EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE UNFORTUNATE 'EBOLA AMBUSH': A NEED TO FUND RESEARCH IN AFRICA

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Over the years, African scientists have generally lamented the poor funding of research in the continent; amidst wastages, funds misappropriation, corruption and misguided priorities. Come to think of it, what would have been the situation if all the wasted funds in Africa were appropriately channeled towards research in medicine, and agriculture, as well as science and technology? Would Africa not have become a heaven-on-earth if her wealth from natural resources like crude oil, diamond and gold, among others, were fully and properly invested in education, health, research, housing, industrial development and overall social welfare of her citizens?

An unbiased reflection on Africa surely indicates that she is bedeviled by epidemics, hunger/poverty, unemployment, political instability, general underdevelopment and insecurity, as well as economic and leadership crisis. Unfortunately, most of these calamities confronting Africa are man-made and such human attributes like corruption, greed, quest for power, religious intolerance, and sectionalism -ethnicity, tribalism, and racism, remains the major causative factors triggering them. Also, the continent has gradually become a breeding ground and safe-heaven for terrorists. This particular phenomenon has compounded the woes of a continents which, for many years, has grappled with the incidences of life threatening epidemics like malaria, HIV/AIDS, cholera, river blindness, guinea worm infestations and hemorrhagic fevers -Lassa, Dengue and recently, Ebola, which is currently ravaging the citizens of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra leone. Most importantly, these epidemics characteristically confront an unprepared and seemingly helpless continent plagued by wars and an excessive squandering of her abundant natural resources.

It is even more disheartening to note that as Africans, we seem not to learn from mistakes of the past and subsequently ensure that conscientious efforts are made towards addressing the anomalies that have kept our mother continent in the chains of underdevelopment and leaving her at the mercy of giants from other continents. It is high time therefore, that Africans realized that the African ‘dream’ and ‘destiny’ lies in their hands. Our leaders must begin to make concerted efforts towards preventing some of these calamities plaguing the continent and forcing them to seek for assistance from external forces. They must begin to look beyond acquiring power, wealth and fame, as events have shown that human survival stretches beyond personal aggrandizement. They must also avoid actions that have so far triggered mutual distrust, armed revolutions, communal crisis, militancy, and recently terrorism.

In addition, African leaders must begin to fund innovative research in various facets of life as innovation remains that key to fixing the numerous challenges of human existence. They must be proactive in their policy formulations and appreciate the fact that most of the strategies adopted by developed countries to attain their enviable heights in education, health, science and technology, among others, are products of genuine and well funded research coupled with requisite policy formulation and implementation. Surely, a commitment to funding innovative research enhances a nation’s capacity to meet the exigencies of her population, and most importantly, serve as a preventive shield against life threatening situations like the current ‘ambush-like’ Ebola virus epidemic that has so far overwhelmed some African nations, despite having reared its ugly head many years ago.