Lake Chad, Transaqua Basis for New Africa

Below is the speech given by EIR Africa specialist Freeman at the inaugural meeting of the International Scientific Committee of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in N’Djamena, Chad, Nov. 17, 2014. Freeman entitled his remarks “Implications for Saving Lake Chad in the New Strategic Dynamic.”

1. During the last 14 months, there has emerged in the world a new paradigm of thinking among a growing number of nations for cooperation in promoting long overdue economic development driven by large-scale infrastructure projects for energy, rail transportation, and water management. Highlights of this process are:

   **September 2013:** China’s President Xi Jinping announced the New Silk Road Economic Belt.

   **July 15-16, 2014:** The Sixth Summit of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) announced the creation of a New Development Bank.

   **October 2014:** Twenty-two nations joined the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank.

   **Nov. 8, 2014:** China announces the formation of the Silk Road Fund, in the run-up to the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference in Beijing.

   These initiatives exemplify an alternative to the heretofore hegemonic global financial system dominated by the monetarist banking centers of Wall Street, the City of London, and Paris. These developments taken together, and related activities and initiatives in this direction, signify a fundamental change in the world.

   What we might call the BRICS/New Silk Road geometry correctly focuses on fostering real economic growth derived from massive investment in infrastructure projects, contrary to the Western policy of finding new exotic financial mechanisms to maintain the “too big to fail” banks, that are dying under the weight of $1.75 trillion in worthless derivatives.

**Saving Lives and Reversing Desertification**

2. The two largest bodies of water in the Sahel are the In-Land Mali Delta, and Lake Chad, both of which, if developed, can yield increased food from farming and fishing, required to feed almost 25 million Africans who exist in the Sahel at varying levels of food insecurity. Preventing the disappearance of Lake Chad and refurbishing it to its 1963 level of 25,000 square kilometers, is not just of great importance to the nations of the Sahel and the rest of Africa, but is strategically important to the planet. If we would realize the full potential of the Mali In-Land Delta on the Niger River and restore Lake Chad, we would not only save tens of millions of lives, but also begin the process of reversing the southward march of the desert.

The shrinkage of Lake Chad: “Preventing the disappearance of Lake Chad and refurbishing it to its 1963 level of 25,000 square kilometers, is not just of great importance to the nations of the Sahel and the rest of Africa, but is strategically important to the planet.”
Large-scale water projects along with east-west and north-south high-speed railroads, and the generation of hundreds of thousands of additional megawatts of electrical power (including large-scale use of nuclear energy), are not fanciful dreams. They are vitally necessary endeavors for the development of the African continent to provide for its future population of 2.4 billion, which is anticipated to occur in less than two generations.

3. The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) must take the lead among African institutions for the mission to refurbish Lake Chad. Water transfer is urgent and essential. There has been attention to plans for transferring water from the Obangui River through construction of a dam at Palambo and a canal to feed into the Chari River, the largest tributary to Lake Chad. This water transfer would restore a percentage of Lake Chad, preventing its disappearance at current trends. But that will not return it to its earlier size, which should be the ultimate goal of the LCBC. This project should not be neglected. However, to restore Lake Chad and expand the productivity and output of the countries encompassed by the LCBC, and as well the Great Lakes Region, requires the implementation of the Transaqua water transfer project.

The broad outlines are the construction of a 2,400-km kilometer canal using 5% (100 billion cubic meters) of the Congo River’s 1.9 trillion cubic meters of water that pours out unused into the Atlantic Ocean each year, and sending it north to supply the Chari River, which flows into Lake Chad. Transaqua is not just a water project; it is transformative, a great project that will alter fundamentally the economic processes and lives of all the nations of the LCBC and Great Lakes, thus transforming the African continent.

There should be nothing astonishing about human beings intervening to move large amounts of water from a super-moist basin to an arid basin, thus improving the biosphere for the benefit of mankind. The key to the successful improvement of an economy/society is the ability of a people to increase the output of physical wealth (not money) produced from one production cycle to the next by increasing the productive powers of its people. Technologically advanced infrastructure supplies a crucial ingredient to increasing the productivity of a society. Transaqua would create a corridor of development from the southeast portion of the Democratic Republic of Congo all the way to the Sahel.

