

Media and Communication in Africa: the Egyptian Role!

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The founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) realized in their first meeting in Addis Ababa in May, 1963 that the African continent is in need for a voice and a tongue, the first to be heard worldwide and the latter to express itself as well as the aspirations of its peoples. However, the implementation of this idea has been delayed for a quiet period of time until the Ministers of Information and Communication in Africa met together for the first time in 1977. Since then, the sound of Africa has been heard through their conference which continued to be held every two years. As for the Joint Government Council among African governments, which consists of 17 ministers of information, holds a meeting once a year. On April 9th, 1979 the second Conference of African Ministers of Information adopted the Convention for the establishment of the African News Agency known as the Pan African News Agency (PANA), which came into force in 1983, i.e. after twenty years of the founding fathers' decision. Since then, PANA has become the African tongue.

When the Arab Republic of Egypt chaired the Conference of African Ministers of Information in 1979, it highlighted two facts:

- The new global media system, which the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture "UNESCO" has called for and has adopted through the MacBride Commission, did stumble due to linguistic pretexts by arson. Whereas the real motive was the continuation of the dominance of the First World over the destinations of media and communications. Accordingly, it is realized that Africa should set its own new media system.
- The belief that there is a cultural invasion facing the third world, in general, and Africa, in particular, has pulled the African countries down. Actually, such cultural invasion has become a "peg" on which Africa hangs its



failure in developing its media. And thus, it is necessary to produce programs that could compete rather than to acquiesce.

In this respect, Egypt set a work program including a number of workshops and seminars that were held in Cairo ending up with the following objectives:

- Establishing media and communication system among African countries has a positive impact on social transformation and economic development.
- Planning for a self-reliant regional development that aims to improve the level of African cooperation in the dissemination of news, information and cultural products in order to reduce dependence on foreign cultural and news agencies.
- Enhancing the existing African institutions for the development of communication, and establishing new institutions in the fields that support the new communication and information system.
- Providing intensive education and training for individuals in order to raise the capacity and the level of the African staff in design as well as the use of communication technology, in addition to the level of professionals.
- Facilitating trade exchange between the countries of the continent, and cooperation in the field of communication, information and related fields .
- Introducing and supporting activities that support the new system through programs in order to convey the continent's message and to present an effective coverage of African affairs.
- Facilitating communication with Africans in the countries of immigration.
- Enabling African points of view to contribute to the basics of justice, and to create a global dialogue about the opportunities and problems facing the international community.
- Giving a good image of the continent and its institutions as well as its peoples whether inside or outside the continent.
- Contributing to world peace and promoting harmony among countries and regions.

As an outcome, a joint African media and communication plan is set and then it was approved by the Conference of African Ministers of Information. Such plan covered the following fields:

- Communication and development.
- Film, video, camera and theater.
- Radio and television.
- Press and Publications.
- News agencies.
- Advertising.
- Technology.
- Public information services.
- Manpower development.
- Funding.
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

At the conclusion of the joint African media and communication plan the following is stated:

"The need to change the current state of communication and media

among the African countries has become sound clear. In this respect, the proposed strategies in such policy can accomplish the required changes. and the implementation of that Member States will take historic and significant steps in order to create a communications system and inform the African-new, and that it is not to keep up with the twentieth century and by, but for efforts others have achieved! "

Accordingly, a new African media and communication system has been approved, a PANAFRICAN ADVERTISING UNION has been establishment, in addition to the establishment of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA). In this regards, Senegal won to host the Agency, while Kenya won the presidency of the Union , and Nigeria won the post of the Secretary-General.

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