

The Republic of Benin

Positions for the African Development Bank

The topics before the African Development Bank (AfDB) are: Furthering Private Sector Development for Economic Growth; and Enhancing Nutritional Programs to Improve Quality of Life. Benin looks forward to its continuous efforts of collaborating with fellow Member States to better address these issues and develop effective solutions.

I. Furthering Private Sector Development for Economic Growth

The mission of the African Development Bank (AfDB) is to promote sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. The AfDB has highlighted furthering private sector development to battle the hinderances of turning away from colonialism and moving towards a 'New Africa'. Regional Member Countries (RMCs) are developing along various degrees. A cohesive effort towards sustainability is insurmountable with some RMCs still hindered by an 'under developed' economy. Africa offers opportunity for prosperity across the continent, hindered by the lack of growth or even presence of the private sector. Over recent decades, Africa has seemed more attractive to investors with substantial growth of trade and regional stability. A positive relationship between the private sector and economic development has been exemplified across the Globe. Areas in which the AfDB have deemed paramount for growth are agribusiness, energy, and transportation. The current reliability on agribusiness across most RMCs makes food insecurity no less than detrimental to a region's sustainability. This body reported in Feed Africa that a third of calories consumed were imported, the low agricultural production makes it an uncompetitive sector. This is an area of concern for both economic and general welfare needs. This United Nations (UN) body recognized that 1 in 5 persons lack sufficient electricity and the advantages brought by electricity. The number reaches 9 in 10 when examining sub-Saharan Africa. These inadequate power networks leave people without clean water, proper sanitation, inadequate healthcare, lack of lighting, minimal communication, and no proper means to cook or heat in a home. Access to modern and reliable energy is widely regarded as a prerequisite for economic development and sustainability. The OECD reported approximately a quarter of the value of goods from a developing country are spent on transportation of that good. Member States cannot expect to thrive when constant hinderances exist in forms restricting their profit margins. Transportation is a key domain in combatting restrictions of trade.

We recognize that the issues of developing an underdeveloped state is one where comprehensive cohesion is necessary. The AfDB released the Strategy for Agricultural Transformation in Africa 2016-2025, called Feed Africa, that exemplifies agriculture as a good option for the required diversification of economies as it exhibits lower price volatility than manufactured goods. Africa also embodies undeveloped endowments necessary for agricultural success. Agribusiness offers a direct promotion of entrepreneurial and innovative thinking that creates employment opportunity and increases the flow of goods within a region with outward reaches. The Business and Sustainable Development Commission of Grow Africa identified 14 sustainable business prospects targeted at food security. To advance the accessibility to adequate electricity, does not just establish prerequisites for economic development but towards a more sustainable way of life at a micro-level perspective. Private-public partnerships like Power Africa have initiated collective action between governments, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), and UN bodies to enhance accessibility to clean power for homes and businesses. Recent successes in Ghana involving infrastructure improvements should be extended throughout the continent. A 3-tier highway system linked crucial trading post for inter and intrastate trade made way for innovation and development in Ghana's economy. We recognize the G20 compact for Africa that has instigated private investment in infrastructure and support its continuation and enhancement.

Benin continuously strives to close the gap within the value chains of processing goods. Margins of profit should be maximized within applicable areas, farmers should process goods along the value chain as far as they are able. Benin highlights the necessity of diversifying economies and that diversification must be done on both macro and micro levels. Not only should a RMCs economy be profitable, but self-sustaining. We would like to reiterate the AfDB Feed Africa report in efforts to identify sustainable food sources and adhere to the 7 sets of enablers needed to catalyze development. We would like to remind Member States that throughout the vast continent lies ample opportunity to exploit renewable energy sources for the well-being of the whole. Hydropower, solar, and geothermal energy are abundantly accessible, the means to convert such energy are waiting to be harnessed throughout the region. Natural incentives for enabling renewable energy are already in place by ways of enhancing economies as well as environments. It is essential that RMCs adhere to their most profitable means while focusing on diversification and therefore sustainability through economic development. Benin looks to further engagements such

as the “toolbox” of information offered by the G20 Compact. This allows investors of various levels, micro to macro, and varying organizations, governmental and nongovernmental to collectively share information regarding needs and capabilities. Private and public investments in energy, agribusiness, and transportation infrastructure as highlighted by the AfDB, will propel Africa towards economic development and ultimately sustainability.

