FIRST AFRICA LIBERTY FORUM
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AFRICA LIBERTY FORUM AT GLANCE

The Liberty Forums are continental events pioneered by the Atlas Network that bring together friends and allies of the global freedom movements. The Africa Liberty Forum (ALF), the first ever held on the continent forms part of the Atlas Network’s commitment to strengthening the global freedom movements in Africa. The ALF brought together over 90 participants across Africa to discuss challenges facing the continent and how to effectively advance market reforms.

Other Liberty Forums have taken place in Asia, Europe and America.

The maiden edition of the ALF was organized in collaboration with Imani Africa from 9-10 June, 2016 at the Menavic Palace Hotel, Accra-Ghana under the theme: “The growth of Independence, Good Governance and Liberty in Africa”.

The ALF was brought to a climax by the Africa Liberty Dinner which offered superior networking opportunities, intellectual enlightenment and soothing entertainment to participants.
The first ever Africa Liberty Forum brought together participants from Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Cameroon and South Africa. The forum was a combination of video screening, lectures, and presentations of projects for the Liberty Awards.

The following topics featured in the 2016 ALF:

- Africa’s Prosperous Future: Challenges to Entrepreneurship;

- What is courting insecurity in much of Africa? Religious Differences or Poverty & Unemployment?;

- Who is slowing integration? African leaders or their citizens? Should we not integrate regionally before attempting a continental Free Trade Area?;

- Falling Oil Prices: Is this the new natural resource curse in Africa? Will Africa resort to aid to shore up slow growth?;

- Presidential Term Limits in Africa: Are they the new limits to our Democracy?

The Africa Liberty Forum was graced by key thought leaders on the continent who took their turns to address the various topics listed above. They include; Mr. Franklin Cudjoe, (President of Imani Africa), Mr. Herman Chinery-Hesse (CEO, SOFTtribe), Mr. Brian Conklin (USAID), Mrs. Awurabena Okrah (CEO, Winglow Clothes & Textiles Ltd) and Dr. Gordon Kwesi Adomdza (Ashesi University), Dr. Kwesi Aning (Director, Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research, KAIPTC), Mr. Patrick Stephenson (Research Fellow, IMANI Africa), Mr. Nkunimdini Asante-Antwi (Director of Metis
Decisions Limited), Dr. Ishmael Ackah, (Head of Policy Research, African Center for Energy Policy) and Mr. Kofi B Bentil (Lawyer and Vice President of Imani Africa.)

PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES

The Africa Liberty Forum started with a video screening of the award-winning film, Poverty, Inc. Drawing from over 200 interviews filmed in 20 countries, Poverty, Inc. unearths an uncomfortable side of charity that can no longer be ignored. It also talks about the global aid architecture and those who profit from it the most.

Mr. Franklin Cudjoe hosted a panel that featured Mr. Herman Chinery-Hesse, Mr. Brian Conklin, Mrs. Awurabena Okrah, and Dr. Gordon Kwesi Adomdza. They discussed Africa’s Prosperous Future: Challenges to Entrepreneurship.

The panel discussion began with Mr. Herman Chinery-Hesse, who was featured in the Poverty, Inc, explaining the factors that changed business trends on the continent. He noted that nowhere in history has foreign aid developed an economy. He was of the view that Government, Private Sector and Citizens must work hand in hand to pursue a common agenda. “Only Africa can develop Africa”, he concluded.

Mr. Brian Conklin, explained how the various elements of the film embarrassed him, as an aid worker. He however explained that, those in the aid sector, whether their approach was right or wrong, do what they do with the belief to make an impact. He stated the different approach the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) uses in releasing funds to ensure accountability through monitoring and evaluation. According to him, USAID has helped to reduce poverty in the North of Ghana by 18% in 3 years, which is remarkable and very close to their target of reducing poverty by 20%.
Mrs. Awurabena Okrah, an entrepreneur who was also part of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) stated that aid has been helpful to entrepreneurs, but it is not sustainable. Once the projects end, the aid organisations no longer follow up. She also lamented on the failure of AGOA in supporting non-traditional exports from Ghana.

Dr. Gordon Kwesi Adomdza, shared the experiences he had seen in the enterprise environment in Ghana from the academic perspective. He stated that, in general, in Ghana, entrepreneurs don’t do due diligence; they wait for a first mover to penetrate a market and then copy the same businesses. He also advocated for design thinking approach in solving problems in Africa.

What is courting insecurity in much of Africa? Religious Differences or Poverty & Unemployment?

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Kwesi Aning

Dr. Kwesi Aning opined that ‘There can be no liberty without security’. He said religion and poverty are major causes of social instability not only in Africa but in many parts of the world. He was of the view that security has to be looked from governance perspectives: to him bad governance and corruption seem to be fueling the insecurity the continent has been experiencing, especially in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. He also emphasized the importance of properly defining the poor, using a multi-faceted definition to fully reflect circumstances and to know whom exactly is at risk to insecurity, and thus manipulation. He said countries with weak infrastructure, high unemployment and economic instability are at higher risk to insecurity. In conclusion, Dr. Aning
conveyed that religious differences on their own do not cause insecurity; it is only when they are joined with other factors, such as corruption and economic conflicts that insecurity. Unless deliberate interventions are taken to regain trust in public institutions, the potential for instability will continue to grow.

