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Marang

International Relations Newsletter

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JOHANNESBURG

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Dear Readers,

The African Union (AU) projects that 20 million jobs are at risk on the continent in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, with at least 2 million of those in South Africa's Gauteng province, home to Johannesburg. This edition of Marang focuses on the 'Future of Work,' with an excerpt from the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs report for 2020, which maps the jobs and skills of the future by tracking the pace of socio-economic change.

The C40 network contends that cities the world over should consider promoting the creation of jobs that support low-carbon economy initiatives. It has since pledged to help the City extend the development and roll-out of its municipal Climate Action Plan. Balancing long-term economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the renewal of the City's environmental agenda may ensure economic growth while mitigating climate change.

The Executive Mayor of Joburg, Geoff Makhubo writes that the Covid-19 lockdown laid bare the complexities of food insecurity facing residents of the City. Stalled supply chain processes and closed borders during the lockdown worsened the crisis. Makhubo's account of this reality is on [page 4](#).

This edition also profiles the use, impact and challenge of digital culture for African diplomats, arguing that it is conceived primordially or structured to thrive only in western social systems.

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We hope you enjoy the read!

THE FUTURE OF JOBS



The Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown and related recession have created a highly uncertain outlook for the labour market and accelerated the arrival of the future of work. *The Future of Jobs Report 2020* sheds light on 1) the pandemic-related disruptions, contextualised within a longer history of economic cycles, and 2) the expected outlook for technology adoption, jobs and skills in the next five years.

Despite a high degree of uncertainty, the report uses a unique combination of qualitative and quantitative intelligence to expand the knowledge base about the future of jobs and skills. It aggregates the views of business leaders — chief executives, chief strategy officers and chief human resource officers — on the frontlines of decision-making regarding human capital. The report also provides in-depth information for 15 industry sectors and 26 advanced and emerging countries.

The report's key findings include:

– **The pace of technology adoption is expected to remain unabated and may accelerate in some areas.** The adoption of cloud computing, big data and e-commerce remain high priorities for business leaders, following a trend established in previous years. However, there has also been a significant rise in interest for encryption, non-humanoid robots and artificial intelligence.

– **Automation, in tandem with the Covid-19 recession is creating a 'double-disruption' scenario** for workers.

In addition to the current disruption from the pandemic-induced lockdown and economic contraction, technological adoption by companies will transform tasks, jobs and skills by 2025. Forty-three percent of businesses surveyed indicate that they are set to reduce their workforce due to technology integration, 41 percent plan to expand their use of contractors for task-specialised work, and 34 percent plan to expand their workforce due to technology integration.

– **Although the number of jobs destroyed will be surpassed by the number of 'jobs of tomorrow' created, in contrast to previous years, job creation is slowing while job destruction accelerates.**

Employers expect that by 2025, increasingly redundant roles will decline from being 15.4 percent of the workforce to 9 percent (6.4 percent decline) and that emerging professions will grow from 7.8 percent to 13.5 percent (5.7 percent growth) of the total employee base of company respondents. Based on these figures, it is estimated that by 2025, 85 million jobs may be displaced by a shift in the division of labour between humans and machines. About 97 million new roles may emerge that are more adapted to the new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms.

– **Skills gaps continue to be high as in-demand skills across jobs change in the next five years.** The top skills and skill groups which employers see as rising in prominence in the lead up to 2025 include groups such as critical thinking and analysis as well as problem-solving, and skills in self-management such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility.

– **The future of work has already arrived for a large majority of the online white-collar workforce.** Eighty-four percent of employers are set to rapidly digitalise working processes, including a significant expansion of remote work—with the potential to move 44 percent of their workforce to operate remotely.

– **In the absence of proactive efforts, inequality is likely to be exacerbated by the dual impact of technology and the pandemic recession.** Jobs held by lower-wage workers, women and younger workers were more deeply impacted in the first phase of the economic contraction.

– **Online learning and training are on the rise but looks different for those in employment and those who are unemployed.** There has been a four-fold increase in the numbers of individuals seeking out opportunities for learning online through their own initiative, a five-fold increase in employer provision of online learning opportunities to their workers and a nine-fold enrolment increase for learners accessing online learning through government programmes.

– **The window of opportunity to reskill and upskill workers has become shorter in the newly constrained labour market.** This applies to workers who are likely to stay in their roles as well as those who risk losing their roles due to rising recession-related unemployment and can no longer expect to retrain at work.

– **Despite the current economic downturn, most employers recognise the value of human capital investment.** An average of 66 percent of employers surveyed expect to get a return on investment in up-skilling and reskilling within one year. However, this time horizon risks being too long for many employers in the context of the current economic shock, and nearly 17 percent remain uncertain on having any return on their investment.

