

# Implementing a Vision

*Mr. Denis Christel Sassou-Nguesso's (Republic of the Congo) visit to Washington, D.C. to promote his new foundation 'Perspectives D'Avenir' was inspiring, engaging and a concrete demonstration of the '21st Century African Leadership'.*

September 26th, 2011



*Mr. Denis Christel Sassou-Nguesso*



Washington, D.C September 23rd, 2011 marked the last day of Mr. Denis Christel Sassou-Nguesso five-day (September 19th-23rd) visit as part of an international tour to promote his foundation 'Perspectives D'Avenir' in the United States. Although Mr. Sassou-Nguesso is Minister and Deputy Director-General of the SNPC (Congo's National Petroleum Company) in charge of downstream operations, his tour was that of a private citizen raising awareness for his foundation.

'Perspectives D'Avenir' ('Future Possibilities/Opportunities') is a concrete expression of Mr. Sassou-Nguesso's personal commitment to the education of financially disadvantaged youth whose educational ambition may otherwise be cut short due to a lack of funds. One of the stories Mr. Sassou-Nguesso shared during his meetings is that of witnessing highly talented students (during his studies) that were unable to continue their education because their families were economically disadvantaged. This unfairness disturbed him and served as an inspiration to develop a beacon of hope and support for those youth committed to successful higher educational and professional training.

The foundation will award, top post secondary students, opportunities that

enable educational and professional success by providing entrepreneurial training, scholarships and exchange programs. As a result, 'Perspective D'Avenir' has the potential of contributing to the unmeasurable benefit of pride, commitment and loyalty needed to develop an economically strong Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Sassou-Nguesso personal commitment to the foundation is not only sincere in ideas but is apparent in his sense of urgency to have the foundation fully operational within the next year. Since its inception, six months ago, a business plan is already in place and a state-of-the-art building is due to be finished by October 2012. The Building will provide training and lodging facilities. Mr. Sassou-Nguesso has personally funded a significant portion of the foundation's development and intends to continue his financial commitment. Moreover, he is determined to run a successful and transparent foundation by putting in place a high profile board, which will be in turn governed by an internationally recognized advisory board.

The events and activities of the week were designed to bring Mr. Sassou-Nguesso in direct contact with key organizations and individuals that may serve as partners, collaborators and/or advisors on the path to successful implementation. Mr. Sassou-Nguesso's full week involved meetings with the US Department of Education, US Department of State, USAID, Vital Voices, CDC, NAFEO, HBCUs & NAFEO representatives, The Whitaker Group, Global Commodities Trade & Finance, PetroAfrica, Senator Mary Landrieu and Congressman Donald Payne. It was evident that during meetings,



*Sharing the building design plans with Mr. Yaya Moussa and Ms. Edie Fraser*

**DENIS CHRISTEL SASSOU-NGUESSO**

*Mr. Denis Christel SASSOU NGUESSO was born in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. He completed his high school education at the Congo Military Academy for the Youth, and continued on to France (Bordeaux and Paris) to earn professional and graduate law degrees. He then started his career in oil management after a professional training in London with leading oil traders including Glencore, Trafigura and Vitol. He subsequently spent six months with Chevron in San Ramon, USA, and extensively visited the company's other US based offices.*

*He joined SNPC in 2001 and became an executive in the company's trading branch in London, UK, through end-2002. He then returned to Brazzaville to head SNPC's trading operations in 2003 and 2004. In 2005, he was promoted head of SNPC's oil trading department. From 2005 until recently, he was Managing Director of SNPC's specialized oil and gas trading subsidiary. Since January 2011, Mr. SASSOU NGUESSO is Deputy Managing Director of the SNPC Group, in charge of downstream oil activities. Mr. SASSOU NGUESSO takes at heart his country's social and political challenges by contributing to the modernizing of the ruling political party. As an illustration, he has recently created a foundation to promote excellence in education in Congo. He is also contemplating establishing a national oil management school.*

