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BOSTON UNIVERSITY AFRICAN PRESIDENTIAL CENTER NEWSLETTER

African Ambassadors Discuss the Real State of Africa

On January 27, 2012, Boston University's African Presidential Center hosted a panel discussion titled "What is the Real State of Africa?" to celebrate the launch of the 10th Commemorative Edition of the annual *African Leaders State of Africa Report*. The event also marked the rebranding of the African Presidential Center (or APC), previously known as the African Presidential Archives and Research Center (or APARC).

APC director, Ambassador Charles R. Stith moderated the discussion which featured distinguished guests, Ambassador Steve Matenje of Malawi, Ambassador Tebelelo Seretse of Botswana, and Ambassador Walter Carrington, former US Ambassador to Nigeria and Senegal. This panel discussion was the first in a two-part series of African Ambassadors offering their perspective on development and policy on the continent.

The panel focused on the question, "What is the Real State of Africa?" Each of the panelists responded with informal comments to Ambassador Stith's questions, before opening the discussion to the audience. The goal of the discussion was to challenge some of the negative stereotypes of Africa, often perpetuated by the mainstream media, and by giving examples from Botswana, Malawi, and Nigeria, these three Ambassadors offered a more hopeful perspective on the current state of Africa.

The first question which was discussed pointed to the fact that many of the headlines regarding Africa in the mainstream media are sensationalist and focus on negative stories. For example, earlier in 2012, the Washington Post ran a headline about "Mugabe's Bloody Path to Victory in Zimbabwe". Similarly, the New York Times ran a column on Somali Pirates, the DRC's "fraudulent" elections were covered in *The Economist*, and BBC ran a story on riots in northern Nigeria. Ambassador Stith asked the three panelists to share ways in which Botswana, Malawi and Nigeria represent more hopeful news out of Africa.

Ambassador Matenje of Malawi spoke of his country as a beacon of hope for Africa, even though there have been instances of negative publicity: "Africa itself has been described in many ways in the press as a hopeless continent. We are now beginning to see a new Africa. This new beginning has been emerging for quite a number of years. We are going to use our own resources in order to unleash the potential of the country."



(L-R) The Honorable Charles R. Stith, director, APC, The Honorable Steve Matenje, Ambassador of Malawi to the U.S., The Honorable Tebelelo Seretse, Ambassador of Botswana to the U.S., The Honorable Walter Carrington, former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria.

Ambassador Seretse of Botswana, challenged the negative stereotypes of Africa, saying, "The media, by sensationalizing, that's how they make their money." She went on to challenge students in attendance to go to Africa and see for themselves how different the continent is from how it is painted in the media. She added, "If some of you were exposed to the good news in Africa, you may not want to come back here. They instill fear, and this fear really works." Ambassador Seretse did not try to hide some of the real challenges Africa faces, saying, "We all have challenges in Africa, in worse ways than the United States has. In addition to the drought, the HIV/AIDS, when it comes to women in politics, we are failing." However, she also highlighted some of the progress made in Botswana, particularly with regards to race, stating that "...in Botswana, we don't see color. We have tolerance."

In the second question Ambassador Stith posed, he asked the Ambassadors to identify some of the main challenges faced by their respective countries, and to offer some suggestions on how these challenges could be dealt with.

Ambassador Matenje responded to this question by relaying that while they do have major challenges in Malawi, they are being met with optimism and diligence in order to overcome them.

“WHAT IS THE REAL STATE OF AFRICA”
African Ambassadors Respond



In addition to discussing issues related to religious differences, Ambassador Carrington explained that some of the major challenges in Nigeria are related to corruption.

“Nigeria has corruption that is endemic and I think more than anything else has held it back. There has recently been the development of the group Boko Haram. The Boko Haram which represented in the beginning a very, very small group in the north, has now become larger. If it ever comes to the south, that’s when you’ve got real problems in Nigeria. Muslims and Christians have lived together in the southwest of Nigeria, among the Yoruba, for years. It is impossible to tell who is a Christian and who is a Muslim by the person’s name. They keep their Yoruba names, they do not change them. The Boko Haram is worrying, but the idea that they are associated with Al-Qaeda is wrong.”

Ambassador Matenje stressed that “...the biggest challenge we face is that Malawi is landlocked. We use three ports in order to access the sea. We depend on road transportation for our imports and exports. One third of those costs goes to transportation. It makes our goods uncompetitive. The second point is the issue of climate change. If rains don’t come at the right time and in the sufficient amount, we will not have enough crops. The third challenge is the problem of HIV/AIDS. At one point the infection rate was about 30%. Now we are below 20%. It has killed people with potential, people who should be driving the economy forward.”

Ambassador Seretse told the audience that in Botswana “[another] challenge is dependence on one major resource; we depend on diamonds, but they are not forever. We need to diversify our economy.”

