

The Nigeria's National Assembly and Inter-Parliamentary Diplomacy: An Assessment of the Fourth and Fifth National Assembly

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of the fourth and fifth Nigerian National Assembly in inter-parliamentary diplomacy. Using historical method, the paper established that the re-entry of the National Assembly into the global parliamentary circle following Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 was critical in the realization of certain foreign policy objectives. These include: the restoration of Nigeria's image; improved confidence in Nigeria's democracy; enhanced bargaining power in the campaign for external debt relief; influenced the domestication of important international treaties; and engendered the National Assembly to support laudable sub-regional peace initiatives. The paper concludes that the Nigeria's National Assembly must further strengthen its participation in inter-parliamentary assemblies so that Nigeria can maximize benefits from her foreign policy commitments.

Key Words: Nigeria, National Assembly, Inter-Parliamentary Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Democracy.

Introduction

The return to democratic governance in Nigeria in May 1999 and the inauguration of the National Assembly opened a new vista for the National Assembly to re-launch itself into the global parliamentary circle. This came after sixteen years absence of parliamentary institutions in the country occasioned by protracted military rule. Although, the Nigerian parliament in the First and Second Republics had limited diplomatic engagements, but by the time the country returned to democracy in 1999, the world had become highly globalized with complex interdependence and interrelationships. The complex web of regional and global integration of the 21st century created hybrid socio-economic and political issues across national boundaries with attendant increase in accountability demand by national electorates. This enlarged the scope and responsibilities of national parliaments contributed to the proliferation and the expansion of the networks of International Parliamentary Organizations (IPOs).

Given this context, no sooner was the Fourth National Assembly inaugurated in June 1999, than the Senate and the House of Representatives resolved on Wednesday 9th and Tuesday 22nd June, 1999, respectively made formal application to re-affiliate with IPOs such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA); Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); and the African Parliamentary Union (APU) (Salim 2010). Nigeria, for instance, was re-admitted and invited to participate in the 102nd IPU Conference in Berlin, Germany.

Between 1999 and 2007, Nigeria belonged to many IPOs and parliamentary institutions. The Nigerian national legislature used this fora not only to announce Nigeria's return to democracy but to demonstrate that Nigeria's democratic transition was on course. The Nigerian National Assembly played active and prominent roles in IPU conferences, meetings of CPA,

APU, West African Parliamentary Union (WAPU) ECOWAS Parliament, Conference of Speakers of West African Parliaments (CSWAP), African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)/European Union (EU) Joint Assembly, among others.

This paper assesses the performance of the fourth and the fifth National Assembly in inter-parliamentary diplomacy and its impact on the realization of Nigeria's foreign policy within the period under review.

Origin and Evolution of Inter-Parliamentary Diplomacy

Traditionally, parliaments have always maintained relations on the basis of reciprocal courtesy. This used to take the form of invitations, visits and fact-finding missions mainly for the speakers of assemblies or their representatives (Committee for Parliament and Public Relations CPPR Report 2006, p. 4). The emergence and growth of international parliamentary institutions (IPIs) is a phenomenon that developed mainly in the second half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, the history of IPIs is even far back in time. Indeed, their origin, date back to the creation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1889 (Cofelice 2012, p. 32). The IPU originated in Europe as an association of individual parliamentarians brought together by mutual interests for securing peaceful resolutions to international disputes. It was initiated by two parliamentarians, William Randal Cremer (United Kingdom) and Frederick Passy (France). The first inter-parliamentary conference on International Arbitration was convened in 1889 in Paris, France and attended by nine (9) countries. Over the years, the IPU has evolved and expanded into 139 member countries with a permanent secretariat in its headquarters in Geneva (Salim 2010; Committee for Parliament and Public Relations Report 2006).

Throughout the 20th Century, the IPU survived as a unifying force for representatives of parliaments of sovereign states. Its main objectives as specified in Article 1 of its Statute is to:

...promote personal contacts between members of parliament, constituted into National Groups, and to unite them in common action to secure and maintain the full participation of their respective states in the firm establishment and development of representative institutions and in the advancement of the work of international peace and cooperation, particularly by supporting the objectives of the United Nations. With this end in view, the IPU shall express its views on all questions of an international character suitable for settlement by parliamentary action and shall make suggestions for the development of parliamentary institutions, with a view to improving the working of those institutions and increasing their means of action.

