



Africa and the Commonwealth: What Relationship Since 1994?

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ABSTRACT

The Commonwealth is a global organisation with some unique and important characteristics that complement other global multilateral organizations. Its peculiarities, most especially its networking and informal qualities, have endeared the organization until recently to her members. In this age of internet in which smartness and alertness are highly valued, some of its traits are now becoming a thing of an anathema, regarded as a cog in the wheel of progress. African continent alone has over thirty percent of Commonwealth membership. This paper examines Commonwealth relations with Africa since 1994 when apartheid ended in South Africa and Africans had a renewed relationship with the organization after both parties had endured a tenuous relationship in the preceding years. The study has the objective of assessing the economic and political gains Africa has derived from membership of the Commonwealth as well as to ascertain whether or not the relationship is mutually beneficial. The essay is qualitative and adopts the historical research methodology, detailing the evolution and progression in Commonwealth's relationship with Africa during the period of study. The essay complements the use of secondary sources with primary sources. Data was therefore composed of official documents from the Commonwealth Secretariat as well as documents from some African countries. The study concludes that Africa has benefitted immensely from the Commonwealth since 1994, despite some aspects of its relationship needing

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improvements. It recommends, therefore, that both parties will have to work towards a symbiotic relationship in order to enjoy a more robust partnership that is effective and impactful in the interest of all.

Keywords: Africa; commonwealth; commonwealth secretariat; international organizations; mutual relationship.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fifty four Commonwealth member nations of the world are found in the six continents of the world with the African continent having nineteen. Teslim O Elias has rightly identified that, at independence during the 1960s, while many Anglophone Africans opted to become republics and jettisoned the British monarchy, they all chose to remain within the fold of the Commonwealth owing to the material gains they were sure to derive from it [1]. Apart from the possible economic gains, Peter Henshaw has made the point that the transformation of the Commonwealth from what was entirely British to an organization that embraced other cultures was one destined to aid greater interactions between member nations, to the extent of significantly affecting global politics [2]. But John Holmes reminds us that the transformation of the organization from the British Commonwealth to the Commonwealth of Nations in 1949 and the concomitant 'free and equal' status it conferred on members had huge ramifications as this was more theoretical rather than practical [3].

Olusola Akinrinade has examined the relationship between the Commonwealth and Africa between 1960 and 1980 in the context of 'free and equal' status. He submits that while Africa came to play a great part within the organization in the 1960s, during the 1970s the issue of Rhodesia and South Africa ensured that the Commonwealth took a pronouncedly 'Africa Dimension' to the extent that it threatened the existence of the organization [4]. It is therefore fair to say that Commonwealth relationship with Africa had a chequered history, as it was not always smooth [5]. Before apartheid came to an end in 1994, relations between Africa and the Commonwealth was strained because of the issue of South Africa and Rhodesia. After the collapse of apartheid, however, a new relationship developed between both parties. There was, for example, a better commitment to ensure that member nations were democratic and did not violate human rights. For instance, Donnelly and Neville were right in identifying that while Nigeria was a regional power that was a

strategic member of the Commonwealth, but challenges of governance did not allow it pull its weight within the organization [6]. Indeed, Akinriade was right in concluding that the violation of human rights under the Abacha administration, particularly in respect of Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution in 1995, was a mark for the Commonwealth to signal the world and member nations that it would have zero tolerance for bad administration [7].

There are several elements to the new relationship between the Commonwealth and Africa, some of these elements keep on vibrating and ringing to the extent that they now stand for the opposite of traditional drivers of foreign policy of the apartheid era. The first of these ingredients was the interest in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) phenomenon expressed in the engagement with civil society by the Commonwealth in order to wage war on poverty and want. The second element of this new relationship between Africa and Commonwealth is the change in the foundation of inequality between the developing countries of Africa and the developed countries of the Commonwealth. The change was manifested in the emphasis on governance as the driving force or what Christopher Clapham called the critical driver of development [8].