Ambassador Carrington gave a brief summary of Nigeria’s modern situation, attempting to debunk misleading stereotypes and speaking of the challenges facing Nigeria, specifically regarding the issue of homegrown terrorism. “5 or 6 years after independence, there was a military coup. It also underwent a civil war, which resulted in a fissure in a country which is now seeing an echo of that today. Nigeria is unique in the sense that it is the only country in the world whose population is evenly divided between Muslims and Christians. There has been incredible harmony between Christians and Muslims with some very notable exceptions. Nigeria has had to overcome problems which would have sunk many countries in the world. You have had a constitution which was secular. Since 1999, it has had civilian leadership.”

Lastly, the discussion turned to specific events that had recently occurred in North Africa; specifically the Arab Spring. Ambassador Stith asked his colleagues to reflect on the impact of the Arab Spring with regards to the countries in which revolutions have taken place, and asked them to discuss possible repercussions of such revolutions across the African continent.

The panel discussed the complexities of the challenges facing Africa, as well as the progress many countries have made in overcoming issues of development. The audience asked a wide range of questions that allowed the Ambassadors to discuss a wide variety of topics, including how religion has played a positive role in Malawi’s development, as well as how China has had an impact on Africa’s economy.





Ambassador Tebelelo Mazile Seretse assumed the position of Ambassador of the Republic of Botswana to the United States on 14 February, 2011. Ambassador Seretse has previously served as a Member of Parliament and Cabinet under the former president of Botswana, Festus G. Mogae from 1999 until 2004. In addition to her extensive contribution to the public sector, she has also contributed to the private sector in Botswana, serving as a board member of the Bank of Botswana and the Botswana Diamond Mining Company. She has also served as Director and Chairperson of RPC Data Limited, the largest integrated information technology services company in Botswana. She has also served as Chairperson and Director of FSG Limited. She was head of the African Delegation for the fourth World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in Doha in 2001.



Ambassador Steve D. Matenje assumed the position of Ambassador of the Republic of Malawi to the United States on 16 September, 2010. Prior to this, Ambassador Matenje served as Malawi’s envoy to the US. He also previously served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malawi to the United Nations, as well as Solicitor General of Malawi and Permanent Secretary in Malawi’s Ministry of Justice. A public servant in the Malawi Civil Service since 1980, Ambassador Matenje started his legal career in the Ministry of Justice as a State Attorney before becoming Parliamentary Counsel. As Solicitor General, Ambassador Matenje represented the Malawi Government in negotiations with Malawi’s bilateral and multilateral partners including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, African Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development, European Union, and European Investment Bank for financing for various development projects in Malawi.



Ambassador Walter C. Carrington was appointed United States Ambassador to Senegal in 1980 by President Carter. He was later appointed United States Ambassador to Nigeria in 1993 by President Clinton. While in Nigeria, he gained a reputation as an outspoken champion of human rights against the oppressive military dictatorship. He practiced law in Boston and spent ten years with the Peace Corps directing programs in Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Senegal as regional director of Africa. Currently, Ambassador Carrington is an Associate at Harvard’s W.E.B. DuBois Institute where he is working on a book on Nigeria. *A Duty to Speak: Refusing to Remain Silent in a Time of Tyranny*, a collection of Ambassador Carrington’s speeches challenging military rule and promoting human rights and democracy, was published in Nigeria in 2010 at a State Banquet in honor of his eightieth birthday.

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Newsletter of the African Presidential Center at Boston University

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The Honorable Ebrahim Rasool, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to the United States, lectures at Boston University on “South Africa Rising - South Africa joins BRIC Countries as the leading African emerging economy.”

The African Presidential Center partnered with Boston University’s Center for Finance, Law & Policy to host another lecture by an African Ambassador to the United States. On February 17, 2012, The Honorable Ebrahim Rasool, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to the United States joined guests at Boston University for a discussion about South Africa’s recent inclusion in BRICS, and the country’s position as Africa’s leading emerging economy.

Ambassador Rasool treated guests to an overview and broad historical perspective of South Africa and its position in African affairs. Rasool explained that South Africa was not as badly impacted as most economies by the 2008 global recession because of the diversity of its economy. When comparing South Africa to other economies, Rasool claimed to prefer a diverse economy that maintains a steady 3-4% annual growth rate, over an economy that may be booming due to a single commodity but is therefore more vulnerable to global economic trends. In looking ahead at South Africa’s future, Ambassador Rasool stressed that “Education is the most important investment for South Africa.”

Below are excerpts from his remarks:

“At the end of it, my appeal to you will be that we need a country like South Africa to succeed, not only because it has all of the ingredients to succeed, but where a country has gone beyond itself to present a model of reconciliation, unity, and development, we need to invest in that country because the world desperately needs models and examples of what the finest human beings are capable of when they allow themselves to lead and be led. And that, I think, will be the most empowering, clarient call to make about why South Africa and the African continent needs the attention that we’re coming to seek here.

So in one way BRICS seeks to redress the economic as well as the political architecture of the world and to bring to bear global governance because we often take the bitter medicine within emerging

markets of structural adjustment, but it is not an equal medicine when other countries display excessive levels of debt, when other countries display a lack of regulation, when other countries have private sectors which are ungoverned, then structural adjustment is not the answer for those countries.