The end of the Second World War marked the historic watershed in the evolution and development of parliamentary diplomacy. The formation of regional integration groups in Europe (after the Second World War) and the need to involve national parliaments of members in the process led to the establishment of Council of Europe. This later transformed first into the European Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and later European Parliament with members directly elected through universal franchise. Subsequently, in pursuant of Article 9 of the modified Brussels Treaty, the Assembly of the European Union was created in 1955. Not long after, NATO followed the example of the European Union and established the North Atlantic Assembly-NAA (CPPR Report 2006).

The decolonization process in Africa, Asia and Latin America from the 1950s led to the freeing of former colonies into independence. The newly, independent countries in the bid to find relevance in the international system joined and formed several international parliamentary bodies, most of them closely followed the European precedence. However, while the development of most IPOs in the newly independent countries were severely stunted by the reality and politics of the Cold War, their European counterparts (particularly the IPU) waxed stronger and became the platforms for the restoration of mutual confidence and trust among

former enemies of the World War II. The IPU enabled the Cold War belligerents to keep in contact and filled the gap in official negotiations on behalf of their respective countries.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a dramatic growth of public and parliamentary diplomacy. Regional integration processes have facilitated the “parliamentarization” of world politics because of the emergence of hybrid areas that are not only “intermestic” but, in the case of the EU, “communitarian”, and thus, transcend the national–international dichotomy (Malamud and Stavris 2011, p. 103). This development is marked by the proliferation and consolidation of regional and other international parliamentary assemblies (Malamud and Stavris 2011).

In the early 1990s, for instance, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Conference of the Central European Initiative were established. Similarly, as a result of the changes in Eastern Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (IPA) for Independent Commonwealth States were formed. The growth of these Regional Parliamentary Assemblies (RPAs) not only responded to global changes but the accountability demands by national electorates arising from these changes. Hence, RPAs became “institutions to uphold good governance, accountability and transparency” (Karuuombe 2008, p. 7). Mikhail Gorbachev noted this early enough when he pointed out that “...new style in international relations implies extending their framework far beyond the limits of the diplomatic process proper. Parliaments, along with governments, are becoming increasingly active participants in international contacts, and this is an encouraging development. It points to a trend towards greater democracy in international relations” (Zarjevski 1989, p. 7).

During this period, the Third Wave of democratization had begun in Africa; and legislative institutions which largely disappeared from the continent during the Cold War era due to military interventions had started reappearing. Due to the few number of democracies on the continent, the emerging African legislatures had no choice than to re-affiliate with established European parliamentary bodies for support and technical assistance. It was not until the late 1990s that regional parliamentary bodies and institutions began taking root in Africa with immense challenges. However, Africa has made significant progress with respect to regionalism and the attendant increase in regional parliamentary institutions.

Even though it is only the European Parliament (EP) that has so far developed a truly supranational character and real legislative powers (Malamud and Stavridis 2011), there is no skepticism that regional and transnational parliamentary bodies have become the hallmark of parliamentary diplomacy. According to Hamilton (2010, p. 5), IPAs are indispensable in the present global system because they help in promoting:

...democratic control and scrutiny over governments at international level; initiating activities aimed at peace, security and strengthening democracy and human rights, economic development, improving education and social conditions; helping to solve worldwide crises: the financial crisis, the energy crisis and climate change; disseminating and safeguarding democratic values (both generally and as a safeguard for the enforcement of human rights and the principles of the rule of law) nationally and internationally; monitoring conventions of international organisations and (other) international agreements of states and governments aimed at strengthening democracy, the rule of law and the implementation of human rights; investing in personal relations and international contacts (networking); involving non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the development and implementation of policy; improving the functioning of parliamentary mechanisms at national level through the exchange of knowledge and experience and political, intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Indeed, Cutler (2006, p. 82-3) rightly observed that parliamentary diplomacy represents an important, middle ground between the traditional level of interstate diplomacy and the new level of transnational co-operation amongst grassroots, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). IPAs, as modern instruments of parliamentary diplomacy, provide the forum for multilateral consultation which helps in shaping legislative choices of national government; and contributes in enhancing awareness of parliamentarians and updating them on new and best practices. These critical roles of parliamentary bodies not only make them important structures of global governance, but indispensable, complimentary institutions in diplomatic practice in a rapidly globalizing world.

