

INTERNATIONAL

Africa seeks democratic reform

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A two-day summit on democracy was held in Botswana in late February. African heads of state and government met to explore how the African Commonwealth can live up to universal standards of democracy.

Their brief includes examining proposals worked out at a Feb. 24-25 preparatory meeting. However, their meeting could hardly be said to have come up with a set of innovative ideas, even though the fact that it brought together government and opposition politicians from 16 countries was in itself an achievement, noted some politicians and academics in attendance at the preparatory conference.

Delegates agreed to propose to the heads of government that they establish constitutional frameworks and state structures that would facilitate democratic practice in their countries. They also concluded that universal tenets such as the people's right to elect their political leaders, freedom of association and freedom of expression should be entrenched in constitutions and respected. A democratic culture should be established

in their various countries, they said.

The oft-repeated maxim that democracy goes beyond periodic elections was also highlighted. "An efficient election management body and a successful election do not add up to a successful democracy," said one academic at the precom.

The 16 countries participating in the "Roundtable of Commonwealth Heads of State and Government on Democracy and Good Governance in Africa" have varying records in these areas.

At one end of the scale, the

1994 elections in South Africa gave that country its first democratic government following decades of institutionalized racial discrimination that disenfranchised three quarters of its people.

At the other are countries like Zambia. The nation earned widespread criticism last year when its parliament passed a constitutional clause barring first and second generation Zambians from running for president — an obvious attempt to sideline former president Kenneth Kaunda, whose parents were Malawians.

Trade conference promotes African investment

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The immense opportunities offered by Africa for American businesses will again be featured at a major trade and investment conference which will take place in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The organizers, Phoenix-based AMI Consultants, said the May 1-2 forum will discuss emerging opportunities for U.S. investment in Africa.

It will deal with the challenges, information, facilitation and support

programs about how to do business in Africa.

Few regions of the world offer more untapped opportunity for U.S. businesses than Africa," said Robert Sherman, president of AMI Consultants.

Sub-Sahara Africa is a market of nearly 750 million persons. The annual rate of returns on the U.S. foreign direct investment has been calculated by the Department of Commerce at 28 percent. This is higher than any other

Jagan and Manley, two Caribbean statesmen die

Special to Sentinel-Voice

When Caribbean community leaders signed "The Charter of Civil Society" at their inter-sessional meeting in Antigua last month, they were fulfilling one of the dreams of Guyana's president, Cheddi Jagan: a civil society.

Caribbean Community Chairman Lester Bird, Antigua and Barbuda's prime minister, emphasized the role Jagan played in promoting the Charter which revamped the chain of command and echoed the president's concern for democracy and individual freedom.

Ironically, the executive president of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana was struggling to recover from a

Feb. 14 heart attack at the time of the signing and died March 6, 1997.

Michael Manley, was a pioneer in the Caribbean's struggle for a civil society, remembered at the inter-sessional meeting of the Caribbean leaders. The meeting was held to approve changes to the structure and decision-making processes of Caricom, the first such changes since the signing of the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas which established the Community.

Manley was the only surviving signatory to that Treaty (the other signatories being Errol Barrow of Barbados, Forbes Burnham of Guyana, and Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago).

Manley was also the architect of the Shridath Ramphal-led West Indian Commission, which had originally proposed the Charter of Civil Society. Less than 24 hours after Jagan's passing, Manley himself lost his six-year struggle with prostate cancer.

Caribbean leaders and other prominent regional personalities have been effusive in their praise of these two elder statesmen of regional politics. The main theme of the copious tributes has been the commitment of the two men to Caribbean integration and their struggle on behalf of developing countries and for the rights of poor people.

Ghana rethinking world bank reform

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Viewed as one of Africa's top reformers, Ghana is now coming to grips with the high cost of adjustment on its people 13 years after it launched a structural reform program at the World Bank's bidding. The program has reaped benefits, but it has also brought severe pains in its wake, and government officials whom World Bank chief James Wolfensohn met here this week told him the time has come for aspects of the program to be reviewed. Under its structural adjustment program, begun in 1983 while it was under military rule, Ghana has removed all forms of market control and exchange regulation, sold off state enterprises and scrapped subsidies. As a result, the cost of food and services has risen beyond the reach of poorer Ghanaians.

President Rawlings said that Ghana, like some other developing countries applying SAPs, now faced a dilemma: how to meet the rising expectations of its people and, at the same time, the objectives of the adjustment program.

The amount Ghana spends servicing its foreign debt went from 13.2 percent of its exports in 1980 to 24.8 percent in 1994, according to the World Bank's 1996 World Development Report. In the same period, the debt increased from just under \$1.4 billion to close to \$5.4 billion.

Stargardt—

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developing novel strategies for therapy.

Genetic information from 48 families, gathered from more than 200 families studied jointly by investigators from Baylor and the University of Utah over the past 10 years, was analyzed for this report.

The research team consisted of five senior investigators — Dr. Lewis, Dr. James Lupski, Baylor professor of molecular and human genetics, Dr. Michael Dean from the National Cancer Institute, Dr. Mark Leppert of the University of Utah, and Dr. Jeremy Nathans of Johns Hopkins University — and their collaborators.

Policies —

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of Columbia in the DC appropriations act and funding UDC with federal monies; support for Title V, Teacher preparation and retention and a new Patricia Robert Harris Faculty Development Fellowship program.

NAFEO is the national voice for 116-historically and predominantly black colleges and universities.

Love —

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shared with them the importance of telling themselves they are lovely, lovable and intelligent. I also emphasized the importance of monitoring the thoughts, ideas and the images that flashed into their minds and the importance of making choices. Choosing what they think about, talk about, what they think is important and most of all choosing to like themselves.

When I spoke about stress, the children in one seventh grade class shared the things that stress them out and make them anxious. When I tied in stress and health and described what goes on in your body when you are under "dis-stress" they were very knowledgeable and could relate well to it. There is hope. They know all that. Now we have to get them to implement positive habits and practices into their daily routines. That's where you come in.

While their peers are important, the first role models they see are the adults in their lives. What type of example are you setting? Are you drinking and drugging? Are you abusive? Do you like yourself and conduct yourself in a manner that indicates you have high self-esteem, a good self-image and self-respect?

If you are like most adults in America, you probably don't like yourself or have a good self-image. Your children will mirror your reactions to life, how you carry yourself and how you react to life's ups and downs.

Many of the children were painfully aware that people who were abused as children turned around and abused their children. We have to set a better tone in our communities. It will not happen overnight and it is a long term process. But it can and must be done, if we are going to turn things around.

Tell your children you love them, demonstrate your love. Encourage them to do their best. Let them see you doing and being your best. Set a good example. Our children are too precious not to invest the time energy and effort in leaving a better world for them.



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