We wanted a diagnostic on why Africa is not joining, is not overcoming the digital divide and at what conditions Africa will join the digital world. And when it came down to South Africa to give its final thoughts about the matter, it was so breathtaking in simplicity that it stunned us into action. He made the point that New York as a city has more telephone connections than Africa as a continent and that the precondition for entering the digital age is telephone connectivity. But to enter the digital age and to have telephone connectivity, the precursor to that is a steady reliable supply of electricity or energy. But to have a stable electricity grid across the continent, you need to get rid of all the conflicts because the first thing that rebels or whoever who are disgruntled target are electricity pile-ons. It’s the easiest, most unguarded targets. And therefore his conclusion was that if you want to be, if you want to enter the digital age, make peace.

It sounded devastatingly simple, but that’s when the penny dropped for us that we are not going to be able to realize Africa’s potential if we are not going to have the capacity to make peace, make conflicts something of the past, build democracy at its institutions, establish the rule of law, and create a prosperity dividend that will make the changes in Africa irreversible. That was the point at which our president started engaging in the negotiations in Sudan; our president at that time Thaba Mbeki. Our current president took charge of the Great Lakes, Nelson Mandela was pulled out of retirement to get Burundi and Rwanda sorted out, our various ministers went to the DRC, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and wherever there were conflicts that were raging, we went to mediate those conflicts and to back it up by peacekeeping forces from the African Union and to back it up by reconstruction efforts, post-conflict reconstruction efforts largely led by South Africa.



And more and more, the rule of law is getting rid of acts of corruption and so forth because when the one thing we've got to be honest about is that there are many Western companies who often prefer the murkiness of a non-democratic Africa, where there's no formal markets because they prefer to get their goods on the black market as opposed to the open market. And all of us would at some point have to look at our cell phones to look at some of those ingredients. Hopefully no one will look at their wedding rings to find conflict diamonds, but the fact of the matter is that as one gets the economy out of the black market and into the open market, you already collapse much of the reputed corruption that I think Africa has been settled with as an image. As a result of all of that, we can say that Africa has now emerged for the second year running as the third fastest growing region, regional economy. After China and India, then comes Africa.

The World Economic Forum found that our financial market development in South Africa has fourth place currently in the world. Our regulation of our Stock Exchange has just won first place in the world. Our auditing standards and reporting standards, and the degree of regulation over it, the World Economic Forum has just placed South Africa first in the world. The soundness of our banks comes in at second place in the world, and the efficiency of our boardroom governments also comes in at second place in the world.”



The Honorable Ebrahim Rasool

Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to the United States of America

Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool is South Africa's Ambassador to the United States of America. Before joining the Embassy, his most recent positions have included Member of Parliament in the National Assembly, Special Advisor to the State President of the Republic of South Africa and Premier (governor of the Western Cape Province).

Ebrahim Rasool has a long history of involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle starting at High School and including leadership in the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the African National Congress (ANC). He has had to make sacrifices like spending time in prison and being under house arrest.

His social and political involvement has consistently been faith-driven. He has been involved in both the Islamic Movement as well as the Interfaith Movement, and has been active in mobilising Muslims and the broader faith communities for a deeper understanding of Islam and faith under conditions of oppression (under apartheid) and currently under conditions of globalisation.

Ebrahim Rasool has built up extensive experience of Government having led various Departments like Health, Welfare, Finance and Economic Development, and as Premier of the Western Cape was instrumental in, amongst others, attracting foreign investment into the Province worth R8 billion (approximately \$1 billion) having the highest provincial economic growth rate, and making significant strides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

For his contribution to South Africa Ambassador Rasool has been the recipient of a number of leadership awards. In 2008 he was awarded the Visionary Leadership and Public Good Award from the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists, and the Award for Commitment and Leadership in Fight Against Crime from Business Against Crime. In 2005 the London Financial Times awarded Ambassador Rasool the Foreign Direct Investment Africa Personality of the Year Award. Rasool is also the recipient of the Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights presented to him by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 1998. He is also the founder of the World for All Foundation – a foundation that rethinks the intellectual tools available to Muslims and faith communities, that creates co-operative relations between faiths, cultures and communities at a global level. Ambassador Rasool is dedicated to overcoming the potential for conflict in the World.

“SOUTH AFRICA RISING - South Africa joins BRIC Countries as the leading African emerging economy
February 17, 2012 at Boston University



While traveling for the launch of the *African Leaders State of Africa Report*, African Presidential Center Director, Ambassador Charles Stith, introduces Ambassador Rasool via Skype.



Ambassador Rasool is welcomed by Cornelius Hurley, Director of Boston University's Center for Law, Finance & Policy.



Ambassador Rasool greets Boston University faculty and staff. (L-R) Ms. Susan Zalkind, Pardee Center Research Initiatives and Multimedia Coordinator; Dr. John Thornton, Professor, BU African-American Studies; Ambassador Rasool; Dr. James McCann, Director, Pardee Center; Dr. Linda Heywood, Director, African American Studies

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