The Nigerian National Assembly's Statutory Basis for Inter-Parliamentary Relations

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution set the tone for Nigeria's National Assembly to engage in parliamentary diplomacy. Section 19 of the Constitution states the objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy as follows:

- a. Promotion and protection of the national interest;
- b. Promotion of African integration and support for African Unity;
- c. Promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
- d. Respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the settling of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
- e. Promotion of a just world economic order.

According to Pine (2005), it is in pursuit of these lofty objectives that both the Senate and the House of Representatives set up standing committees on Foreign Affairs and Inter-Parliamentary Relations. In addition, the Senate and the House of Representatives also have standing committees on Cooperation, Integration and NEPAD. These committees, apart from defense, (which, because of its special nature has external dimensions) are the main instruments of foreign policy in the National Assembly. Other committees such as Loans, Aid and Debt Management, Treaties, Protocols and Agreements, Lake Chad, Women in Parliament, (House of Representatives); Trade and Investment, Local and Foreign Debts (Senate), also play important roles in external relations. On the specific issue of inter-parliamentary diplomacy, the roles of the committee on Inter-Parliamentary Diplomacy/Affairs in the House of Representatives is captured in the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives (2003) as follows:

- i. study, analyze and suggest improvement of the charters of all parliamentary, cooperative groupings of which the House of Representative is a member as well as find other ways by which Nigerian legislature shall exert itself thereon;
- ii. initiate good policies on Parliamentary research and documentation and ensure an efficient data bank on the National Assembly and State Assemblies – House of Representatives/ Recommend for the Senate, the formation of and entry by the Senate into any New parliamentary grouping -Senate;
- iii. ensure maintenance of harmonious and productive relations between National Assembly and all world parliaments;
- iv. recommend to the House the formation of, and entry by the House into any new parliamentary grouping;
- v. ensure the maintenance of harmonious relations with and in all international parliamentary association such as Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Union of African Parliaments (UAP), African, Caribbean and Pacific/EEC Joint Assembly;
- vi. coordinate national and international parliamentary exchanges, hospitality and courtesies on reciprocal basis;
- vii. make recommendations to the House as to the desirability of the House sending delegation to specific inter-parliamentary events;

- viii. initiate the organisation of national and international conferences, seminars, workshops and other fora for the dissemination of parliamentary education and experiences;
- ix. represent the National Assembly in specific, international parliamentary associations or groupings on terms agreed to between the House and Senate;
- x. oversight any house Foreign Office dedicated to inter-parliamentary relations work;
- xi. ensure good relationship between National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly; and ensure the execution of the House Resolutions on inter-parliamentary relations (Alli 2014, p. 46-7).

The Nigerian National Assembly and Inter-Parliamentary Diplomacy

Pursuant to Nigeria's foreign policy objectives laid out in section 19 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as well as the mandate of the National Assembly on inter-parliamentary relations as detailed in the Assembly's Standing Rules, Nigeria's National Assembly, shortly after its inauguration on the 6th and 22 June, 1999 resolved to renew its membership of international parliamentary organizations. Consequently, it made formal applications to the IPU, CPA, and subsequently APU, West African Parliamentary Union (WAPU), and African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)/European Union (EU) Joint Assembly for membership and re-affiliation.

Nigeria was re-admitted into IPU and CPA respectively in late 1999. This step was significant to the extent that it did not only announce Nigeria's democratisation to the rest of the world, but signaled the country's readiness to resume its traditional frontline role in global affairs. The Nigerian National Assembly also connected itself to other global parliamentary organizations and institutions such as the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Association (AAPA), Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECA). From 1999 to 2007, the National Assembly also played leading and pivotal roles in the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in 2004 and ECOWAS-Parliament in 2006 respectively.

The roles of the Nigerian Assembly in the emergence of these parliamentary institutions in Africa is not unconnected with the country's traditional, frontline roles in regional and continental politics since independence in 1960. These roles were in line with the enshrined afro-centric thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy. The creation of these regional parliamentary bodies expanded the platforms for the Nigeria's National Assembly and other parliaments on the African continent (generally regarded as late comers in inter-parliamentary diplomacy) to engage in diplomacy and contribute to good governance, democracy and socio-economic development. The participation of the Nigeria's National Assembly in some of these international parliamentary assemblies and conferences notably the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) culminated in the domestication of some important treaties and conventions in Nigeria.

