

PolicyPennings by Daryll E. Ray & Harwood D. Schaffer

Senegal's Prime Minister committed to holistic economic development

On his recent trip to Africa, Harwood had the opportunity attend and address the Global Ecovillage Summit held December 10-14, 2014 in Dakar, Senegal. In last week's column we summarized the presentation of Col. Demba Ba, Director General of Senegal's National Ecovillage Agency (ANEV) during the formal opening session of the Summit. In this column, we present, in full, the speech of Prime Minister Mohammad Boun Abdallah Dione (pronounced "John").

Dione opened the Summit saying, "I am very pleased to welcome each one of you. In 1992 during the Rio Summit in Brazil, the President of Senegal, then spokesman of the African continent, reminded all in attendance that the universal conscience—as humanity is essentially a set of moral and spiritual values—should be at the beginning and the end of every social development project."

"As a result, Senegal translated this into action by creating a ministry for ecovillages in 2008 and by charging ANEV with the mission of promoting improved living standards for the population, while reducing its ecological footprint. His Excellency President [Macky] Sall went beyond the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012 saying, 'A green economy cannot just limit itself to a simple declaration of intentions. It demands a sustainable change in modes of production and consumption affecting agriculture, industry, and energy. More than just a green economy, Senegal is proposing the achievement of green governance, articulated around balanced economic and social policies and based on ecologically and rational technologies and modes of production.'

"On my part, as I am aware that the way forward will involve the quest for sustainable development. I have instructed my government to give priority to a holistic development process which places humanity and the natural environment at the heart of the process; so we intend to reinforce our achievement through the promotion of clean energies in order to provide free time to populations and allow them to contribute to the preservation and conservation of the environment and natural resources (Authors' note: The clean energy technologies of biogas and solar panels free women from the task of gathering wood, thus freeing some of their time while also eliminating the need to cut down trees for firewood. This moves villages from the position of contributing to global warming to reducing the impact of global warming by sequestering atmospheric carbon dioxide in the form of wood. The clean energy technologies also improve the health of women and children because they are no longer subjected to the soot that comes from the wood fires used for cooking.).

"Senegal has always been at the vanguard of ideas advocated by the ecovillage movement while insisting, particularly, on the fact that ecovillage development

should have a humane face and reflect the moral and spiritual values of the peoples that implement it. The concept of ecovillages, as you can see, is essentially based on a cultural and spiritual development. Senegalese civil society, as today's meeting shows, through the leadership of GEN Africa, GEN Senegal and other NGOs and associations have played a major role in supporting the government through the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and ANEV.

"Reminding you of the words that Chiek Anta Diop expressed, 'Knowledge takes as its source the knowledge of one's self and no growth is possible without reference to one's own values,' I am convinced that ecovillages advance these same principles as their first dimension is based on culture. So an ecovillage is a model for economic development, integrating social progress through the preservation of natural resources and the environment. Ecovillage is the salutary way to create a new type of Senegalese whose identity revolves around respect for beings, inanimate objects, social ethical rules, and participatory methods, the aim of which is to implement good governance for an emergent Senegal.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the choice of Senegal to organize the first edition of the Global Ecovillage Summit is a recognition and courtesy from the international community through GEN to pay tribute to the people of Senegal for their determination to make eco-development through ecovillages a universal humanism. Be it warmly thanked for it. Senegal civil society actors as well as development partners in harmony with the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development have already started the transformation of Senegalese villages into ecovillages,

"Now around a hundred villages has experienced this transformation process and the feedback that we have received makes us very optimistic and puts us in a position to say that before 2017 we could reach the number of 500 fully developed ecovillages, while strongly reaffirming our determination and that of my government to keep making Senegal the leading country in ecovillage design and implementation. I would like to give the big family of the world eco-citizen a warm welcome to the county of Senegal and I declare open the first Global Ecovillage Summit."

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