– **Companies need to invest in better metrics of human and social capital through the adoption of environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics and matched with renewed measures of human capital accounting.** A significant number of business leaders understand that reskilling employees, particularly in industry coalitions and in public-private collaborations is both cost-effective and has significant mid- to long-term dividends — not only for their enterprise but also for the benefit of society more broadly. Companies hope to internally redeploy nearly 50 percent of workers displaced by technological automation and augmentation, as opposed to making wider use of layoffs and automation-based labour savings as a core workforce strategy.

– **The public sector needs to provide stronger support for reskilling and up-skilling for at-risk or displaced workers.** Only 21 percent of businesses report being able to make use of public funds to support their employees through reskilling and up-skilling. The public sector will need to create incentives for investments in the markets and jobs of tomorrow; provide stronger safety nets for displaced workers during job transitions, and to tackle long-delayed improvements to education and training systems. (Source: World Economic Forum, November 2020).

[Source: World Economic Forum, November 2020].

Joburg befriends likeminded Pakistan

The Executive Mayor of Joburg, Geoff Makhubo has a courtesy call with the Acting High Commissioner of Pakistan, His Excellency Adnan Javaid to explore synergistic relations.



African local governments adopt the new “future of work” principle



African local governments have an opportunity to make decent work a reality for Africa's youth, developing skills, technological pathways and productivity for a brighter future in Africa, transforming Africa's informal and rural economy for decent work, and respecting international labour standards, promoting social dialogue and ensuring gender equality.

This is the sentiment of Dr Joni Musabayana, the Regional Director for Africa in the International Labour Organisation:

What is the role of the ILO in ensuring that African local governments adopt the new “future of work” principle?

The Future of Work calls for a human centred agenda, that places people and the work they do at the centre of economic, social policy and business practice. One of the pillars focuses on increasing investment in the institutions of work. From regulations and employment contracts to collective agreements and labour inspections systems. These form building blocks of just societies that forge pathway to reduce working and secure a future of work with dignity, economic security and equality.

The Abidjan Declaration can be adopted by local governments as it has the following principles:

1. Making decent work a reality for Africa's youth, developing skills, technological pathways and productivity for a brighter future in Africa, transforming Africa's informal and rural economy for decent work, and respecting international labour standards, promoting social dialogue and ensuring gender equality.
2. Strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work through:
 - supporting the role of the private sector as a principal source of economic growth and job creation by promoting an enabling environment

for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, in order to generate decent work, productive employment and improved living standards for all

- supporting the role of the public sector as a significant employer and provider of quality public services;
 - creating decent work and productive employment for all, with emphasis on youth, women, persons with disabilities and other groups vulnerable to discrimination;
 - promoting entrepreneurship;
 - ensuring freedom to innovate and experiment, as well as voice representation and rights for youth;
 - striving for an enabling environment for, and promoting where appropriate, cross-border social dialogue to foster decent work, including for vulnerable workers in global supply chains
3. Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development and growth, full and productive freely chosen employment and decent work for all, through:
 - facilitating the promotion of structural transformation with emphasis on agriculture and rural economies and food security;
 - enhancing productivity;
 - improving working conditions, occupational safety and health;
 - improving the environment for sustainable enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - promoting cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy; and
 - promoting growth towards a green economy and just transition

How is the ILO assisting African local governments to reverse Covid-19 related unemployment?

National employment policies can play a key role in linking the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis and achieving an inclusive, job-rich recovery. This requires adapting policy processes to address three key areas at local government:

1. Local government need to practise Policy sequencing and balancing health and employment objectives across a range of policy domains. This includes

macroeconomic policies; sectoral strategies and business support; social protection and income support; PES, labour market institutions; and skills development.

2. Target hard-hit sectors (e.g. retail, accommodation) and groups (e.g. women, young people and others, such as persons with disabilities), especially those in the informal economy, during the reactivation and recovery phases through general and specific policy measures, while identifying opportunities in new sectors with employment potential.
3. Intense response by local government to the heightened uncertainty through: strengthened data collection, assessments and analytical approaches; more responsive policy processes; and social dialogue with employer and worker organizations needs to be put in place. Looking beyond the recovery phase, national employment policy processes also need to consider the longer-term implications of the COVID-19 crisis. In many ways, the current crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities (e.g. faced by specific groups, such as women) and accelerated trends that were already impacting the labour market (for instance, digitalization). In this context, the formalisation of enterprises and workers in line with Recommendation No. 204 will help reinforce efforts to reduce inequalities and strengthen resilience in

the labour market. Local government and informal economy sector must find ways to work together.

A focus on employment, including self-employment, is fundamental to facilitate the recovery process. Past responses to health emergencies and natural disasters have shown that employment-intensive investments in health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and services are an important means of immediate job creation in crises. Policies that support skills development and entrepreneurship cushion the impact of unemployment.

Longer-term, large public investments are needed to boost employment and crowd in private investment. Governments could accelerate economic growth and boost employment with measures such as employment-intensive public investment, government procurement that provides preferences to small businesses, and tax incentives to stimulate local sourcing of larger firms.

