

Major powers growing interest in Africa-II

Africa
Re Muski
7-3-87

Col (Retd) Ghulam Sarwar

With regard to the impact of new African policy as adopted by the West, we see that new opportunities and challenges are presently confronting Africa. Of late, African countries are committed to developing their economy in the backdrop of stabilized political order. However, most of these countries find it hard to gain rapid economic growth due to their inherent weak national strength. Therefore, we feel that in the first instance, they should make efforts to import capital, technologies and equipment. In this way, they should try to increase their exports. However, political upheavals, following the end of the Cold War, caused grave outflow of foreign capitals and made Western businessmen and entrepreneurs hesitate about doing business in Africa. The latest understanding over Africa by Western government and mass media, however, augurs well for the future of Africa.

We firmly believe that Africa has tremendous opportunities of economic development. Improved investment conditions could also attract more funds and technologies and boost private investments. In addition, more enterprises and business opportunities coming to Africa could increase import-export trade, promote domestic economic de-

velopment and improve people's living standards. As a result, poverty trends in Africa would be checked and its marginalization in the world economy contained.

African countries are members of the United Nations and other international organizations. Western countries are also very interested in Africa's future economic potentials. This has made it possible for African countries to enter into fruitful negotiations with major powers and it has also created favourable conditions for African countries in their opposition to foreign interference.

Africa is also facing severe challenges. Developed countries, especially the United States, of late, have cut their official assistance to Africa. This year, Washington reduced once again its aids. Although the decision was made under great Congressional pressures, it showed a tendency that the developed countries do not want to undertake UN-defined responsibilities of helping poor countries. In addition, the difficulties confronted by African countries in the economic development are by no means less and the gap between Africa and the developed countries is still broadening. Therefore, people should not be over-optimistic although the economic situation is showing trends of improve-

ment in Africa.

Secondly, the dis-equilibrium of development among African countries is still widening over the past year or so. Foreign capitals have flown into those African countries which are already in the developing stage. More business opportunities are concentrated there. Though this move is quite beneficial to these countries and could provide as incentive to other backward countries to change their present status, still, we cannot overlook the act that it could also widen the gap between those poverty-stricken countries and the affluent ones. In the process, it could bring about illegal immigrations and other serious social problems. Therefore, an indifferent attitude towards the most impoverished countries would jeopardize stability and development in the African continent.

THE DEVELOPED countries have different political strategies and divergent economic interests in Africa. The United States, Japan and Germany are in no position to exercise traditional influence on Africa. However, they seem to spare no effort to establish their foothold in Africa. In the process, strategic interests of France and Britain have been somewhat hurt. Hence, clash of interest has erupted inevitably. For example, France attempted to further its relations with South-

Africa and Britain took over a contract of petroleum exploration in Algeria. In this respect, the competition between America and France is very prominent. This could be proved in the VI-Africa top official meeting held last year in French-speaking African countries. It is expected that such conflicts among Western countries will grow in the future. If handled properly, African countries could gain substantially, otherwise they would become victim of major powers' rivalries and clashes.

China maintains a friendly and cooperative relations with African countries. In fact, it attaches great importance to develop political and economic ties with Africa. Being developing countries, both China and African countries have suffered in their respective history of colonialism and imperialist oppression and exploitation. Sharing this common factor, China and African countries have approached each other over the years in striving for and safeguarding national independence and state sovereignty, in freeing from control and exploitation of world monopoly capitalism and in the struggle for a just and reasonable international order. Today, peace and development have become the main theme of the time.

However, identity of views notwithstanding, Sino-African rela-

tions have not been trouble-free in the recent past, following the drastic political upheaval the 1990s.

To further Sino-African relationship continuously, the Chinese Government has also made necessary readjustments to its Africa policy and worked out new guidelines for economic and trade cooperation. These principles touch on various fields of politics, economy, culture and education, and also show the importance that the government attaches on the development of relations with Africa. The basic guidelines of such a policy are: On the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China wishes to consolidate and develop good relationship with Africa of equality, friendship, unity and cooperation and joint development; China hopes to increase consultation and cooperation with Africa in international affairs, support each other and defend together the interest of developing countries, and work hand in hand for establishing a just and reasonable international political and economic new order, China is willing to develop actively, on the basis of equality and mutual benefits, economic and trade cooperation in broad-ranging fields and in various forms and seek joint development.

Concluded