



# **Africa's Window of Opportunity: A Collective Effort**

*"If you are not a part of the solution, you are part of the problem."*  
— Eldridge Cleaver, writer and political activist

Today's Africa can be seen either as on the cusp of great opportunity or on the downhill slide. It depends on your perspective and your disposition. There are those who see the glass as half-empty or the glass as half-full. I prefer seeing the glass as half-full because there is more to work with, the future can be seen in a new light, and there is positive energy to move one forward. From this perspective of a glass flowing over, two events have recently occurred in Africa that are worth mentioning and that, when seen in the right light, can energize positive change to come:

## **A New President in Nigeria – Muhammadu Bahari**

Muhammadu Bahari ousted a sitting president for the first time ever. This occurrence was a surprise to many and, to me, shows that the people are paying attention and want change; they are not willing to put up with a corrupt government; and they have faith that the country can have another chance at democracy and civility.

The Washington Post, May 29th, reported that "[Secretary of State John F. Kerry](#) led the U.S. delegation to the inauguration in a [symbolic show](#) of the Obama administration's willingness to strengthen a relationship that has been severely strained in recent years under former president Goodluck Jonathan."

## **A New Head of the Africa Development Bank – Akinwumi Adesina**

"The choice of the dapper, bowtie-sporting 55-year-old economist, Akinwumi Adesina, is not only a personal victory of the man, but also a boost for his country and, most importantly, a potentially momentous pivot for Africa." This was voiced by J. Peter Pham, Director of the Atlantic Council's Africa Center.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon described Adesina as an "eminent personality" who had shown outstanding leadership in his role since 2009 in the UN Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group.

In Akinwumi words, he wants to "finish off the white elephants," in a reference to useless luxury projects that are often financed using international aid and built by foreign businessmen, and which reek of corruption.

He also has urged more cooperation across borders, pitching ideas such as an "African Google," a transnational electricity market and a regional stock exchange.

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Much is going to be asked of both of these individuals and from these two events. Alone they will not cause a sea-change, but it can be a start. If we can see this as good news that could beget other good news that goes beyond borders, institutions and personalities, then much can transpire. If we get myriad in the glass half-empty and focus on only the challenges in Africa—and there are many—then we can easily feel discouraged.

Could the collective energy and forces behind these changes propel others, namely us, forward? Could we see these changes as motivators for good?

If we have something solid to hold onto, as the above, then our faith, trust and action could lead us to even more positive change.

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*To be truly honest, I recently realized I was spending much too much time focusing on the problems within Africa. When I became aware of this mindset, I then had an opportunity to change, or stay the same. I chose to change my perspective, for it is nothing more than that – a perspective. I made a choice to instead start “Celebrate Africa” not from a Pollyanna or blindly optimistic viewpoint, but as a point of departure. It is being in what I call the ‘truth of reality,’ which we don’t often want to see. — Patricia*  
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You will hear many say that you can’t take the continent of Africa and label it one way or the other—there are 54 countries. I would say yes and no to this, because if the nations of Africa could see themselves more as a continent collectively working together, then more solid change might happen. The strength of 54 African countries would be formidable. This larger whole that makes up Africa is waiting and wanting for positive change to occur.

This change will happen when we all take responsibility for our thoughts and actions. If you see yourself as part of this change—starting with your mindset and perspective, be it about Africa or anywhere else, for that matter—then what is the role you play?

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**As always, a few questions to get thinking along this line:**

- 1. What one small thing can you do over the next week that could impact Africa’s greater good? (And don’t say you can’t, because I know you can all Tweet a positive message.)**
- 2. What mindset or belief might you need to change, within yourself, to do what you said you would do in question 1?**

We all tend to ‘play too small’ and are actually much more than we think we are. So, be your greater self even if you are not sure what that is. Just do something that you see as risky, and you will be operating from a larger platform.

*“The best ideas are never bound by borders.” — John Kerry, Secretary of State of the U.S.*

*Regards,  
Patricia*

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