Pine (2009) rightly noted that resolutions of international parliamentary bodies particularly the IPU influenced the domestication of a number of treaties during the fourth and the fifth National Assembly. Treaties such as the Child Right Act of 2003, and the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act 2004 which also established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), an agency saddled with the responsibility to implement the Act were domesticated. Similarly, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW), 2004; Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes; and Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children, 2001; Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 2001; Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, 2002 were also domesticated.

The ratification by the National Assembly in 2005 of the Treaty to Establish African Economic Community Relating to the Pan-African Parliament (Accession and Jurisdiction) Act 2004, for example, directly gave effect and legitimacy to the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), a parliamentary organ of the 53-member state African Union (Malamud and Stavridis 2011, p.

112). These treaties not only improved social and legal rights of women and children in Nigeria, but peace and security and regional integration in West Africa in particular and Africa in general.

In sub-regional security, the active participation of Nigeria's National Assembly in regional parliamentary organizations like ECOWAS Parliament, CSWAP, PAP etc. contributed significantly to peace and security in Africa particularly in the West African sub-region. At the 3rd Conference of Speakers of West African Parliaments, for example, far reaching resolutions were adopted towards ending the devastating intra-state armed conflicts in the West African Sub-region. The CSWAP resolutions include:

- i. the observance of moratorium on the manufacture, distribution and circulation of small arms in the sub-region as a means of preventing local and sub-regional armed conflicts;
- ii. call on the Heads of States of Guinea, Sierra Leone to convene a summit as a matter of extreme urgency and in the interest of suffering humanity, with the primary aims of finding an effectively negotiated strategy for ending the conflicts;
- iii. agreement to send an inter-parliamentary Good Auspices Mission to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia with the objective of helping to restore a climate of confidence among the three Heads of States of the Mano River Union Community (Salim 2010, 139-140).

This, among other security resolutions of West African parliamentary bodies, were instrumental to the cooperative and supportive disposition of the Nigerian Senate towards President Obasanjo's peace initiatives at ending the protracted armed conflicts in Liberia. It would be recalled that on Wednesday, 16th July, 2003, the Nigerian Senate expeditiously approved President Obasanjo's request to deploy two battalions of Nigerian soldiers to Liberia as part of an international peace keeping force ahead of the planned exit of President Charles Taylor of Liberia on 11 August, 2003. The cooperation of the Nigerian Senate contributed significantly to the eventual exit of Charles Taylor from Liberia and his reception on asylum in Nigeria on the 11th August, 2003. The success of this peace initiative led to the return of peace in that country and by extension, the West African sub-region.

At the level of cooperation with parliamentary organizations and institutions, the Nigeria's National Assembly played a crucial role in the formation of the Association of Senate Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECA) in April 2002. In recognition of the important roles played by the Nigerian parliamentary delegation, two Nigerians Mr. Livinus Usuji and Senator Jonathan Zwingina were elected as the association's Secretary-General and Vice Chairman respectively (Pine 2009). Within two years of Nigeria's re-affiliation to CPA, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Umar Ghalli Na'abba, was elected the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the CPA (Africa Region) at the 32nd Conference of the Association and also Chairman of the 3rd Conference of Speakers of West African Parliaments (Salim 2010, p.137). Other prominent positions held by Nigerian legislators include: Senator Florence Ita-Giwa (Senior Representative, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, CWP), September 2002 – June 2003), Hon. Aminu Bello Masari (President, CPA 2005-2006); Hon. Peter N. Jiya (Alternate Regional Representative 2005-2007) (Salim 2010) inter-alia.

The return of Nigeria to the international parliamentary circle facilitated cross-cultural exchanges in parliamentary practice between the Nigerian National Assembly and other parliaments in the world. Nigeria also benefited technical assistance, training, aides and grants. These, in no small measure, contributed to the increased capacity of the National Assembly in law making and oversight functions particularly after the inauguration of the 5th National Assembly in 2003. The impact was mostly seen in increased oversight activities and assertiveness of the National Assembly, especially in budgetary matters, electoral reform, and constitutional amendment. Nigeria's participation in parliamentary diplomacy also assured the international community of the viability of Nigeria's democratic transition. More importantly, it helped in bolstering the country's image which had sunk to a low level during the five years rule of General Sani Abacha, 1993-1998.