Employment retention schemes, including short-time work arrangements/partial unemployment benefits and other time bound support for enterprises, such as wage subsidies, provision of paid leave and extension of existing entitlements to workers, training leave, grants and related schemes. Time bound financial/ tax relief and income smoothing measures to support business continuity especially, MSME's and those who are self-employed.

Figure 1. Policy framework: Four key pillars to fight COVID-19 according to International Labour Standards

Pillar 1

Stimulating the economy and employment

- Active fiscal policy
- Accommodative monetary policy
- Lending and financial support to specific sectors, including the health sector

Pillar 2

Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes

- Extend social protection for all
- Implement employment retention measures
- Provide financial/tax and other relief for enterprises

Pillar 3

Protecting workers in the workplace

- Strengthen OSH measures
- Adapt work arrangements (e.g. teleworking)
- Prevent discrimination and exclusion
- Provide health access for all

Pillar 2

Relying on social dialogue for solutions

- Strengthen the capacity and resilience of employers' and workers' organizations
- Strengthen the capacity of governments
- Strengthen social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour relations institutions and processes

What best practice lessons can African local governments learn from their international counterparts?

Maintaining people's job-readiness has been an important dimension of Public Employment Services during the pandemic. Employability-oriented services deal with the ability to search for jobs, update a resumé, and locate and understand labour market information. Another important dimension of maintaining people's job readiness is fostering the ability to update and refresh competencies and skills to perform tasks in a job, which will be more relevant in the post-coronavirus context. According to global estimates, a third of the skills deemed essential in today's job market have changed in the last five years (WEF, 2016). This process is likely to accelerate owing to the effects of COVID-19 on demand for skills in several occupations and sectors.

Some countries have reinforced support for target groups in need of improving and/or acquiring digital skills to keep themselves afloat in the job market.

- Singapore launched a special support grant for low and middle-income unemployed workers affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The grant is linked to job-searching support and training by the national training provider, Workforce Singapore, or the Employment and Employability Institute, delivered through virtual classrooms and e-learning) (Government of Singapore, 2020).
- The Government of Australia is allocating additional funding for jobseekers aged 45 and above to increase access to training and job-search support, improve digital literacy and identify transferable skills (ILO, 2020c).
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Russia announced special subsidies for people at risk of dismissal and part-time workers, as well as providing access to advanced vocational training or apprenticeship/internship programmes (ILO, 2020c).

Unprecedented labour market disruptions require timely and large-scale support for enterprises and workers around the world. The ILO calls for urgent and immediate policy responses to actively support transitions into decent work and prevent a significant drop in labour market participation.

Which economic sectors should African local governments develop and transform in the post Covid-19 period?

Workers and enterprises in the informal economy are the most vulnerable. 2 billion people worldwide work in the informal economy in jobs that are characterised by a lack of

basic protection, including social protection coverage. They often have poor access to health-care services and have no income replacement in case of sickness or lockdown. Many of them have no possibility to work remotely from home. Staying home means losing their jobs, and without wages, they cannot eat. Close to 1.1 billion informal economy workers live and work in countries in full lockdown, and an additional 304 million in countries in partial lockdown. These workers together represent 67 percent of informal employment.

Employees are considered informally employed if their employer does not contribute to social security on their behalf or, in the case of a missing answer to the question in the household survey that the employer does not contribute, if they do not benefit from paid annual leave or sick leave. Employers and own-account workers are in informal employment if they run enterprises (or economic units) in the informal sector (non-incorporated private enterprises without a formal bookkeeping system or not registered with relevant national authorities. Almost all these workers (over 95 percent) are working in units of fewer than ten workers. Among informal economy workers significantly impacted by the crisis, women are over-represented in high-risk sectors: 42 percent of women workers are working in those sectors, compared to 32 percent of men.

Support to businesses and jobs need to target the most vulnerable in order to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the confinement period. Given the vulnerability of small enterprises and workers in the informal economy, governments should explore all options to finance measures that support firms and their workers and provide adequate social protection. Substantial numbers of own-account-workers, micro and small businesses, and people in the informal economy are highly vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic in developing countries.

Tailored responses are needed to reach and support small businesses, through combined measures of direct financial support and loan guarantees to avoid saddling firms with too much debt (but conditional on retaining workers). Preparedness to identify and expand financial resources is therefore essential to deal with high demand for lines of credit. For small businesses, microfinance and semi-formal financial institutions can constitute an effective means of reaching enterprises and own-account workers operating in the informal economy.

Income support for workers and enterprises operating in the informal economy is critical to prevent them from plunging far deeper into poverty. As there is little time to design new schemes, successful programmes should be prioritized and scaled up, such as cash transfers, child

allowances and programmes used for shelter and food relief. In many cases, conditional and unconditional cash transfers may be needed for an extended period. Income support for poor workers and households is vital for firms, especially those that produce consumption goods.

