

Geosciences for Development in Africa in the New Millenium

MUHONGO, S., Geological Society of Africa

The projected population of the African continent in 2000 will be about 820 million and its average annual growth rate of the total population in this new millenium will be the highest (ca 2.5%) when compared to other continents. In the Africa's decade of rennaissance (1990 - 2000), its average positive economic growth rate was about 2 - 5%, but about 40% of its population in the Sub- Saharan Africa falls into the absolute poverty category, according to UN records. By 1995, the Africa's external debt burden amounted to about US \$ 330 billion for which Sub - Saharan Africa accounts for about US \$ 231 billion.

Africa has enormous earth resources. It has the world's largest reserves of strategic minerals such as Cr (82%), Co (54%), Mn (52%), Au (30%), U (29%), V (20%) and many undiscovered and underestimated earth resources. Development and sustainable management of these resources are necessary for poverty eradication in Africa. Hence, geosciences have a key role to play so as to increase the economic growth rate averaging 5 - 7% a year which is deemed necessary for poverty alleviation and eradication in Africa. Thus, geosciences in Africa and elsewhere have to provide solutions to societal or community problems. They have to contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the peoples of the African continent. For Africa, geoscientific objectives in this new millenium should be focused at:

- (i) provision of sufficient earth resources (e.g. water, energy, minerals),
- (ii) provision and maintenance of quality education and research in geociences,
- (iii) sound environmental management, timely assessment of natural hazards and mitigation of disasters; and
- (iv) advising and influencing politicians and decision makers on matters pertaining to the development and management of Africa's earth resources for sustainable socio-economic development of the continent.