It was in order to drive home the point that the British Labour party removed Africa from the realm of super power competition and in the process enhanced the moral context of the relationship. Lynda Chalker was made the first British Minister of State for Overseas Development and Africa in 1989 and served in this capacity until 1997 after apartheid had been dissolved. Chalker's role in helping to evaluate and balance economy with politics in a bid to reduce poverty in Africa is yet to be documented but there is no doubt that she played a significant role in Africa's post-apartheid development. The critical link between governance and public welfare was emphasized and attempt was made to provide African indigenous support for policies favoured by the developed countries of the West: The United

Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand which are the leading members of the Commonwealth and are also among the leading members of the twenty largest economies that emphasize good governance, democracy, human right, rule of law, education. These became core values that the Commonwealth seek to integrate in the domestic political processes of African member countries. But to what degree has the Commonwealth been able to effect Africa with these values? The extent to which these values have been integrated into African domestic process is a real challenge to the Commonwealth as will be seen in this paper.

The remainder of the essay is divided into four sections: the study first identifies the evolutionary development of the Commonwealth, how its values were formed. Thereafter, we examine how Commonwealth values have impacted Africa and the benefits the continent has received as a result. The follow section places emphasis on how the organization has particularly affected education and youth development in Africa. Finally, an assessment is done to ascertain whether or not the relationship between the Commonwealth and Africa is mutually beneficial or not, before then making concluding remarks.

2. THE COMMONWEALTH'S EVOLUTION AND VALUES

An in-depth analysis of the Commonwealth response must be situated within the context of the overall purpose of the Commonwealth. The denotation and connotation of the word Commonwealth has been fully discussed by Professor Bola Akinterinwa, the former Director General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and therefore need no further discussion here [9]. What is required here is to give the history of the origins of the Commonwealth even if cursorily.

The Commonwealth has a long history. According to the Report of the House of Commons on the role and future of the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth has been called the world's oldest political association of sovereign states [10]. Although the British Empire from which Commonwealth evolved dated back to the 12th century as an organisation of sovereign states the Commonwealth's origins could be traced to 1869/1870 when representatives from self-governing colonies met unofficially to demand

consultative arrangements. The first colonial conference took place in 1887, coinciding with Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. From 1907 there were regular meetings of Prime Ministers with countries invited to send their heads of government only if they had responsible government on the British Parliamentary model. The Prime Ministers' Meeting (PMM) as the regular meeting of the prime ministers came to be called, was a major milestone in the evolution of the Commonwealth as it came to represent 'a meeting of responsible government', that is a government that had concern for its citizenry. This concern as will be shown later, in this article resonates in some of the core values of the Commonwealth as the 20th century unfolded as well as even to the 21st century and hopefully to the distant future.

The Prime Ministers' Meeting (PMM) which started in 1907 was attended not only by the white colonies of Britain, viz: Canada; Australia and New Zealand but also by India in 1917. India, although not yet a self-governing country, was invited to send representatives from 1917. Southern Ireland as the Irish Free State was added in 1922. An agreement of 1926, commonly referred to as the Balfour Declaration, another significant milestone in the evolution of the Commonwealth, defined the position and mutual relation of the members "as autonomous, equal in status, owing common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated [11]. These principles as enshrined in the Balfour Declaration were embodied in the preamble to the Statute of Westminster of 1931 which also declared that the Crown was the symbol of the free association of the members. The term "British Commonwealth of Nations" was first used formally in 1921 and from 1948 the term "The Commonwealth" replaced it.

After the Second World War of 1939 to 1945, additional members were recorded. India and Pakistan in 1947 and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1948. When India, the largest member became a republic it sought to remain in the Commonwealth and this was agreed by the existing members. The British monarch is the symbol of the free association of the independent member nations and as such, the Head of the Commonwealth. The words of the Declaration set the tone for the future of the Commonwealth. The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon declared that 'they remain united as free and equal members of the

Commonwealth of Nations, freely co- operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress' [12].