Wholesale, Retail, Manufacturing and Tourism industries are also affected. More than half of these enterprises, some 232 million are in wholesale and retail trade. Own-account workers represent 45 percent of all employment in this sector, while micro firms (between two and nine employees) account for 25 percent of all workers in it. A further 111 million enterprises in manufacturing, 51 million in accommodation and food services and 42 million in real estate and other business activities are currently facing an extraordinarily difficult business environment with major impacts on employment opportunities. Taken together, these four sectors account for more than 30 percent of GDP on average. Own-account workers and micro-enterprises together represent around 70 percent of global employment in retail trade and nearly 60 percent in the accommodation and food services sector, a reflection of the severe vulnerability of these sectors in the current economic crisis. While small enterprises around the globe play a major role as providers of jobs, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, they often lack access to credit, have few assets and are the least likely to benefit from fiscal measures in general and from the stimulus packages related to the current crisis. As witnessed in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the number of small businesses in advanced economies is expected to decline due to widespread business failures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it will take considerable time to bring back investment and business operations as recovery is likely to be slow.

Job-rich recovery will lay the foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth. The impact of the pandemic is likely to be uneven, adding significantly to existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. In the recovery phase, greater attention should be paid to the strengthening of employment policies to support enterprises and workers, along with strong labour market institutions and comprehensive and well-resourced social protection systems, including care policies and infrastructure, that kick in automatically and in an inclusive way as crises occur.

Article written by ILO DWT/CO Pretoria Director Dr Joni Musabayana

C40 network pledges to make Joburg carbon neutral



The C40 network has pledged to help the City extend the development and roll-out of its municipal Climate Action Plan. The C40 Building Energy programme for 2020 aims to assist cities like Joburg to transform their building stock for a low carbon future. The programme supports more than 50 of the world's largest cities to develop policies that reduce emissions from existing buildings to avoid carbon lock-in. It also helps cities use buildings as sources of low carbon energy by installing solar panels or capturing waste heat.

The Building Energy 2020 programme provides support through various methods, including:

- Embedding technical advisors in selected cities
- Providing short periods of consultancy guidance to overcome specific barriers
- Developing city-led research projects and
- Hosting action-oriented workshops, all the while leveraging the experience of and sharing lessons with peer cities through C40's four building and energy networks.
- On the other hand, the C40 network has secured additional funding to help the City implement its Climate Action Plan.

Cities encouraged to consider low carbon projects



Cities around the world should consider promoting the creation of jobs that support low-carbon economy initiatives. The Covid-19 pandemic has an adverse impact on the global economy amid the ongoing climate crisis. Balancing long-term economic recovery and renewal with the environmental agenda may be one way to ensure economic growth while mitigating climate change. One means of achieving this is through a renewed commitment from the local and national government to invest in and develop job creation for a low carbon economy.

Cities should consider encouraging low carbon projects including up-skilling and training local people in:

- Clean electricity generation and provision of low-carbon heat for homes and businesses e.g. manufacturing wind turbines, deploying solar PV, installing heat pumps, and maintaining energy-system infrastructure
- Installing energy efficiency products ranging from insulation, lighting, and control systems
- Providing low-carbon services e.g. financial, legal and IT, and producing alternative fuels such as bioenergy and hydrogen
- Encouraging low-emission vehicles and associated infrastructure e.g. electric vehicles, manufacturing batteries, installing electric vehicle charge-points.

[Source: Resilient Cities Network, October 2020].

Resilient food systems for the poor

In this article Geoff Makhubo, the Executive Mayor of Joburg and Mark Watts, the Executive Director of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group highlight how the response to the Covid-19 pandemic may help build resilient food systems for the poor.



The Covid-19 lockdown laid bare the complexities of food insecurity facing millions of residents of the City of Joburg. Stalled supply chain processes and closed borders during the lockdown worsened this crisis by limiting the flow of food from farms to consumers. School closures and rising unemployment mean millions of people around the world are missing out on enough, healthy and nutritious meals. Statistics South Africa estimates that food insecurity will double due to compromised availability and access, resulting in a loss of livelihoods, mirroring the World Food programme's projection that acute hunger is set to double this year due to the Covid-19 crisis.

Food insecurity has become a common challenge throughout the world, particularly among vulnerable groups and the poor. Yet the great cities of Africa face a serious threat of hunger and malnutrition, which could exacerbate vulnerability among communities. Under-nutrition and its resultant effects of suppressed immune systems can heighten the severity and duration of illnesses, which compromise the absorption of nutrients and delay the recovery process. In the context of a global pandemic, these threats to the health of citizens become even more severe.

The precarious food security situation facing several parts

of the African continent is made even worse by the impact of climate change. Many in the region are experiencing frequent anomalies such as intense flooding and drought. Massive invasions of desert locusts are ravaging crops and destroying livelihoods across the Horn of Africa and East Africa.