Who is slowing integration? African leaders or their citizens? Should we not integrate regionally before attempting a continental Free Trade Area?

Presenter: Mr. Patrick Stephenson
Discussant: Nkunimdini Asante-Antwi

Speaking on the above topic, Mr. Patrick Stephenson said the primary objective of free trade areas is to enable the free movement of people and goods from one country to another. Historically, this was the focus in many West African empires, including the Ghana, the Mali and the Songhai Empires. According to him, the concept of integration and trade have never been alien to Africans – even prior to colonization. Currently in Africa, the biggest challenge to trade is the inability of people to move freely across borders. He noted that the African Integration Agenda dated back to the 1960s.

Mr. Nkunimdini Asante-Antwi, who was a discussant said that Integration will continue to be a challenge in the absence of a political will. He emphasized the need to prioritize Integration on the African Agenda.

Falling Oil Prices: Is this the new natural resource curse in Africa? Will Africa resort to aid to shore up slow growth?

Presenter: Dr. Ishmael Ackah
Discussants: Nkunimdini Asante-Antwi and Kofi Sylvester Kofi Boahen
Dr. Ishmael Ackah took participants through an overview of how oil affects Africans, by explaining the three main causes of the oil curse, namely, the Dutch disease, which reduces the productivity of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, Price volatility, which can lead to uncertainty for the private sector and unsustainable debt levels, and the Political Channel, when weak institutions, corruption and conflicts destabilize oil prices. He said for African Oil producing Countries to overcome the oil curse, they should follow the example of Malaysia which diversified its economic despite the existence of a vibrant oil and gas industry. He suggested that Oil Producing African Countries should also establish a stabilization fund, a resource price rule/ benchmark and cap expenditure, among other policy recommendations.

**Afrocentric Obama**

Presenter: Dr. Etse Sikandu

“When President Obama was elected, there was renewed hope in Africa that, someone, with African roots was coming and would offer them more help and better understand issues relating to Africa”, these were the opening words of Dr. Etse Sikandu who spoke on the “Afrocentric Obama”. According to him, Obama related to the African identity; and that was evident “throughout his policies”; he has a worldview ground in the idea of interaction, interdependence and co-operation, rather than individualism and isolation. Dr. Etse Sikandu said that if African leaders followed the example of President Barack Obama, development on the continent could be moved a lot further. “Africa needs to make sure that their policies serve their own good rather than that of foreign entities”, he stated.
Mr. Kofi Bentil climaxed the ALF with a presentation on *Presidential Term Limits in Africa*. He stated that liberty unlike democracy is not a man-made concept but God-given. He took participants through a pool of governance systems, namely, monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy and democracy and how they affect the livelihood of the people in particular and development in General. He said limiting Presidential Terms is not the prerequisite of development in Africa. According to him, what matters the most is how governance directly affects the livelihoods of the people. He was of the opinion that African nations need “strong men” to build and safeguard the integrity of Strong Institutions.
Liberty Awards annually recognize think tanks that have made important contributions to improving the landscape for enterprise and entrepreneurship in their regions. The winner of the inaugural Africa Liberty Award is the Namibia-based Chevauchee Foundation, for its “Namibia Schools Reading and Debating Societies” program that introduces the ideas of freedom, Austrian economics, and public choice theory to students in high schools and universities across the country. Other finalists include Imani Africa’s Advocacy for the ratification of European Partnership Agreement” project, and Nigeria-based African Students for Liberty (ASFL) for its ASFL Local Coordinator Program.

The winner of the Africa Liberty Award received $5,000 and was honored at the Africa Liberty Dinner. Mr. Nathan Tjirimuje picked up the Africa Liberty Award plaque for Chevauchee, Aboagye T. Mintah represented IMANI and ASFL was represented by Mayowa Olumayowa Okediran.

LIBERTY DINNER

The liberty dinner was held at the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel to climax the Africa Liberty Forum. It brought together the participants of the Liberty Forum, participants of SYPALA and special invited guests to dine, network and be entertained.

The over 100 guests were treated to delicious Ghanaian cuisines and entertained by an energetic Ghanaian cultural performance by the Ghana Dance Ensemble. Two key note speeches were delivered by renowned speakers. Dr. Tony Oteng-Gyasi (CEO, Tropical Cables & Conductors Ltd & IMANI Board Member) spoke on the theme, “Free enterprise and the evolution of economic development in Africa” while Ace Kojo Anan Ankomah Esq. (Managing Partner Bentsi-Enchill, Letsa & Ankomah) delivered a thought provoking speech on the topic; “Civil liberties, national security and the law in a technological age”. Mr. Bernard Avle, Host of the CitiFM breakfast show was the master of ceremony.
MEDIA COVERAGE

The Africa Liberty Forum was extensively covered by the media in Ghana including TV3, Onua FM, Class Fm, Radio XYZ, Dromo FM, Daily Searchlight, The Finder, Today Newspaper.

The Africa Liberty Forum was also widely covered on social media (Facebook, Twitter). All the lectures and speeches were live tweeted using the official hashtag #AfricaLF16

Social Media Coverage: #AfricaLF16

500 posts were made using the hashtag by 66 users. The social media posts reached 108,511 accounts with a total of 1,019,312 impressions (The number of people who viewed the posts)

For more information, visit www.imaniafrica.org

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