

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Debated at United Nations as World Crisis Escalates

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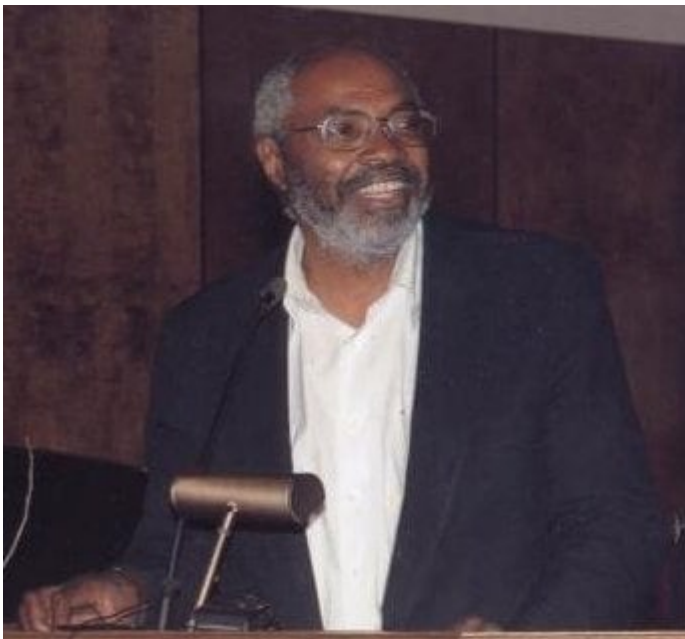
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*Numerous heads-of-state attended a United Nations conference in New York City in late April to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. Another gathering focused on the current status by governments internationally to curb the impact of climate change.*

*This SDG program was adopted during 2015 after the lapse of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The MDG set objectives of eliminating poverty and raising incomes beginning in 2000 and extending for a decade-and-a-half.*

During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there were conditions which arose in leading states within Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific resulting in significant economic growth. The rise in prices for oil, natural gas, strategic minerals and other commodities produced by so-called “developing countries” fueled profits for multi-national corporations and governments ruling states where these resources were extracted and exported.



Abayomi Azikiwe in 2010 at New Bethel

Income generation within the post-colonial and neo-colonial states encouraged Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the areas of light and heavy industrial production, technology transfers along with greater cooperation among governments in the Global South. Actual levels of household incomes rose in many regions of Africa, Latin American and the Asia-Pacific along with political alliances among these states bringing to the fore such

organizations as the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa Summit (BRICS), the Africa-South America Summit (ASAS) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

Nonetheless, the distribution of the wealth generated during the new millennium was far less than equitable. Wealthy social groups arose while professional, small-and-medium-sized enterprise owners and their workers experienced significant improvements in their living standards.

Much of the debt which had crippled the African continent during the 1980s and 1990s was written off and refinanced giving the appearance of substantial development that would extend into the unforeseeable future. The further deregulation of the international financial industry provided credit for corporate investments and individual household consumption.

### Rapid Reversal in Evidence

By the close of the last decade the expansion of a credit-based economy was quickly resulting in the closure of leading investment firms and banks. Western capitalist governments and central banks were compelled to bailout the financial institutions to the tune of trillions of dollars and euros.

The effect of this phenomenon in the United States, Western Europe and China was not immediately apparent to many governments in Africa. Nevertheless, the strategic interests of leading capitalist states remained in conflict with the emerging economies.

Under the Obama administration more emphasis was placed on domestic production of oil and natural gas prompting a precipitous decline in the prices of these major exports for countries such as Nigeria, Russia, Venezuela and Brazil. In South Africa, where the extraction of gold, diamonds, platinum, iron ore and coal had been the engine of growth under the racist system of settler-colonialism since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, witnessed large-scale capital flight and job losses.

Of course there was a clear political agenda in operation as well where the regional blocs of FOCAC, BRICS and the rejuvenated Non-aligned Movement (NAM) were perceived by imperialism as a threat to their hegemony in the fields of international exchange and the overall balance of military and economic forces.

### United Nations Conference Served as Forum for 'Emerging States'

Two notable speeches during the meeting were delivered by President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil.

Speaking at the High-Level Thematic Debate on Achieving Sustainable Development Goals on April 21, President Mugabe criticized the imperialists' economic sanctions which have robbed Zimbabwe of over \$42 billion in revenue since the beginning of the millennium, effectively hampering the Southern African state from reaching the MDGs. The impact of the sanctions against Zimbabwe was placed within the context of the broader economic crises facing former colonial and neo-colonial countries.

Mugabe spoke to the urgency of the situation facing the majority of peoples of the world saying: "It is my hope that the critical lessons of the Millennium Development Goals will instruct us in this endeavor and particularly on the imperative of moving swiftly from

commitments to action, to assure success in our common and individual efforts. The enormity of the ambition we have set for ourselves must be matched by an equal sense of purpose, cohesion and speed. Let us, therefore, use this occasion to compare notes and inspire one another as we set off on the demanding transformative journey ahead of us.” (Zimbabwe Herald)

The president of this former British colony and leading independent state in Southern Africa stressed that: “Recent revelations have shone light on the schemes, legal or otherwise, that deprive governments of huge financial resources which can be channeled towards development. International cooperation is imperative in stemming and stamping out financial engineering schemes that siphon resources from use for public good.”

Furthering noting “For us in Africa, illicit flows, estimated at \$60 billion a year, further hemorrhage the limited financial resources at our disposal. This area needs urgent resolution to ensure that an improvement in domestic resource mobilization efforts contributes to national coffers, and not to lining the pockets of those illegally transferring these resources from our countries.”

Washington under the Obama administration is stiffening sanctions against Zimbabwe by prohibiting transactions involving dozens of institutions and individuals as part and parcel of an imperialist scheme to interfere in Zimbabwe’s 2018 elections. Evidence uncovered by the state-owned Sunday Mail during the week of April 18 illustrated that U.S. administration is blocking Visa Card and MasterCard usage for all Zimbabweans on a list of “Politically Exposed Persons”.

Banks operating in Zimbabwe have received warnings of “stiff penalties” that will be imposed on people and institutions which fail to carry out the sanctions. Earlier in February, Barclays Bank was fined \$2.5 million for conducting financial transactions involving Zimbabweans and other entities on the list.

Brazilian President Rousseff, who was subjected to an impeachment vote in the lower house of parliament, said that she would continue to fight to remain in power in Brazil after a politically-motivated attack against the Worker’s Party, which is numerically a minority group in the legislature, but still maintains the largest bloc within the legislative body.

She blamed the wealthy class in Brazil for what she described as the illegal attempt to force her from office. She indicated that she would appeal to the regional South American states to suspend Brazil if she does not survive a vote in the senate scheduled for May.

Reuters reported on her visit during the Climate Change dialogue at the UN, noting “Rousseff denounced her impeachment as a ‘coup’ to an international audience on Friday (April 22), and said she would petition the Mercosur regional grouping of South American nations for Brazil to be suspended if the democratic process is violated. ‘I would appeal to the democracy clause if there were, from now on, a rupture of what I consider democratic process,’ she told reporters in New York.”

Mercosur’s platform embodies a clause which can be enacted if elected governments are overthrown among member states. This happened in Paraguay in 2012.

If the removal of Rousseff is found to be in violation of democratic practice, member-states can be suspended from participating in regional meetings along with the imposition of

economic sanctions. Rousseff's comments during a press conference in New York were the strongest statement yet that she will continue to resist those seeking to remove her from office.

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