II. Enhancing Nutritional Programs to Improve Quality of Life

Access to food is considered a fundamental right. However, hunger and malnutrition are one of the leading causes of suffering and death with over 709 million people suffering from hunger worldwide stemming from food insecurity. The main cause of food insecurity is food shortages which are usually the result of environmental disruptions, violent conflict, and political instability, all causing delays of food production or damage to agricultural infrastructure. Hunger is especially problematic in Africa where violence and instability exist in high rates in certain regions. Militants and insurgents have been known to divert food sources to hunger stricken areas. In addition, extreme climate conditions in some areas such as excessive heat and lack of rain cause water supply shortages that deplete moisture from farmlands and inhibit further food production often resulting in droughts that spawn catastrophic famines as recently seen in Somalia. For pregnant women specifically, malnourishment is extremely dangerous because they in turn give birth to malnourished infants, and this leads to a plethora of physical problems that have resulted in the deaths of 3.1 million children. In Africa alone 58 million children under five are the victims of chronic undernourishment. Furthermore, malnourishment results in physical and psychological distress prohibiting success in school and the workplace, lowering productivity and heightening poverty rates. Because of the economic disadvantages caused as a result of food insecurity, addressing this issue in the United Nations (UN) is not only a health issue, but a monetary one as well. Further, Collier’s World Bank research suggests a deep linkage and cyclical effect between poverty and conflict, suggesting that food insecurity has broader political ramifications as well.

To combat food insecurity, in 2016 the African Development Bank (AfDB) developed a program, African Leaders on Nutrition, that strives to achieve a hunger free continent by focusing on science and research to promote better nutrition, investing in nutritional programs, and creating breast-feeding policies. The World Food Programme (WFP) also continues to support efforts and aid by establishing programs such as the Moderate Acute Malnutrition program in Ghana. In alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition developed the UN Global Nutrition Agenda that provides a framework including ten principles as a guideline for promoting secure food strategies. It encourages collaboration between various other food programs such as; the Food and Agricultural Organization, WFP, and Network and Communities of Practice for Scaling Up Nutrition. The UN also created the High Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security in response to, and as method of combatting, rising food prices. In 1996 the UN established a goal to decrease world hunger by 50% at the World Food Summit in Rome. They have continued to pursue this goal by creating new program such as the Anti-Hunger program and the International Alliance Against Hunger. The AfDB continues to strive to reduce hunger and fight causal factors by constructing programs like Feed Africa that works to boost agriculture production in Africa and lower hunger rates. The AfDB also works alongside Regional Member Countries (RMCs) to create their own programs, and they help to finance these initiatives and invest in them. Some of the include the Food and Nutrition Services and Skills Development and the Entrepreneurship Project Supporting Women and Youth in Zambia. However, while these programs illustrate major steps being taken, hunger is still a large-scale problem.

Because hunger results in mass numbers of death across the globe, it is imperative that investments and continuous focus remains on this issue, especially in suffering regions like West Africa and more generally, Sub-Saharan Africa. Benin is one of the poorest nations in the world and is part of a region in Africa that experiences ongoing conflict, environmental instability, and poor agricultural systems. This is problematic since we are a state reliant on subsistence farming but face environmental uncertainty and agricultural market volatility. As a result, we are listed at 21 out of 45 on the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index. By continuing to push for more investments, Benin and other states will improve in hunger rates that result in longer life expectancy, lower rates of children being born malnourished, increased economic activity, and greater quality of life. Additionally, these investments and programs can help insure lower rates of conflict that spiral from poverty and food shortages, and aid in stopping this cycle of insecurity. Benin believes that the continuation of progress in successful implementation of programs and investment is the key to greatly reducing world hunger. Further, we propose a strategic expansion of these programs to address areas hardest hit by food insecurity.