SOCIO-ECONOMIC & POLITICAL (SEPol) FORUM

(A PRO C.ANVA.S SUMMIT MEETING)

THEME :

AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY :
THE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS & ECONOMIC STAKES TODAY
(CODE : ADDCREST)

FEATURING PLENARY SESSIONS, SYMPOSIA, SEMINAR WORKING PAPERS/DISCUSSION GROUPS

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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DATE

26-28 JUNE 2014

SEPol Forum Venue:
@ THE BARCELONA HOTELS, ABUJA
http://www.barcelonahotelsnigeria.com/home/

THEME DESCRIPTION

'AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY'

In Africa's onward march toward realizing ubiquitous development at both human and societal levels, it is often argued that such a goal is achievable (only?) via the path of democracy. Also, the checkered history of Africa's development has often been used as a raison d'être for new probes to be launched by scholars, professionals and leaders of all stripes into past, present and future development efforts or agenda for a 'betrayed' continent. The real issue here concerns not so much the question of how to relate Africa's development to her democratic aspirations; but whether and to what extent both phenomena share the same conditions for their realization.

Many questions loom large before us: does democracy guarantee and foster development—which comes first, or do they come together? Can development be achieved outside of a democratic set-up—what sustains both for a 'besieged' continent? What (kind of) development is achievable outside of a democratic framework? Is a 'democratic society' feasible under, or compatible with, the present configurations of (traditional) African communities? What societies become 'democratized', and under what conditions does democratization 'happen'? Is one woman's democracy another man's gerontocracy? What cultural, religious and social impulses gave rise to democracy in the first instance, and how were these navigated or negotiated in the course of its development? What social/political and religious/cultural foundations are needed for development and democracy in Africa, and what kinds of institutions may be built on them to ensure that democracy flourish and continue well into the future? How can we deal with or balance the problématique of developmental time and democratic space for a once-trusting but wary citizenry? And what transformations can we truly realize within the 'new social order' we are being called upon to create so as to make Africa a continent that is second to none?

The stalling condition of Africa's development and democracy would seem more urgent now than ever. In view of all these issues, what is one to make of 'African democracy', especially so, when democracies of western nations have continued to be subjected to very severe debates, criticisms and widespread 'contestation'? What determines participation and representation in a democracy and what measures prevent the African 'experiment' from failing before it matures?

The present scenario of our world today is not unconnected to the forces of globalization which have been unleashed and now exert their 'powers' over all and sundry. Pivotal issues for Africa concern not just 'globalization' per se—another contested movement (!); or its so-called 'futures' (read: 'sutures') for a 'belated' continent, which is now in frantic search of a 'path' for achieving 'rapid' modernization or 'fast track' development. Rather, the issues concern the major structural foundation of development and function of democracy to achieve the goals of a new continent.

What new cultural mind-set, religious belief/behavior and economic framework are supportive of Africa's development and democracy, and how can we foster the social institutions which would make them achievable? These 'determinants' should necessarily shape a new political class, structure and culture that will cut across the full spectrum of emergent African society: where democratic 'values' and education in the 'virtues' work and reinforce each other; where the 'real job of politics' is shared within a 'new social ordering of society' via the responsibility of a democratic citizenship; where social institutions and networks at all levels of the society and government are meaningfully linked via productive labor, which rewards all citizens and their contributions; and whose selfless leaders guarantee a virile and buoyant economy which is prudently managed by those entrusted with such 'sacred' task, as of individuals who must give account of their full stewardship.

This forum engages with these ideals, issues and their implications for Africa in the new century.