In 1952, on assuming the throne, the present Queen, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, became the Head of the Commonwealth. Having emerged from a group of countries that had a connection with Britain, the modern Commonwealth has been based from the beginning in 1949 on the maintenance of fundamental values and principles. Since the 1949 Declaration, the Commonwealth has regularly restated and refreshed those principles and values which have become key to the Commonwealth. Two documents have been especially important. In 1971, at the Singapore Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM, formerly PMM) the Declaration of Commonwealth principles defined the voluntary character and consensual working methods of the Commonwealth specifying its goals and objectives. Among the fourteen detailed principles in the Declaration were these:

Within (its) diversity all members of the Commonwealth hold certain principles in common. It is by pursuing these principles that the Commonwealth can continue to influence international society for the benefit of mankind.

We believe in liberty of the individual, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief, and in their inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic process in framing the society in which they live. We therefore strive to each of our countries those representative institutions and guarantees for personal freedom under the law our common heritage [13].

The 1991 Harare Commonwealth declaration sought to apply those principles in the context of the cold war pledging the heads of government to work with renewed vigour on the protection and promotion of the fundamental politics and values of which reflect national circumstances, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government.

These principles were underlined at the Port of Spain CHOGM of 2009. When meeting in the 60th anniversary year of the modern Commonwealth, the heads of government, taking pride in their collective achievements over the past six decades reaffirmed their strong and abiding commitment to the Commonwealth's fundamental values and principles.

For the Commonwealth to achieve the task it has set for itself, there are Commonwealth intergovernmental organizations:

- The Commonwealth Secretariat, which carries out plans agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government through technical assistance (via the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), advice and policy development. The secretariat's mission statement is: we work as a trusted partner for all Commonwealth people as: a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance; a catalyst for global consensus-building; a source of assistance for sustainable development and poverty eradication.
- The Commonwealth Foundation, which helps civil society organizations promote democracy, development, culture and understanding.
- The Commonwealth of Learning, which encourages the development and sharing of open learning and distance education.
- The work of the formal intergovernmental Commonwealth institutions is only part of the picture, and perhaps not the most visible part. There are around 100 associations (70 accredited) in the Commonwealth network. Among the associations are bodies, concerned with land rights, parliamentary assemblies (the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association), culture, gender equality, health, humanitarian relief, disability, education and trade unions. The aims of the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association (CMJA) include: to advance the administration of the law by promoting the independence of the judiciary and to advance education in the law, the administration of justice, the treatment of offenders and the prevention of crime within the Commonwealth. Another example of the non-official Commonwealth at work is the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC). This is a UK based youth development and education charity which works alongside young people to support them as active global citizens through sharing lives, exchanging ideas and working together. The CYEC supports a bilateral UK - Commonwealth group, youth exchange programme and

Commonwealth—wide youth-led development and leadership projects [14].

From all of the above, a few comments are in order. The first thing to note is that the Commonwealth over the years relies on building consensus among its members in an informal manner through the PMM and later, CHOGM. The second thing to note is that Africa was not central to Commonwealth's concern. U.K, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) were perceived to have been at the core of Commonwealth foundation and therefore of more value than Ghana which joined the Commonwealth in 1957, Nigeria in 1960 and the rest seventeen African member nations of the Commonwealth later. Another thing to note is that the core values of the Commonwealth have been increased not just to incorporate democratic principles and values but also economic development. Democracy has always been the stronger when there is free and open market in goods and services, in ideas and in education. There are many diverse economic philosophies to be found across the Commonwealth but all want economic success to improve the wellbeing of their people and assist many to escape from poverty.

How then have the Commonwealth cores or key values impacted upon Africa given the fact that some African members of the Commonwealth had no colonial ties with the United Kingdom? Cameroon and Mozambique are Francophone and Lusophone countries respectively, and Rwanda was colonized by Belgium. How then will they cope with the Commonwealth?

3. COMMONWEALTH VALUES AND IMPACT ON AFRICAN MEMBER NATIONS

According to Professor Ade Adefuye when he was the former Head of the African section of the Commonwealth Secretariat, "most of the African member countries fall in the category of least developed countries of the world and the continent has the potential for political instability. Africa therefore presents the Commonwealth with the greatest challenge [15]." Since apartheid ended in South Africa in 1994, the Commonwealth has been more inclined to ensuring that member nations are committed to the Harare principles. This was in a bid to address the criticism levelled against the Commonwealth that despite professing

democratic values, it had within its fold member-nations governments that were not democratically elected.