Producing Real Wealth, Not Fictitious Money

4. Money is not wealth. All true wealth that has enabled civilization to progress since man’s discovery of fire a million or so years ago, is a product of the unique human quality of creativity. The great Russian/Ukrainian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky proved that mankind transforms the “biosphere” into the “noösphere” (the noetic), through the power of his creative intervention. There is no steady state equilibrium of sustainable development. The physical universe is coherent with the human creative principle and history demonstrates that its intention is for continued growth and development. Physicists would call this an “anti-entropic” principle. Thus implementing the Transaqua project is nothing more than intervening to improve “mother nature,” if you will, for the benefit of mankind’s existence, of which the universe happily approves.

5. Africa is not over-populated, but rather severely underdeveloped. Now is the time to act to improve conditions of life for Africans by realizing the full potential of Africa’s enormous natural wealth. Africa has been kept backward by the extreme deficit in infrastructure, as witnessed in the outbreak of the Ebola virus.

Now is the time for Africa take advantage of the
new BRICS/New Silk Road approach to investing in real economic growth, which is spreading to nations comprising over half the population on the planet. Leaders with a vision of what the future of Africa can be, should enumerate identifiable prioritized transformative infrastructure projects that must be accomplished in the next 10-20 years to secure the future of the continent. We need to ensure that saving Lake Chad and Transaqua are foremost on such a list.

Interview: Sanusi Abdullahi

Preparing the Way for The Transaqua Project

Sanusi Abdullahi, an engineer, is the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. Lawrence Freeman interviewed him on Nov. 20 in N’Djamena, the capital of Chad.

EIR: This week we completed the inaugural session of the International Scientific Advisory Committee of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), which you initiated. Could you summarize what was accomplished in these discussions?

Abdullahi: Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. Let me say that during the last donors’ conference for funding the five-year investment plan, it was recommended that we should set up an international scientific committee to guide us in the implementation of the program. We also had that idea, but the meeting reinforced the need. During this same operation, we are pleased to have people who have a wealth of experience, and the discussions were very rich indeed. It was concluded that the committee will intensify activities in 2015 with a set roadmap and specific activities that will help the commission to actualize the program in place.

EIR: Was the meeting successful in your evaluation?

Abdullahi: The meeting was really very successful, because to have participants come from the U.S. and Europe shows the commitment, at least from the people we selected—the fact that they would spare the time. The full participation of the members we invited was very successful.

EIR: We discussed during our deliberation, the need to transfer water to Lake Chad; that simple conservation would not be sufficient. The Transaqua water project, which was developed over 30 years ago to transfer 100 billion cubic meters of water from the Congo River Basin to the Chad River Basin, was discussed in our meeting, but it has not been supported by the donors, nor by institutions from the West. What are your thoughts about the need for us to begin to work on the Transaqua proposal?

Abdullahi: Thank you very much for this question. Let me say we have had the opportunity to get in contact with Dr. [Marcello] Vichi, who was lead engineer for the conceptualization of this Transaqua program; that contact became possible as a result of setting up this committee. That adds value to the fact that the meeting was a success.

The issue of transferring water from the Congo to Lake Chad is, to my mind, the surest way to save this region from so many other problems: not only the issue of climate change, but social, economic integration, and so many other things. During the donor conference, the decision of the political leaders was to stick to taking necessary steps within the Lake Chad area and the tributaries that feed Lake Chad, as a prerequisite to the grand plan to transfer water. From the engineering standpoint, you cannot begin to actualize the transfer of water from the Obangi to Lake Chad, when you know that Lake Chad, as it is now, cannot receive the water.

So yes, we may have some people who are not supporting it at this point in time, but we are not deterred. We are able to articulate good reasons to show them the need to support this program. We are trying to make the work for the transfer of water from the Obangi to Lake Chad a priority; we will show the details and the economic analysis for the program to sell itself, so the revenues can be generated. But now we are concerned about the immediate actions needed to prepare the ground, as it were, for receiving the water.