Much of the period between 1999 and 2007 was characterized by deep difference and recurring disagreements between the National Assembly and the Executive led by President Olusegun Obasanjo. However, either consciously or unconsciously, there appeared to be some measure of consensus between the two arms of government on most foreign policy issues. This common ground was reflected in the complimentary diplomatic activities, speeches, official position of the leadership and delegates of the National Assembly in most international fora. The foreign policy harmony between the National Assembly and President Obasanjo's cabinet was more evident on the issue of the global campaign for external debt relief, the recovery of stolen wealth from Western financial institutions and the restoration of the country's battered image.

At the 104th and 105th IPU conferences, for example, Nigeria's delegation used the platform to campaign for the return of looted wealth by corrupt Nigerian and African leaders and the cancellation of Nigeria's foreign debt. Nigeria also pushed a similar position at the 104th IPU Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, in October 2000. The Nigerian position reflected on the conference resolutions as follows:

...debt cancellation for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and debt relief for other developing countries should be granted immediately and focuses almost exclusively on poverty reduction measures that take account of the predicament of women, especially in rural areas; and on the eradication of inequalities. Calls on developed and developing countries to pursue development with a human face (Pine 2010, p. 71).

Similarly, at the 106th IPU Conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in September, 2001, Nigeria became more vocal and active in IPU activities. At this time, the repatriation of looted public funds and foreign debt relief were the core concern of Nigeria's foreign policy and key issues of engagement for the Nigerian legislature at international parliamentary assemblies. At this conference, a unanimous resolution was made by delegates to "bring pressure to bear on their respective governments and all interested parties, to prevent the transfer abroad of funds illegally acquired by corrupt leaders, and where such transfers had taken place, to ensure repatriation to their countries of origin, so that they may be allocated to programmes for the promotion of children's welfare". Nigeria continued to push similar positions in subsequent IPU conferences. At the 107th IPU conference in 2002, Nigeria's former Deputy Senate President, Senator Ibrahim Mantu who led the Nigerian delegation identified five key threats to African development namely: impact of globalization, conflicts, widespread warfare, ecological disasters and foreign debt overhang. In his own words, Senator Ibrahim Mantu said:

...one of the greatest threats to Africa's development is huge and increasing foreign debts. These debts are indeed, a source of irritation to the continent with a major chunk of national earnings being devoted to payment of just the interests on these debts.... Funny enough, the bulk of these monies is stashed away in western financial institutions. Yet, African nations are saddled with the responsibility of paying these debts, which were hardly used to improve the lots of our people. It would be in the interest of African nations for western creditor-nations to consider writing off these debts as their contributions to the success of the latest efforts to lift Africa out of its development crisis (Pine 2010, p. 86).

The former Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Austin Okpara who headed the Nigerian delegation to the 112th IPU conference in April 2005 presented Nigeria's position on the floor of the general debate on the global political, economic and social situation and particularly on Africa as follows:

The greatest impediment to Africa's development and economic growth remains its huge and ever-increasing debt. It is depressing to note that a large percentage of the national earnings, which would otherwise have gone to development projects, are now being channeled towards servicing debts. The case of Nigeria is especially instructive. Our President has made countless number of trips to the creditor-western nations with a view to securing some form of debt relief. This has yielded very little benefit. Out of frustration, and deeply concerned about the effect of the debt trap on the common people, the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, recently adopted a motion authorizing the President to declare a unilateral moratorium on the servicing and repayment of debt.

The loud voices of the Nigerian legislators at international parliamentary assemblies calling for foreign debt relief for Nigeria and the repatriation of stolen wealth in Western financial institution not only helped in publicizing the issues, but in garnering support for Nigeria's global campaign. At the height of the campaign for foreign debt relief, the Nigeria House of Representatives adopted a resolution in May 2005 urging the Federal Government to repudiate the country's foreign debt. Although the motion was a spontaneous response to national frustration occasioned by unrealistic, foreign debt overhang, the motion of the House of Representatives also satisfied the objective of attracting international attention especially that of G8 countries to Nigeria's foreign debt crises.