*He is specifically interested in developing the skills of the Congolese youth through training. Furthermore, in his capacity as Deputy MD, Mr. SASSOU NGUESSO is working to enhance the social effectiveness of the national oil company, SNPC, by better cooperating with foreign investors to create local economic value in Congo. He believes that political accountability, social responsibility and economic justice for all are the best way to avert the social and political unrest which have recently erupted across Africa. To materialize his social and political ambition, he founded an organization called CECAD, whose aim is to assist Congolese students and to implement micro projects with high social impact. In light of its success, that organization became a political force (Pôle des Jeunes Républicains, or PJR in short) that can boast 37 representatives in local assemblies and 8 members at the national assembly.*

*In 2006, the movement became a fully-fledged political party, the Party for Justice and the Republic (same acronym, PJR). On July 25, 2011, on the occasion of the PCT's extraordinary congress, the PJR merged with the ruling party to bring new blood and perspective to Congo politics. On that occasion, Mr. Denis SASSOU NGUESSO has been elected to the new party's executive body (Comité Central) and subsequently to the political bureau, the party's highest decision-making body. Aligning his vision of Congo social and political transformation and his deeds, Mr. SASSOU NGUESSO has established a new foundation that will offer grants, scholarships and various forms of assistance to needy Congolese students and promote excellence in education. Against that background, Mr. SASSOU NGUESSO, through his foundation, is seeking to launch mutually beneficial social initiatives with individuals and institutions in the United States, Europe and Africa.*

Mr. Sassou-Nguesso was appreciative of all input and remained very open to brain storm and exchange ideas on how to deal with potential brain drain, development of local faculty, put in place proven entrepreneurial training and advanced leadership programs, just to name a few.

Wednesday, September 21st marked one of the highlight of his visit when he was honored during the award dinner of the 'Constituency for African (CFA) Ron Brown Series'. The dinner's theme "Excellence in Leadership for 21st Century Africa" could not have been a better fit for Mr. Sassou-Nguesso social programs in the Congo. He was presented the much deserved CFA's "African Pioneer Award". He shared the stage with other giants shaping the 21st Century Africa such as Chief (Dr.) Adeniyi losla Micheal Adenuga (Globacom), Chevron, Rosa Whitaker (The Whitaker Group), Vincent Osayande Ebuh (PetroLog; Zenith Bank) and Obiageli K. Ezekwesili (World Bank).

One might say that 'Perspectives D'Avenir' is an excellent example of an internally lead movement, gaining momentum, within the African continent by Africans for Africans in collaboration with international partners that share the same vision. This movement is committed to the future of the continent by lifting up the youth, empowering them with education, pride and more control over their own futures. In addition, the foundation fits seamlessly within the 3 prong attack on poverty that

focus on educational opportunities, infrastructure development and health management.

Owing to the fact that Mr. Sassou-Nguesso is approachable, dares to implement his vision of economic empowerment and is fully committed, he returns home with a few other considerations, or rather challenges, put forth to him that go beyond his foundation. He has been challenged to develop, in addition to the foundation, a center of excellence; to not only stay within the boundaries of the Congo, but dare to take on the role of global thought leader for the youth of Africa; to consider the benefits the private sector can have for economic development by getting locals trained in the supply chain of these industries; and to capture the full potential within all private-sector and non-profit organizations in the Congo as catalysts for reaching these objectives for the youth and economically dis-advantaged.

Without a doubt, with Mr. Denis Christel Sassou-Nguesso's passion and commitment, 'Perspectives D'Avenir' will be a phenomenal success!

*Mr. Sassou-Nguesso's visit was facilitated by Ms. Edie Fraser, Senior Consultant at Diversified Search; Mr. Yaya Moussa President of Kontinent; and Dr. Gloria Herndon, President and CEO of GB Energie.*

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L-R, H.E. Ambassador Serge Mombouli, Mr. Denis Christel Sassou-Nguesso, Dr. Gloria Herndon and Mr. Stanley L. Straughter (Chairman, CFA)