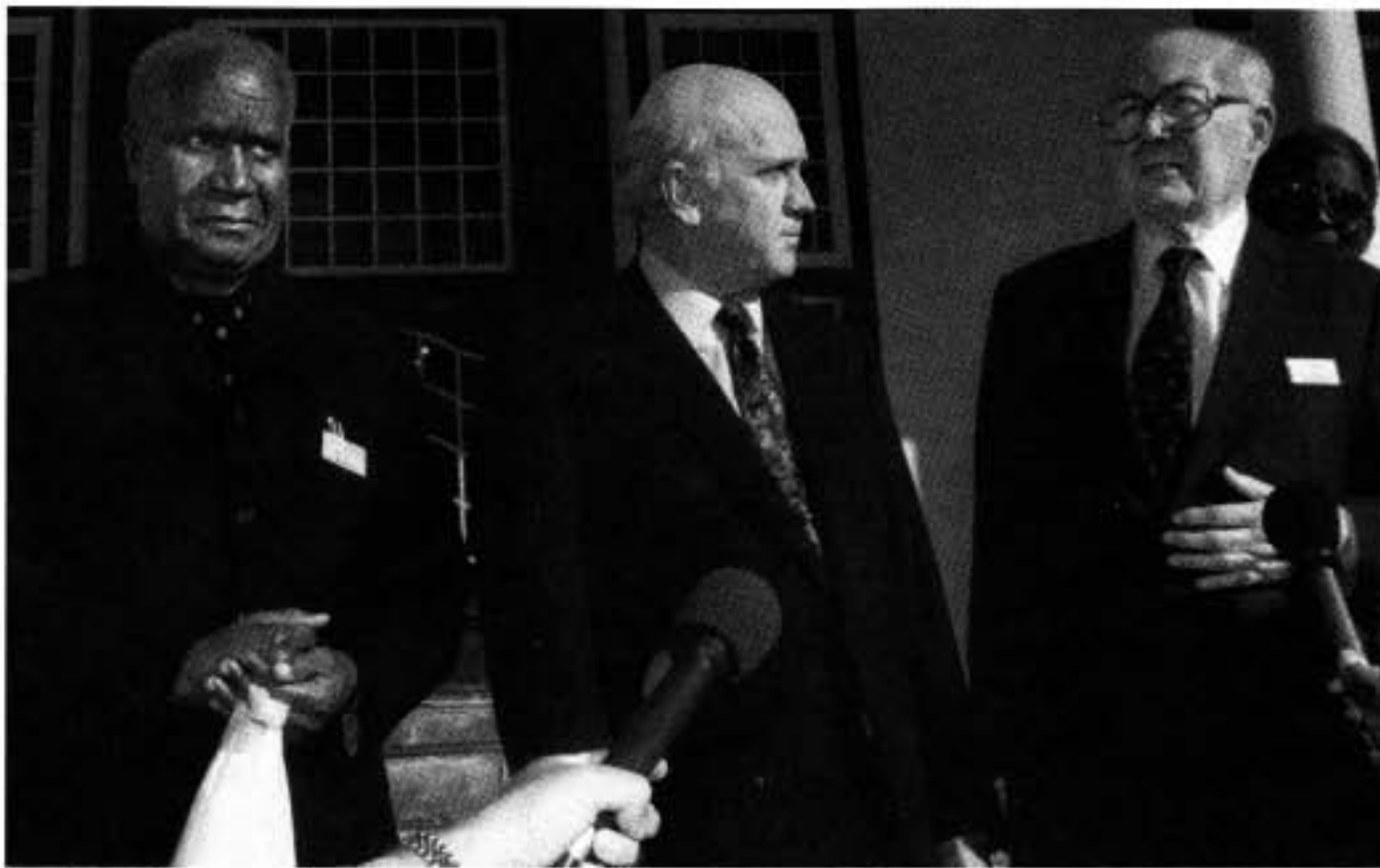


was to refurbish and restructure agricultural development to expand exports and to work towards an increase in domestic savings.