The harm caused by Covid-19 has not been quantified, just as the impact of climate change is not fair. It is the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities that are at greater risk. Our ambition should not be a return to 'normal' but to build a better, more sustainable, resilient and fairer society out of the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. That means guaranteeing that all citizens have access to adequate nutritious food.

In the City of Joburg [CoJ], several short- and long-term interventions have been considered under the Covid-19 crisis, including distributing emergency food parcels procured from local markets. Joburg managed to reach more than 150 000 vulnerable households by the end of the first four months of the national lockdown, with a target to reach even more people who are in dire need of food. The City still aims to reach 1 000 000 households during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The City's Social Development Department has facilitated the provision of food parcels to those in need and provides shelter (along with meals) to over 800 homeless persons daily. In addition, the City has identified several existing and new partners in the field of food production and continues to provide safe and nutritious food to vulnerable groups. As the fight against the impact of Covid-19 continues, the CoJ is open to partnerships with prospective international bodies that share the same vision in mitigating food insecurity. The CoJ perceives long term sustainable interventions as an imperative measure to mitigate food insecurity.

In addition to the distribution of food parcels, the City has been providing technical and business training, including assisting with seeds and tools, as well as registering and organising cooperatives to improve their access to markets. The City has also converted dumping areas into useable land. Unused land in schools, clinics and parks is being converted to communal gardens for the poor. These efforts will enable Joburgers to produce their own food through backyard and communal gardens.

The City is reviewing its Food Resilience Policy in accordance with the changing socio-economic environment. Regrettably, nine million South African children might have missed out on daily government-sponsored meals due to school closures during the peak economic lockdown period between March and July 2020. However, food programmes in schools resumed as the country re-opened schools. The City recognises the opportunity and importance of making sure young people get the right food to position them for better health, cognitive development and lifelong success.

The City of Joburg is not alone in this fight against food insecurity. Other African mayors are taking similar bold actions. In Lagos, closed schools have been repurposed to serve as makeshift food markets to allow residents to access food without travelling long distances. Accra ramped up its home gardening programme by distributing seedlings to households and is slowly creating a city-led

movement of urban farming. Freetown is also providing informal settlements with equipment and training to grow vegetables, helping people to comply with lockdown rules and improve food security.

The Covid-19 pandemic reveals the threat that climate change, the destruction of habitats and environmental degradation pose to public health and our collective ability to feed ourselves. Research by C40, Arup and Leeds University reveals that globally, food systems are responsible for roughly 13 percent of emissions in cities. That is why mayors are committed to shaping the way food is produced, procured and distributed, as well as how waste is managed. Working through the C40 network of 94 cities committed to urgent action on climate change, we're collaborating with our peers around the world to deploy locally relevant solutions.

For African cities, this means creating a food system that provides adequate and nutritious food to tackle the threat of malnourishment. It also means taking action to dissuade the growing middle-class in African cities from adopting the same unsustainable and unhealthy diets seen in many higher-income cities. We're also committed to reducing food waste to prevent organic waste from ending up in landfills - a major source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Where our food comes from, how people access it, and what they are eating are all central to the Covid-19 response and recovery strategy for African cities. We need to ensure that all citizens have easy access to adequate, affordable, diverse and culturally appropriate food. We also need to make sure that locally sourced plant-based foods are the easiest and the cheapest option. This work was important before Covid-19 struck, now it is essential.

Written by Geoff Makhubo, Executive Mayor of Joburg, South Africa and Mark Watts, Executive Director, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group).

Makhubo hosts EU Diplomatic Corps



The Executive Mayor of Joburg, Cllr Geoff Makhubo hosts a virtual meeting with the EU Diplomatic Corps to strengthen the CoJ-EU relations on investments, Covid-19 and migration. South Africa is the EU's largest trading partner in Africa.

Is digitalisation de-Africanising African public diplomacy? A philosophical reflection

SERIES

African Digital Diplomacy

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AFRICAPORTAL

Over the years, Black African scholars, critics and politicians have popularised the belief that digital cultures are essentially driven by western forces who are contributing to the westernisation of the African continent. This belief follows from at least two somewhat arguable claims. The first is that digital cultures first emerged in the west before proliferating in other parts of the world, including Africa. The second is that these digital cultures seem primordialily conceived or structured to thrive in western social systems. In context, digital cultures are, by the above myth or belief, typically meant for the west; and Africa is simply trying to grapple with them. In tandem with this frame of thinking, Kehbuma Langmia argues in his 2016 book titled *Globalisation and Culture: An Afrocentric Perspective* that “as it stands, the cyberspace public sphere activities follow canons crafted and executed in the west by westerners with little or no input from other non-developed regions of the world like Africa”.