As a follow-up measure, the Nigerian National Assembly also sent parliamentary delegation to the United States Congress, British Parliament, German, Italy, France and Japan. It should be noted that aside from the strategic importance of the visits by the Nigerian parliamentary delegation to leading Western creditor nations, the timing of the visit (between 24 April and 7, May 2005) was intended to influence the inclusion of Nigeria's debt crises on the agenda of the G8 meeting scheduled for 6 to 8 July 2005 at Gleneagles, Scotland. Nigeria's parliamentary diplomatic engagements were well coordinated with the Executive arm under President Olusegun Obasanjo. This eventually paid off when, in July 2005, the Paris Club of creditors announced the cancellation of over US\$18 billion of Nigeria's foreign debt.

Conclusion

The participation of Nigeria's fourth and fifth National Assembly in inter-parliamentary diplomacy contributed significantly to the successes of Nigeria's foreign policy between 1999 and 2007. More specifically Nigeria's presence in inter-parliamentary assemblies not only increased the confidence of the international community in Nigeria's nascent democracy but bolstered the country's image which sank to the lowest level during the immediate past military regimes. The Nigerian National Assembly used inter-parliamentary platforms to campaign for foreign debt relief, repatriation of looted public monies kept in Western financial institutions and foreign direct investments. Important treaties were domesticated and the National Assembly participated in landmark security and peace in initiatives as a consequence of the Assembly's participation in inter-parliamentary activities. These parliamentary engagements not only complimented the foreign policy efforts of the then Federal Government led by President Olusegun Obasanjo but enhanced Nigeria's diplomatic bargaining powers. The Nigerian National Assembly must continue to strengthen its participation in inter-parliamentary assemblies so that Nigeria can maximize benefits from her foreign policy commitments.

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by Kristina Bekenova

Generating US\$4.2bln and 547,500 jobs¹, the rapidly growing sector of cultural and creative industries (CCI) in Africa is believed to be on the verge of becoming one of the major drivers of the sustainable development and economic growth in the continent.

Since 2008, the CCI have been paid considerable attention by the UN agency on trade and development (UNCTAD). “To highlight the contribution of the creative industries across the globe in the face of the economic downturn” UNCTAD issued two reports (2008, 2010) where it is noted that “the creative industries hold great potential for developing countries that seek to diversify their economies and leapfrog into one of the most dynamic sectors of the world economy” (2010, p. xxiii).

This statement about the importance of cultural industries nowadays is very interesting especially from the point of how this term came into the use and became the focus of specific attention. First, the term “culture industry” in its singular form was introduced by T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1947 and had a distinctly negative meaning, marked with consumerism, standardization, sameness, unanimity of modern culture because of the industrialization of culture amounted to a loss of the purity of ‘high’ culture: “all mass culture is identical, .. films and radio no longer need to present themselves as art; the truth that they are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce” (Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, p. 95).

But in the 1990s cultural industries and creativity became an essential force of rapid growth for European economies, started with the UK, where Tony Blair’s government in 1997 decided to make the creative industries one of the main drivers of economic performance in the country. According to the *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (1998), CCI were defined as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”.

Given the success of focusing on these industries as a significant component of economy, as evidenced by the UK where in 1998 CCI employed 1.4 mln people employed, generating £60 billion a year or 5% of total UK national income (Flew 2012, p. 9), the 11 main sectors of the CCI – performing arts, visual arts, books, music, movies, architecture, gaming, newspapers and magazines, advertising, television and radio² – offer a huge potential for Africa. CCI can create job opportunities, promote economic development, and, in addition to economic benefits, they can generate non-monetary value by giving a chance for unique imaginative and technical self-expression in each of above mentioned areas.

For example, to give women equal rights to access to the culture the African Development Bank’s Office of the Special Envoy on Gender in 2015 has launched several initiatives for the benefit of women and youth in textile and garment industry (*Fashionomics*, and *Financing for Impact*). African governments are implementing a wide range of policies designed for the inclusion of disadvantaged social groups (Ethiopia’s bazaar for disabled people; the School of Visual Arts and Design of Zimbabwe with equal opportunity for deaf students; Kigali Arts Festival for rural artisans in Rwanda).