As a consequence, therefore, since 1994 the Commonwealth took concrete steps towards democratizing its African member countries that were governed by military and one party regimes. Countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Kenya and Rwanda particularly stand out. The Commonwealth helped these countries at different times in preparing multi-party elections [16]. These elections were also supervised by the organization in order to forestall malpractice. Indeed, observing elections has been one of the many ways through which the Commonwealth promote democratic processes among member nations. This practice has reinforced belief in the democratic processes and have prevented fraudulent practices such as rigging. As of 2015 the Commonwealth has observed over 44 elections in over 30 countries, mostly in Africa [17]. The organization's commitment to democratic processes does not end with mere observations. After the elections, the Commonwealth sets up a mechanism for ensuring the implementation of the observers' recommendations. In addition, the organization encourages adherence to democratic processes by strengthening institutions that uphold democratic principles, such as the judiciary, electoral commissions as well as the civil service. The Commonwealth secretariat assist individuals in these institutions by organizing training workshops, which are mostly funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC).

The Commonwealth has also been instrumental in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. This role is centred around the office of the Secretary-General who, either directly or through delegated officials and eminent citizens, oversee peacekeeping missions. As a result, the organization has been able to resolve conflicts in a number of African countries, including Sierra Leone, Lesotho, Uganda and the Gambia [18].

One important outcome of the Commonwealth Heads of Government held in Auckland in 1995 was the creation of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), made up of eight ministers saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that member nations adhere to the Commonwealth Harare declaration. As an indication of how serious the organization was, serious violations of the Harare Principles have

led to the suspension of member countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe (in Africa) as well as Pakistan in Asia and Fiji in the Pacific) [19].

However, the support for democracy and conflict resolution was incomplete without the necessary technical aids to go with them. Consequently, the Commonwealth provided the needed technical support to ensure that immediate causes of conflict are addressed through provision of necessary expertise. Such technical assistance came in form of competent individuals who build institutions that will prevent a recurrence of conflicts. This usually requires the collaboration of a number of Commonwealth secretariat divisions that are coordinated by a Deputy Secretary General [20].

With regard to development, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) is the operative arm of Commonwealth development programme. The CFTC has provided services to many African countries. One of the many ways this was done was through skill acquisition, as well as organizing workshops and seminars for government officials that were channeled towards improving their efficiency, assisting in sourcing for capital for investments, and advice for debt management. Matters relating to tackling of money laundering and intellectual property are matters that the CFTC also concerns itself with. Indeed, the Commonwealth recognized that Africa is in the greatest need of developmental assistance. This is why the continent received the highest level of technical assistance from the Commonwealth [21]. For example, 43 per cent of the CFTC budget is spent on Africa and since the 1990s the continent has received £4.5 million worth of CFTC national and regional assistance [22]. The CFTC budget is quite limited at £24 million, but such a sum was supplemented by other British agencies such as Department for International Development (DFID) in UK, the European Union, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) [23].

Technical aid without management of debt profile would yield to very little gain, however. This fact was not lost on the Commonwealth, which concerned itself with reducing the continent's debt profile. The Commonwealth has a Debt Management Programme which uses CS DRMS software that is installed in 12 African countries. The programme serves as an advisory body that also builds capacity for effective debt management. The programme is particularly

useful to Africans which houses 22 of the 39 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) [24]. In fact, it was the Commonwealth that mooted the idea of the HIPC initiative, and countries such as Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda have reached completion point. Six others: Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Zambia have also recorded varying degrees of success in their debt management. The HIPC initiative was expected to reduce the 22 African countries' debts by \$19 billion in 2020 [25]. And while not meeting these targets, it has come pretty close.

Democracy is a hollow concept without economic development. To this end, the Commonwealth recognises the importance of trade in Africa. In this respect, African countries have benefited from the 'Hub and Spokes' project, which concerns itself with three primary arrears: the first has to do with policy advice at regional and national level; the second covers the effective guidance on the World Trade Organisation; as well as advice on trade policy matters at national and regional levels. The project has provided among other things, technical assistance and senior trade policy advisers stationed at African Union, COMESA, SADC, and ECOWAS offices.