A third concern was how African countries, individually and collectively, could engage the international community. It was emphasised that debt relief was a key to economic recovery, that trade protectionism should be on the agenda and resources to assist African countries in economic and social development and the enhancing of efficiency in international organisations should be included. The major stress ought to be on helping Africa to help itself.

The second half of the seminar focused on South Africa – its internal economic and political problems and its place in southern Africa and Africa. To assist the Interaction Council a number of South Africans were invited to address the seminar – including the State President, ANC deputy president Walter Sisulu, (Mandela was in the US attending Bill Clinton's inauguration), Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi of the IFP, the PAC's Barney Desai and the DP's Colin Eglin. Others from different organisations included Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu of the Independent Development Trust, Judge Goldstone and the Rev Frank Chikane of the South African Council of Churches.

If it wasn't clear before the meeting started, it became crystal clear that South Africa's economy was in considerable distress and this would limit South Africa's ability to meet the unrealistic expectations of many in Africa. On the other hand, it was clear that South Africa had many advantages in terms of transport systems, technology, infrastructure and the like, which would certainly make it a major actor on the continent.



Lord Callaghan with Kenneth Kaunda and President De Klerk

ERIC MILLER

Although members of the Interaction Council were left with an impression of a highly complex situation, there was nevertheless an upbeat mood regarding the possibility of the renewal of multi-party negotiations leading to elections within 12 to 15 months. It has to be said, however, that neither the IFP nor the PAC shared the optimism of the government and the ANC.

**I**t is difficult to assess the full significance of the summit. One thing is certain – the more exposure that South Africa gets to world leaders and people of influence, the better it will be for its own re-entry into the international community.

In the second place, the question of the marginalisation of Africa is extremely

serious and it is by no means certain that Africa has convinced the rest of the world that it deserves to be taken seriously. For too long Africa has been a recipient rather than a contributor. It is clear that if Africa wishes to take its rightful place in the world community, it will have to be far more serious on issues like security, militarisation, economic development, corruption, population control and accountable government.

With economic blocs being formed in different parts of the world, the next five years will determine whether Africa remains in the backwaters of economic development, with all its attendant problems, or whether it begins to assume responsible and efficient government and focused economic efficiency and development.

## Multi-party winds of change in Africa

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story for democracy in Africa, despite its disastrous start to the campaign with allegations of Swapo torture in its camps, a massacre of returning Swapo troops due either to a misunderstanding or worse, and South Africa's efforts at destabilisation by secretly funding anti-Swapo parties to the tune of well over R100 million.

When the crucial Ovamboland vote came in, Swapo had 40 percent to the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance's 38 percent, securing for

itself 57 percent of seats in the constituent assembly.

Later, Swapo's support was quietly consolidated in the first multi-party local government elections held late last year.

Which brings us, finally, to Mozambique. The UN has deployed a task force ten times the size of the group sent to Angola. The UN special envoy to Mozambique, Aldo Ajello, has taken a high profile, declaring he is determined to see a genuine settlement and avoid the mistakes of Angola and elsewhere.

Ajello is not prepared to rush a settlement. For one thing, he insists the international force in Mozambique will not permit the election campaign to begin until all military forces are disarmed and dispersed. Rather than repeat any mistakes, the UN is willing to postpone the October 1993 election date, and Ajello has stipulated that the country must be

given 18 months to prepare for elections.

South Africa could do well to look to these recently war-ridden neighbours for inspiration. Possibly herein lies elements of the formula for electoral success: an international monitoring force that demonstrates its seriousness, partly in its size; an end to private armies, obviously under mutually agreed conditions that guarantee all parties are equally disarmed; a detailed pact, worked through by all participants until no ambiguities can be claimed as excuses for any abrogations of promises; and if necessary, despite our eagerness to reach the long-awaited election day, a softly-softly approach that checks and double checks all loopholes to ensure that our expectations of a democratic future match the future that our country deserves.

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