

# Africa's lost opportunity

**T**HERE has been much talk about the potential of the 2010 Fifa World Cup to leave behind a lasting African legacy. Some analysts have even gone so far as to suggest that this will be the event's biggest contribution. Africa is at somewhat of a crossroads at the moment. On the one hand, the continent seems mired in problems; on the other hand, there seems to be much to celebrate.

On the negative side, there is a vast amount of political conflict afoot, some of which seems to be increasing. Recent conflict in the Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe and Uganda has implied that there is much regional instability.

Coupled — especially among some countries — with high levels of poverty and underdevelopment, a lack of progress on trade liberalisation negotiations and high levels of HIV/AIDS, the prospects for the consolidation of democracy, economic growth and sustainability throughout the continent look bleak.

On the other hand, Africa is growing at an average of 7% a year and foreign direct investment has been considerable over the past five years. Debt cancellation and trade concessions — despite the failure of the recent post-Doha talks — have resulted in positive gains.

The African renaissance and New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) initiatives, while seemingly dormant over the past two years, have the potential to revive the ailing fortunes of the continent.

In this regard, the African Union has done commendable work over the past 18 months, especially in Sudan, and the peer-review mechanism is working effectively. There are also positive spin-offs for Africa from SA's non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Encouragingly, too, regional bodies in Africa have been transformed to meet the objectives of Nepad and regional trading blocs have been established, most notably in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, following a summit in Lesotho about a year ago.

So, with the above context in hand, can Africa celebrate and hope to benefit from 2010? On one hand, the concerns and challenges for Africa posed above, coupled with time constraints and a host of Fifa technical specifications, seem to mitigate



UDESCH PILLAY

against widespread collaboration and a true sense of partnership.

On the other hand — drawing on the strengths of the continent — prospects for positioning the event as a continental one look promising.

The following questions are, to my mind, the most salient ones:

First, what are the tourism (and other positive economic) spin-offs from 2010, especially for neighbouring SADC states?

Second, what are the benefits likely to accrue for Africa from successfully staging a

arrangements? For each of the above issues to find expression in a 2010 Africa-wide developmental plan, the South African government needs to start a dialogue with African heads of state.

Close to two years ago, I argued a formative meeting was needed to establish a pan-African co-ordinating committee, entrusted with making sure that the prospects for 2010 to deliver across Africa could be realised.

The South African government, with the local organising committee (LOC) and regional bodies, should drive such a process and assume overall ownership, I argued. Fifa's support would also be crucial.

Unfortunately, this meeting never happened and the process above has yet to ensue. Despite this, the South African government and LOC continue to make huge claims about 2010 and its continental prospects, without any appreciable effort to drive such a process.

The best we can now hope for is that the SADC-based 2010 regional tourism strategy becomes a reality. To that effect, recent talks by SADC tourism ministers in Victoria Falls were encouraging.

As for the 2010 Fifa World Cup being a truly Africa one, well, the moment has been well and truly lost. It is a real pity.

■ *Dr Pillay heads the Human Sciences Research Council's 2010 Fifa World Cup Research Project.*

## The challenges.. seem to mitigate against widespread collaboration'

mega-sporting event like 2010?

Third, does the event have the potential to drive elements of the African renaissance programme, including the opportunity to celebrate the continent's unique culture, diversity and identity?

Fourth, do prospects exist through 2010 to enhance integration of the continent into the global economy, including as an equal global trading partner?

Finally, what is the relationship between event-based economic growth and development, and good governance