The Doha Development Round negotiations of 2001 is another of the many ways through which the Commonwealth Secretariat has provided technical and analytical support to African countries. The Doha negotiations has to do with the problems arising from the world trade. The Commonwealth also believes that tourism can be a major component of revenue generation in Africa. Plans towards using tourism to generate wealth among African nations within the Commonwealth were hatched at the April 2005 meeting in Abuja, where ministers pledged to cooperate in using tourism for sustainable development, creation of wealth and poverty reduction.

The Economic Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2012 implemented a two year project supported by DFID, between 2012 and 2014. The project examined the experiences of four countries to assess, how far their Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) were country-owned and to what extent donors were aligning their assistance behind the PRS. In addition, the Commonwealth has supported the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) initiative. NEPAD is scheme that is

owned and managed by Africans, and is targeted at economic growth and development, reduction in poverty, increased exports and increase in African integration. The Commonwealth has been particularly supportive of NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which is a scheme whereby African countries submit themselves for assessment by their peers on whether or not they were being governed in accordance with acceptable standards. The Commonwealth has encouraged member nations in Africa to submit to this scheme; and both the African Union and NEPAD in return have recognized the Commonwealth as a partner organization in the implementation of the APRM.

It is also worth mentioning that the Commonwealth has been making frantic efforts since 1994 to emphasize equality of all human beings and is combating racial and cultural divisions. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held biennially is usually preceded with an exhibition of the arts and crafts of the host country. This affords the host country an opportunity to showcase its culture. Apart from CHOGM, ministers responsible for education, environment, finance, foreign affairs, gender, health, law and youth also meet regularly. This gives member countries whether from Africa or other continents better understanding of each other's goals in the compacting world of the 21st century.

4. EDUCATION, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

With regard to education, the U.K., Canada, and Australia are assisting African member countries in some ways. Commonwealth scholarship and fellowships are enjoyed by some African members through the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). The number of the Association of Commonwealth Universities has increased from 233 to 533 recently [26]. Commonwealth fellows have the opportunity to interact with scholars from the developed countries of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth also provides many opportunities for the education of the citizens of member states. In particular, it supports tertiary education in some member countries. Of the five countries that receive more than 59% of foreign students, three are Commonwealth member states: Australia, Canada and U.K [27]. The Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship indirectly impact on recipients to spread the

values, sympathies and culture while having direct benefit on individual career development.

Education lies at the heart of personal and social development and has always been a key priority for developing and developed Commonwealth countries in their plans for social and economic development. It has a key role to play in promoting knowledge and awareness of the Commonwealth and its values. It provides the setting and the impetus for much of the movement of persons, services and ideas that have produced a shared sense of Commonwealth identity. Students and teacher mobility, academic exchange, cross-border provision of courses, examinations and qualifications, trade in books and educational materials, all contribute significantly to building Commonwealth consciousness. The education sector more than any other sector (whether gender, human right or health) has more pan-Commonwealth voluntary and professional organizations and associations within the Commonwealth.

Apart from education, democracy, human right, trade and economic development, the Commonwealth also helps to build shared understanding of global issues such as national debt, environmental degradation, promotion of ICT and so on. The Commonwealth provides a mechanism for reaching joint position on key issues facing the world. For example, in the ICT world, the Commonwealth International Telecommunication Union (ITU) group strives to harmonize the different positions of Commonwealth countries within the ITU system and to act as a pressure group. Its strength has been proven on several occasions including elections in the ITU council. On the issue of climate change, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting CHOGM in 2009 and 2011 expressed concern and have been brainstorming on the next line of action.

The Commonwealth is the only multilateral organisation that has the Youth Programme not only to inform and involve the young people in development, but also in opening up of elite Commonwealth associations to younger members. The Royal Commonwealth Society has run student Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting but lack of finance has prevented continuity [28]. The Commonwealth needs to look into this. The major Commonwealth attraction for younger people is of course the Commonwealth Games,

sufficiently being utilised for the benefit of Commonwealth understanding.