Elsewhere in the same book, Kehbuma contends that dependency is the tapeworm that keeps crawling through the veins of Africa to make her look up to Europe and America for communication. It would appear that in-person, communication that characterised Africans before the arrival of the west was not effective so too were the drums, the bells, and the gongs to widen communication that has geo-cultural scope for all Africans. New media emergence from the west has become a welcome relief. That relief has infringed on African cultural spaces and swept her off her feet.”

In line with the above, several African diplomats and diplomacy scholars have hastily regarded digitalisation

not only as a westernising force but also as an agent of the de-Africanisation of public diplomacy in the “Black” continent. For instance, in a 2018 study focused on Kenyan digital diplomacy, Irene Nyambura Waitthaka reviewed the positions of many Kenyan diplomats who describe the digitalisation of diplomacy as a cultural revolution led by the West and an idea still not fully understood and/or accepted by the African continent’s diplomats and intelligentsia.

It has become common to find scholars of African descent who describe digital diplomacy as a purely Western or westernising paradigm. Such observers even doubt the possibility of “Africanising” digital diplomacy. If this line of argument has a degree of pertinence, it is not faultless. It may be safer to argue that digitalisation promotes the de-Africanisation of public diplomacy in Africa to an extent. However, it is not completely hostile to the application of core African cultural values in the conduct of public diplomacy.

De-Africanisation defined

De-Africanisation can be defined as a dramatic process whereby a supposedly African concept, idea or process is stripped of its key African cultural values. This definition follows from the understanding that de-Africanisation is simply the opposite of Africanisation, a phenomenon known to be any of the following scenarios: (1) the act of replacing the non-African features or components of a concept with Black African ones; (2) the act of bringing something under the influence of Africa (ns) and (3) the process of adapting a concept to African needs. The de-Africanisation of public diplomacy could be construed as a situation where the

public diplomacy practised by African Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and diplomats is stripped of its African character.

To borrow Antje Glück's words, the de-Africanisation of public diplomacy is "an epistemic shift away from ideas of African parochialism, which have long defined African's MFAs and embassies' practice of public diplomacy. Some of the Afrocentric values that have governed African diplomacy include (i) Seamless approach to the passage of time, (ii) Respect for cultural tradition and authority, (iii) Predilection for the collective, (iv) Unhurried decisions and (v) the Prioritisation of community rather than individuals. To the above values, one may add three others, namely (a) anti-imperialism and pan-Africanism, (b) the vehement adherence to the political borders left by colonial powers and (c) solidarity of African states on the world stage.

Digitalisation and African cultural values

It is expedient to examine ways in which digitalisation may facilitate or hamper the upholding of specific African cultural values in the sphere of public diplomacy. This article focuses on two such cultural values: (i) predilection for the collective and the prioritisation of community rather than individuals and (ii) unhurried decisions. The first set of values does not per se run counter to the practice of digital diplomacy while the second appears incompatible with most of the savvy and pragmatic practices in digital diplomacy.

As cultural values, these two concepts – predilection for the collective and prioritisation of community rather than individuals – are observed among ethnicities and cultural groups across the African continent. In Southern Africa for instance, the two values find expression in the concept of Ubuntu, which, by definition, is humanism from an African perspective. The term relates to bonding and is in line with Zulu maxims which say that I am because we are, and I am human because I belong. Ubuntu is thus an expression of tenets of African philosophy which say that an individual is human if he or she is a member of the wider community.

The prioritisation of community and the predilection for the collective is similarly reflected in the Nigerian foreign policy principle which states that Nigeria is the keeper of her neighbours. The upholding of these two values is very much compatible with best practices in digital diplomacy. In their leverage of social media for "diaspora diplomacy" and "networked diplomacy," African ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) and embassies can apply these values and ameliorate their conduct of public diplomacy. "Diaspora diplomacy" is a foreign policy strategy whose principal

objective is to generate loyalty towards the home country and ultimately convert this loyalty into political leverage. It is conducted through a variety of instruments such as the propagation of specific nationalistic and religious concepts and rhetoric and the organisation of cultural festivities and presidential elections abroad.

Social media can help African nations to maintain close and healthy relations with their global Diasporas. This can be done through the creation of social media-driven initiatives on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp that serve to inform their global diasporas about issues related to MFAs and embassies' activities abroad as well as information about domestic political events. Such platforms could also be used to provide their countries' Diasporas with information about possibilities to invest at home. Thus, diaspora diplomacy may enable African countries to support the formation of diaspora organisations abroad which contribute to retaining a collective identity.

Several studies have demonstrated that African countries such as Ethiopia are eager to adopt social media as a tool for diaspora diplomacy. In a 2016 paper, Ilan Manor assessed the online activity of Ethiopian embassies to several ex-pat hubs including the United States, the United Kingdom, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Canada. He found that these embassies are highly active on Twitter and Facebook. In the US, the Ethiopian embassy had more than 30 000 followers on Facebook, while the country's embassy to the UK boasts more than 10 000 followers on Facebook and 7000 on Twitter.