¹ www.worldcreative.org

² There are different classification of CCI, which figure out from 11 to 13 industries. Here the reference to 11 sectors marked out by the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC) in *Cultural Times: The First Global Map of Cultural and Creative Industries* (2015)

African countries have been gradually recognizing the significance and importance of the CCI as an instrument of achieving broader development goals. They did so in two ways: 1) by holding different conferences, summits, workshops (the Entertainment Conference in Nigeria; Ongea! the Eastern Africa Music Summit; Scenario Writing workshop in Algeria; Film Master classes in Rwanda); and 2) by integrating the development of the CCI and their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – Ghana with her focus on the development and promotion of the music and film industries, Mali with the idea to link culture with religion, social harmony and security, Nigeria by providing a home to the film industry and Senegal with the promotion of local crafts as an essential element in reducing poverty.

Thus, African countries, blessed by ethnic diversity, perceiving culture as a vehicle to express their own identity, and possessing a unique sense of Aesthetics, can be not only the example for others in terms of the attention they pay to the preservation of their cultural heritage (traditional festivals in Ethiopia, Angola; UNESCO candidature files of Armara (Eritrea); ‘awareness campaign’ in Angola); but also in terms of the rich and diverse initiatives to promote creative talents (Zimbabwe Greatest Talent Show; “Kurema. Kureba, Kwiga” initiative; “Africa in 500 Years” initiative in Malawi).

In spite of the sharp increase of African export of creative goods from \$740 mln (2002) to \$2.2 bln (2008), African creative products are still under-represented in world markets: they are only 0.36% and 0.54% respectively (UNCTAD 2010, p. 130). These modest results, on the global stage, could be explained by the weaknesses and challenges that CCI face in Africa. As noted by Bamaturaki Musinguzi (2016), the countries encounter a wide range of obstacles: they lack governmental funding, have limited infrastructure, experience low priority of the CCI in the national development agenda, don’t have enough skilled and professionally trained people; the copyright law is not adequately enforced; and fail to provide high-quality products. For instance, only 7 countries in Africa have established performance industries, and most of the others have only “embryonic music industries” (UNCTAD 2010, p. 42).

That said, the products of CCI – movies, dances, paintings, music, games, etc., have never been consumed as much as they are consumed today. The appreciation of cultural products is not only an original/peculiar vehicle of communication between people of different nationalities, ‘the universal language’, used to be understood globally, but also a vehicle of introducing yourself, of shaping country’s identity, of sharing with others the cultural richness. Given such sociocultural significance, the aesthetic and symbolic meaning to the products, thus, one of the serious challenges the CCI in Africa faces, in the years of globalization, which promotes a kind of a culture homogenization, is not only how to meet technical problems mentioned above (the *East African Community’s Culture and Creative Industries Bill* introduced in March 2015 is exactly aimed “to create an environment that promotes talents and the necessary infrastructure to develop the industries, and to remove existing barriers”³) but also how to appropriately preserve a rich traditional culture and represent national identity through contemporary art.

The debates on globalization and its cultural consequences displays a rich spectrum of voices: from those who believe that globalization has the power to eliminate cultural barriers and view this transformative process with excitement to those who experience anxiety at the prospect of losing their local voice.

With regard to the impact of globalization, research studies offer three scenarios: homogenization/universalization/Westernization, which brings a homogeneous culture by universalizing the local values and traditions; polarization with inevitable conflict between

³ “East Africa: Boom to Culture and Creative Industries”, Sept. 5, 2015. Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201509071823.html>. Accessed on February 12, 2016.

different cultures (Huntington), and hybridization (Pieterse), where the last one is also titled either glocalization (Friedman) or interculturalism (Bouchard) depending on which nuances different scholars focused, but with the idea of integration global and local tendencies.

Notwithstanding which scenario would be chosen by the African countries in the development of their creative and cultural industries, the actors should, on the one hand, take into account the changing patterns of cultural environment which is no more developing as a close system but is influenced by a diverse range of transnational actors (Dewey 2003) and by the desire to have an ability to successfully export their creative goods. On the other hand, they should keep their unique ways to tell the story of their nation, nationalities and ethnicities, i.e. to introduce African soul to the international audience. In other words, African countries should “absorb influences that naturally fit into and can enrich [their] culture, to resist those things that are truly alien... be able to assimilate aspects of globalization in a way that adds to [its] growth and diversity, without overwhelming it” (Friedman 2000, p. 236).