In addition to the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), the Commonwealth is also interested in gender issues as it strives hard for females in some member countries to acquire vocational skills. It also encourages women to play more visible role in politics. The Commonwealth has blazed the trail in being the first multilateral organisation to have a female (though a Guyanese) as the Secretary General. Certainly this will impact positively on African female members of the Commonwealth.

5. COMMONWEALTH AND AFRICA: ANY MUTUAL BENEFITS?

The Commonwealth of today bears no resemblance to the British empire of the past. Rwanda joined the Commonwealth in 2009 while Mozambique joined the Commonwealth in 1995. Algeria (a Francophone country) is among the applicants (in addition to Suriname, Kuwait, and Lebanon) for Commonwealth membership. What this means is that the Commonwealth in spite of various criticisms from some members, is still attractive and fascinating. As Professor Ade Adefuye observed, the Commonwealth is an entirely new conception built on the highest qualities of the spirit of friendship, loyalty and the desire for freedom and peace [29].

Although the British government provides 30% of the budget of the Commonwealth Secretariat in addition to the free use of Marlborough House and Quadrant House as offices and the British Monarch, the Queen, Elizabeth II is Head of State in each of the Commonwealth countries individually; every member of the Commonwealth is equal. With the collapse of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 and the election of Nelson Mandela as the first African President of South Africa, it is clear that the British Government would have to respect the view of the majority of every member country even if the view clashes and/or conflicts with the British view. Downing Street would therefore continue to “play the piper without necessarily calling the tune” [30].

One unique feature of the Commonwealth is that it is an organisation whose structure is not based on a formal constitution or charter. Rather, it has a series of declarations and statements which define the principles on which the organisation is based and which have become the core values of the Commonwealth as pronounced in

Singapore in 1971, reaffirmed in Harare in 1991 and strengthened at Millbrook in 1995 with the establishment of a machinery (Commonwealth Monitoring Action Group (CMAG) for their implementation. Singapore, Harare, Millbrook and Coolum statements declare the Commonwealth belief in democracy, human rights, rule of law, equality of all citizens and the commitment to ‘sustainable development of all member countries. The Harare principles came about as a result of the establishment of a committee of heads of Government known as the High Level Appraisal Group established in the 1989 CHOGM in Kuala Lumpur to review all activities of the Commonwealth and chart a course and the activities and role of the Commonwealth. After every CHOGM the Chairperson in Office (i.e the host of CHOGM) with some officials will review what action had been reached at the meeting. This is in a bid to walk the talk.

The Commonwealth incontrovertibly has proved its relevance in Africa, most especially with regard to Harare principles as well as the democratization of some African member nations. If not for the Commonwealth, Nigeria and Zimbabwe would not have been suspended. As at the time of writing this article in September 2016, the people of Zimbabwe were still protesting against Robert Mugabe’s 36-year rule. However, the CMAG would still have to be strengthened to play more effective role in unseating despots. Though there are still violations of human rights in Africa as well as gender inequality, the very fact that the Commonwealth is not folding its arms shows that such violations will decrease as the 21st century progresses [31].

At the Abuja CHOGM in December 2003, the Commonwealth recognized that corruption erodes economic development as well as corporate government and pledged maximum cooperation and assistance to recover assets of illicit origin and repatriate them to the countries of origin. Many African countries are known for high level corruption and fear is being expressed that no matter the profitability of African trade with the Commonwealth, if institutions are not strengthened in such a manner that corrupt Africans can end up behind the bars, the wealth derived from commerce will be looted and majority of African Commonwealth members and none members will still remain poor. In effect, Africa must put its house in order so as to benefit from Africa’s relations with the Commonwealth.