Networked diplomacy may similarly enable the application of African concepts of solidarity and communalism. African diplomats and embassies may use social media or their online activity to leverage their position in the global arena. Very active African MFAs and embassies may, for instance, deploy their tweets and Facebook messages to attract a significant number of their peers and get them to support a common cause. The sites of African MFAs and embassies may therefore become information junctions that attract their peers or African counterparts and ultimately enable a collective stance on issues involving the continent.

African embassies to multinational organisations such as the UN have become important hubs of online information, researchers such as Manor illustrate. This has enabled these embassies to serve as information junctions and enabled African diplomats to forge a common stance on issues and influence decisions in these multinational organisations. Manor examined the Twitter networks of some African embassies to the UN in New York in 2016. He found that Rwanda's embassy was the third most popular

embassy in the entire network with the potential to be an information junction that attracts diplomats from other countries as well as a tool to impact the UN's agenda and priorities.

Unhurried decision-making

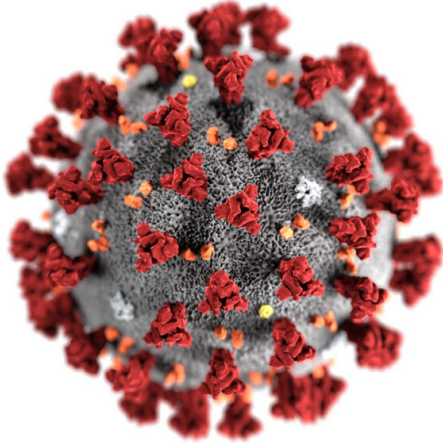
In traditional African culture, leaders are expected to be wise and vested with practical and empirical knowledge. This wisdom and knowledge often manifests in the habit of being meticulous when making decisions that will affect the well-being of the nation. Unhurried decision-making mechanisms that involve consultation and consensus are most valued. If unhurried decision-making constitutes virtue and a practical tool deployed by African traditional leadership to manage delicate situations, in African MFAs or embassies, it is often the product of a top-down process of governance. In the sphere of public diplomacy, such top-down processes have mostly hindered quick responses to difficult situations. Unhurried decisions have sometimes proved un-pragmatic, particularly during contexts such as violent and volatile civil movement protests.

During the 2011 Arab Spring in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, for example, it was observed that while the socio-political situation in the countries concerned was deteriorating every day (particularly during the zenith of the social movement), most African and Western chancelleries reacted relatively slowly. In the current post-truth era, MFAs and embassies are compelled to get ahead of situations and act promptly to avoid communication gaps that may lead to misunderstandings, a negative perception of MFA activities and negative reactions from foreign publics. In this digital age, unhurried decisions may not always be the best solution.

Digitalisation is compatible with some African cultural values and incompatible with others. It enables the upholding of some African values while hampering the application of others. The use of social media-driven communication to engage African Diasporas and African counterparts can enable African MFAs to uphold values such as predilection for the collective and the prioritisation of the community over the individual. Unhurried decision-making, on the other hand, appears incompatible with most of the savvy and pragmatic practices in digital diplomacy.

Written by Floribert Patrick C. Endong, African Digital Diplomacy, Africa Portal).

Covid-19 crisis calls for sustainable urban planning



Despite multiple efforts to advance sustainable development in recent years, the Covid-19 pandemic slammed into cities with full force. Major urban centres, such as Madrid, Milan, London, and New York were hit hardest by the virus. In the era of globalisation, the densest population hubs connect national states to the world, and at the same time, are often the source of Covid-19 spread.

Addressing the reality of urban life globally, the United Nations 2030 Agenda calls for the construction of more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient cities. As of the beginning of October, almost 900 million people live in informal settlements in cities and their metropolitan areas. In Latin America, neighbourhoods with deficient infrastructure for the provision of basic services are still extremely common. Even though considerable progress in the integration of these sectors has been made, the lack of drinking water and access to safely managed sanitation services translate into ideal conditions for the spread of the new virus.

The pandemic also brought with it forced confinement, which manifested a rise in gender-based violence. In the City of Buenos Aires, for example, complaints to the 144-hotline increased by 48 percent. This trend was repeated in many cities around the world. According to António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General "limited progress made in terms of gender equality and women's rights over the last few decades is in danger of being set back as a result of the pandemic". This is also true regarding the disproportionate amount of unpaid work that women do, as well as their exposure as frontline workers.

Likewise, the health crisis highlighted the enormous challenge that remains in terms of decent work. Informal employment increases vulnerability to the pandemic since it puts health, safety, and economic subsistence at risk. This scenario requires us to strengthen our containment networks and promote the transformation of professional training, in addition to stimulating the creation of new quality jobs in the recovery from the crisis.

