

# THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'GOOD GOVERNMENT' AGENDA: SOME MILESTONES

**1 November 1989**

**The World Bank's Long-Term Perspective Study, 'Sub-Saharan Africa: from crisis to sustainable growth'.**

This gave wider currency to the word 'governance', defined as 'the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs'. It argued for less government to set people free to work, and for better government to enable others to be productive. Governments should take more responsibility for population policy, urban growth and the environment. There were calls for 'an attack on corruption from the highest to the lowest levels', making leaders more accountable to their peoples and government business more transparent. Governments should protect the rule of law, the freedom of the press and human rights, seek grass roots participation, and build pluralistic structures.

**6 June 1990**

**The British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Douglas Hurd.**

Speaking at the Overseas Development Institute, London, he called for good government, described as effective, honest and accountable; for political pluralism; for freer more open economies; and argued that 'aid must go where it will do good'.

**21 June 1990**

**Robert McNamara.**

Speaking at the African Leadership Forum in Nigeria, he stated that political systems should not be imposed but waste, corruption and military expenditure need to be reduced, and the following promoted: a free press, open debate, meritocracy in the civil service, an independent judiciary, institutional pluralism, and other means of popular participation.

**21 June 1990**

**President Mitterand of France.**

At a Conference of Heads of State of Francophone Africa at La Baule he said 'it is for Africans to know who should govern them and how. We do not conceal our expectation that true democracies with multi-partyism, free elections and respect for human rights will be established, and we will encourage the developments that lead to them'.

**11 July 1990**

**The Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity.**

Their Declaration made a recommitment to democracy

and recognized the need to promote peoples' participation in government and development, the importance of human rights, the rule of law and high standards of policy and accountability.

**5 August 1990**

**The British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, speaking at Aspen, Colorado.**

She said that 'the problems of developing countries generally stem from politics leading economics astray'. Peoples' right to influence their own destiny requires limits on government power, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a market economy and the right to private property. She sought a new global agenda of co-operation on the environment, population growth, drug addiction and terrorism.

**14 September 1990**

**The United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries.**

Its Programme of Action dealt with the need for good government, democratization, transparency in public sector institutions, human rights and the rule of law. It saw an important role for NGOs.

**22 September 1990**

**World Bank President Barber Conable.**

At the African Caucus of World Bank Governors he said that political uncertainty and arbitrariness constrain development, and spoke of the need for transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law, putting governance at the top of Africa's agenda.

**4 December 1990**

**The Development Assistance Committee (the DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (the OECD).**

Its communiqué on a high level meeting in December 1990 focused attention on participatory development, a phrase much used by the DAC since then.

**25 June 1991**

**Britain's Minister for Overseas Development, Mrs Lynda Chalker.**

At Chatham House, London, she argued for more concentration by governments, doing only what is needed to promote sound economic and social policies; for systems that were open, accountable, pluralistic and democratic; and for more freedom — a free press,

respect for human rights and the rule of law. The Minister committed Britain to increase aid to promote better government from £28 million to £50 million a year.

**29 June 1991**

**The European Council.**

It resolved that respect for human rights, the rule of law and the existence of political institutions which are effective, accountable and enjoy democratic legitimacy are the basis for equitable development.

**20 October 1991**

**The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.**

The Declaration of the Harare meeting talked of 'strengthening the capacity of the Commonwealth to respond to requests from members for assistance in entrenching the practices of democracy, accountable

administration and the rule of law'.

**28 November 1991**

**The European Council.**

A resolution set out a common 'positive approach', listing types of aid to stimulate respect for human rights and encourage democracy. There is also an indication of the procedure to be adopted in response to human rights violations or serious interruptions of democratic processes (or excessive military spending), leading to warnings or, in extremes, changes or suspension of co-operation.

**April 1992**

**The World Bank's 'Governance and Development'.**

This identified 'four areas of governance that are consistent with the Bank's mandate: public sector management, accountability, the legal framework for development, and information and transparency'.