Table 1. Table Showing Commonwealth Member Nations in Africa

S/N	Country	Former colonizers	Date of independence	Year joined commonwealth	Commonwealth youth index	GDP as of 2020
1.	Botswana	Britain	1966	1966	37 out of 49 countries	18.34 billion USD
2.	Cameroon	France/Britain	1960	1960	45 out of 49 countries	39.01 billion USD
3.	The Gambia	Britain	1965	1965	N/A	1.826 billion USD
4.	Ghana	Britain	1957	1957	29 out of 49 countries	66.98 billion USD
5	Kenya	Britain	1963	1963	31 out of 49 countries	95.5 billion USD
6.	Kingdom of Eswatini	Britain	1968	1968	38 out of 49 countries	4.472 billion USD
7.	Lesotho	Britain	1966	1966	47 out of 49 countries	4.7 billion USD
8.	Malawi	Britain	1964	1964	44 out of 49 countries	7.667 billion USD
9.	Mauritius	Britain	1968	1968	16 out of 49 countries	14.05 billion USD
10.	Mozambique	Portugal	1975	1995	49 out of 49 countries	15.29 billion USD
11.	Namibia	South Africa	1990	1990	43 out of 49 countries	12.37 billion USD
12.	Nigeria	Britain	1960	1960	36 out of 49 countries	448.1 billion USD
13.	Rwanda	Belgium	1962	2009	40 out of 49 countries	10.35 billion USD
14.	Seychelles	Britain	1976	1976	40 out of 49 countries	1.703 billion USD
15.	Sierra Leone	Britain	1961	1961	41 out of 49 countries	4.12 billion USD
16.	South Africa	Britain	1931	1931-1961, 1994	32 out of 49 countries	351.4 billion USD
17.	Uganda	Britain	1962	1962	35 out of 49 countries	35.17 billion USD
18.	Tanzania	Britain	1961	1961	46 out of 49 countries	63.18 billion USD
19.	Zambia	Britain	1964	1964	46 out of 49 countries	23.31 billion USD

Source: Information was derived from thecommonwealth.org and datatopics.worldbank.org

6. CONCLUSION

There has been a somewhat shift in Commonwealth focus after the collapse of apartheid from an organization that supported racism in South Africa to one committed to economic development, agitation against unfair international trade practices as well as democratic issues. Rather than go cap-in-hand to the developed countries for aid, Africans now prefer to trade with the western countries on terms that will be beneficial to Africans. Africans, most especially Nigerians are mounting irresistible pressure on Britain to return Abacha's loot to the Nigerian government. Nigeria must ensure that Britain fulfills the promise. In addition, Africans must use the Commonwealth to come up with decisions that will forbid the developed members from providing safe haven for looted funds from Africa. African members should continue to use the Commonwealth for effective and collective articulation of their interest in world politics. For Africa and the Commonwealth it has been an effective and beneficial partnership as both Chief Emeka Anyaoku and Professor Ade Adefuye would seem to agree. Professor Bola Akinterinwa agreed with this position. I believe very strongly that Africa can still use the Commonwealth in more effective ways than it is currently doing.

Africans can use the Commonwealth to get their governments to be much more transparent and committed to democratic principles, rule of law, human rights and economic development if both the African continent and the Commonwealth are sincere. If the Commonwealth is genuinely interested in the development of African member nations, the developed member countries must promote the welfare of the less developed countries by not supporting the corrupt governments that loot the treasury and hide the loots in the developed member countries. Those who support thieves are themselves rogues! The rest of the 21st century must be completely free of corruption.

Africa's democratic journey has improved, thanks to the Commonwealth. Nowhere is this more evident in Nigeria than when in the 2015 general elections an incumbent was defeated by the opposition candidate in a smooth and peaceful transition. Nigeria was commended by the whole world for this feat. Furthermore, for the first time in Nigeria's history, democratic rule since 1999 is uninterrupted and hopefully will

continue to be so. Professor Ade Adefuye's labour is therefore not in vain.

It is a fortunate development that my suggestion to the effect that the Commonwealth should blaze the trail in appointing a female as the organisation's Secretary General has found favour in the sight of the Commonwealth. However, the organization will still have to do more for the female gender. The female gender is still largely discriminated against and still has no voice. The Commonwealth must be much more vocal and supportive of the girl child than hitherto. Dynamism and aggressiveness must be Commonwealth's password.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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