Not “cow boy hats, boots and bikini replacing the traditional attires” (Musunguzi 2016), but cultural and historic heritage, nature imitable in its beauty, people who name this land ‘home’ shape social and psychological uniqueness of the country, its individuality. Creativity and uniqueness are the most attractive features would help see Africa differently – “as a fertile land for good ideas, not just coffee and cocoa”⁴, as a continent rich not only of natural resources, but also of the talented people. African museums, galleries, and exhibitions has so much wonderful to offer: the unique sculptures (Dominic Benhura), paintings (Nambowa Malue; Njogu Touray), music (mbira, nyatiti music), cultural heritage in unique architecture (Asmara, Eritrea), buildings (Bandiagara, Mali), cultural practices, and breathtaking natural landscape. The right presentation and usage not of ‘Western’ cliché, but rather of the richness of its own culture in creative industries will provide great long-term returns. The successful CCI market needs a plurality of heroes and innovators.

In that context, culture and creativity as a component of CCI could be implemented into the policies of cultural tourism representing cultural identity within the continent, or, otherwise, of cultural diplomacy activities to represent cultural uniqueness abroad – the policies which by supporting the development of the local art industries promote them as an element of cultural exchange programs, producing cultural events and creative entertainments of international interest.

Thus, globalization and the technologies it brings should be used as an opportunity to engage with the rest of the world and share different experiences for the benefit of visual artists, choreographers, musicians, filmmakers and all the creators. Cultural policies and national strategies aimed to develop CCI should be devised in the way of harmonic coexistence of reaching the goal of economic development, and preserving traditions, beliefs and developing its indigenous values and ethical norms. As I.Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, notes, “to unlock the potential of the cultural and creative industries also means promoting the overall creativity of societies, affirming the distinctive identities of the places where it flourishes and clusters, improving the quality of life and providing resources for imagining diverse new futures” (CISAC 2015, p.5).

The development of the CCI is of a particular interest for Africa. They will help to diversify the economies, which is especially important in current situation, when “the oil sector fails to contribute to the economy, [and thus] it is very hard for the country to experience the economic

⁴ Ned Dalby, 2013. “Making the most of Africa’s culture and creativity: economic development, democracy and peacebuilding”, African Arguments, October 10. Available from <http://africanarguments.org/2013/10/10/making-the-most-of-africas-culture-and-creativity-economic-development-democracy-and-peacebuilding-by-ned-dalby/> [Accessed February 12, 2016]

dynamism it enjoyed when oil prices were higher” (Pelizzo 2016). They will help to decrease the level of unemployment and eliminate the fears about the future among the young people (the case of Cameroon). They will help to attract cultural tourists, who travel in searching of cultural sights, seeing the lifestyle of indigenous people (Uganda, Kigaragara village; Tanzania, Nyinchoka village; Ethiopia, Omo Valley), and participate in different festivals and traditional activities (in Ethiopia Timket festival holding to commemorate the baptism of Christ; in Angola Luanda Carnival). Moreover, CCI are not an egalitarian scope of activity, they engage wide sections of populations: businessmen, corporations, government agencies, entrepreneurs, artisans, media, curators, and all of it causes excitement, a creative dazzle, that can create and shape a social environment that favors the emergence of new artists, their self-realization, and as a result their business initiatives.

CCI are becoming a mouthpiece of various communities, including the disadvantaged groups of people. And in that context, the independent galleries, festivals, artistic communities to some extent play the role of nutritional medium where using the local instruments new symbols and new meanings presented in books, music, dances, movies, advertising, tele programs are created, and give a chance to African products find its own place on the global market not only as Chinese opera, Latin American telenovelas, Hollywood and Bollywood movies, but with all its beauty and spiritual richness could avoid the production of homogenous, standardized artworks. In this regard, the African governments should not only be focusing on the economic benefits. Proper policy should prevent the commodification and the commercialization of the artworks and the degradation of the culture itself, while creating an artist-friendly environment where there is a place for creativity, phantasy, ideas, for both mainstream as well for new small-scale initiatives.

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