

Introduction

About This Report

This year is of great significance for Africa. In 2005 the world will review progress on a remarkable commitment it made in 2000. The Millennium Development Goals set out to halve world poverty by 2015. But we are now a third of the way to that date and the rich world is falling behind on its pledges to the poor. Nowhere is that more clear than in Africa, where the world is furthest behind in progress to fulfil those solemn promises. If that is to change we must act now.

But all is not gloom. For 2005 is also the year in which it is becoming clear to the outside world that things are changing on the continent – with African governments showing a new vision, both individually and working together through the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme. Africa, at last, looks set to deliver.

A year ago, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, brought together 17 people to form a Commission for Africa. We were invited in our individual and personal capacities rather than as representatives of governments or institutions. A majority of us come from Africa and we have varied experience as political leaders, public servants and in the private sector. The task we were set was this: to define the challenges facing Africa, and to provide clear recommendations on how to support the changes needed to reduce poverty.

Our starting point was the recognition that Africa must drive its own development. Rich nations should support that, because it is in our common interest to make the world a more prosperous and secure place – though the international community will contribute to the achievement of these objectives in different ways. But what is clear is that if Africa does not create the right conditions for development, then any amount of outside support will fail.

Our recommendations are based on two things. We carefully studied all the evidence available to find out what is working and what is not. And we consulted extensively, inside and outside Africa, with governments, civil society, the academic world and with those in the public and private sector.

We have met individuals and groups from each region and 49 individual countries in Africa, and from every G8 country, China, India and across Europe. We have received nearly 500 formal submissions and have made a particular effort to engage with the African diaspora. We are enormously grateful to all these individuals and groups for their contributions.

Our report is in two parts. The first, **The Argument**, addresses itself to that wider audience and succinctly sets out our call to action. The second part, **The Analysis and Evidence**, lays out the substance and basis of our recommendations so these can be held up to public scrutiny. Our Recommendations are set out between these two sections.

Our report is written for many audiences. We address ourselves to decision-makers in Africa who must now drive forward the programme of change they have set out. We address ourselves to the rich and powerful nations of the world, whose leaders meet as the G8 in Gleneagles in Scotland in July 2005 where they must take a strong lead for action of a different order. We address ourselves to the international community, which must commit to greater and faster action on the Millennium Development Goals at the United

Nations in September – and must also act boldly at the World Trade Organisation talks in Hong Kong in December.

And we address ourselves to the people of Africa and the world as a whole. For it is they who must demand action. It is only their insistence which will determine whether their political leaders take strong and sustained action.

The measures we propose constitute a coherent package for Africa. They must be delivered together. 2005 is the year to take the decisions that will show we are serious about turning the vision of a strong and prosperous Africa into a reality.

Tony Blair (Chair)

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