Cities were surprised by an external shock, and just like urban resilience theory warns, it diverted them from their development trajectories. Communities must process this impact with flexibility, and Cities must reorient their thinking and come together to adjust to this new reality if they are to emerge stronger from this challenge. In a few months, the sanitary will be mostly under control, but the magnitude of the social and economic impact is not clear, nor is the path to recovering from them.

With the arrival of Covid-19, the main response worldwide was social distancing. Governments the world over asked people to stay at home, and move "offices" and "schools" to private residences. What's more, public spaces had to be adapted to the conditions imposed by the new normal, with rigorous sanitation standards and strict policies to maintain social distancing compliance. Sidewalks were modified to guide and contain people lining up outside businesses, and in many cities, circles were drawn in parks so people could enjoy green public spaces at a safe distance from other groups.

Some major global cities, like Milan and Paris took it further and used this opportunity to launch ambitious sustainable mobility programmes. The construction of new bicycle lanes and street pedestrianisation has the potential to become the main character of the new normal.

Once the virus has been contained, we should analyse our governments' performance, not only in terms of the number of victims we will have mourned but also based on other indicators: the lost jobs, the impact on educational quality, the increase of domestic violence, and the consequences on the environment, among others. This comprehensive analysis of the effects of Covid-19 is closely linked to resilience and the sustainable development agenda. The pandemic emphasises just how important investing in urban resilience and SDGs is for our ability to confront future challenges.

Assimilating the SDGs into urban planning enables

cities to be better prepared for these challenges. The SDGs give governments a framework to strengthen employment opportunities and improve infrastructure conditions in vulnerable neighbourhoods and introduces mechanisms to eradicate violence and discrimination in all forms. Their pursuit also demonstrates a commitment to action for the climate and future generations.

Furthermore, the urban resilience agenda highlights the importance of identifying and preparing for future shocks in city planning, to reduce their disruptive effects. The next big global crisis may come in the shape of a pandemic, climate disaster, or a social crisis. If we want to be better prepared, we will have to put resilience and sustainable development as the highest priority in cities around the world.

[Source: Resilient Cities Network, November 2020].

Synergistic relations forged with India



The Executive Mayor of Joburg, Geoff Makhubo hosts a courtesy meeting with the Consul General of India, His Excellency, Anju Ranjan to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Joburg hopes to pioneer District Development Model

The City of Joburg hopes to pioneer a District Development Model in which all three spheres of government integrate development plans and budgets in pursuit of inclusive growth and job creation.

The District Development Model is an integrated planning system by the national government, which seeks to fast-track service delivery by supporting municipalities to carry out their mandate. The model aims to improve the coherence and impact of government service delivery. It focuses on **44 Districts and 8 Metros** around the country as development spaces that can be used as centres of service delivery and economic development, including job creation.

By implementing this integrated approach to service delivery, Joburg will achieve its constitutional goal of cooperative governance. The municipality will also strengthen intergovernmental coordination in the planning, budgeting and implementation of government programmes.



Joburg shares knowledge on Inner-City rejuvenation



The City of Joburg has submitted its Inner-City Revitalisation programme to be published as a blueprint on the “Best Practices for Local Sustainable Development”.

The programme is being used as a case study to illustrate that the Inner-City Revitalisation plan has delivered on large-scale flagship projects spanning its cultural, recreational, transportation, commercial, industrial and residential domains. These initiatives inspired investor confidence and reversed the urban decline seen just before the dawn of South Africa’s democracy.

Some of the main factors that led to significant improvements in the Inner City over the years and the wave of improvements now taking place are:

- Public investment in urban renewal and infrastructure;
- City Improvement Districts;
- Institutional and corporate investment and
- Private, entrepreneurial investment, particularly in the residential sector.

Makhubo calls for sustainable solutions to Covid-19, Climate change crisis

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The role of the International Municipal and Regional Movement in Covid times

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South African cities need to engineer innovative, sustainable and resilient solutions for climate change to ensure a safer, cleaner and fairer future for all. The Executive Mayor, Geoff Makhubo says Joburg is driving this transformational climate action in South Africa.

Meanwhile, Makhubo notes that the Covid-19 pandemic has renewed the importance of raising public awareness and maintaining the functionality of basic public service provision. He says the pandemic calls for rapid development of new and adapted services to support sanitary measures while ensuring the protection of public officials who facilitate them.

While the most vulnerable citizens remain the key priority, the sustainability of the service provision ecosystem and the impact of the social crisis are the concerns of cities worldwide.

Makhubo calls for sustainable solutions to Covid-19, Climate change crisis



The City of Joburg's draft Green Building Policy: New Buildings and the draft Development Contributions Policy, which are currently out for public comment will help the municipality achieve a low to net-zero carbon footprint in all new buildings by 2030 and 100 percent of all buildings by 2050. It will also guide the development of green and low energy consuming buildings within the City through renewable energy.

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