

tics; the great and middle powers outside the continent have a profound impact on Africa's economies and tensions, as do corporations and churches, the external media and diverse interest groups. Nevertheless, the growing complexity of international politics in Africa itself cannot conceal the underlying trend towards inequality and conflict on that continent.

#### Notable successes

Despite its contemporary disunity and inequality, Africa has achieved some notable successes during its first two decades of independence, particularly as regards identity, culture and sport. But achievements such as "Festac", all-Africa trade fairs and the Pan-African Games tend to be overshadowed by the unevenness of development, the destruction of unity and the resurgence of interstate conflict. Continental transnational links, no matter how friendly, fail to counterbalance economic and strategic issues in which cohesion is much more problematic.

Africa still retains, however, a degree of unity in its extracontinental relations, as, for instance, in the United Nations or in negotiations with the European Economic Community. Nevertheless, the common front apparent in multilateral relations – as in the "New International Economic Order" debate – has not excluded a great diversity of postures, and results in bilateral deals when individual states needed aid or capital, arms or access. The African caucus, despite its extracontinental activities, has neither prevented the widening of economic disparities on the continent nor reduced the level of conflict. The intentions and resolutions of the Organization of African Unity remain lofty, but the OAU has not been able to secure development and peace through either extraregional advocacy or intraregional diplomacy. And, as the African system has come to include more states, so the inequalities and diversities among them have multiplied.

The OAU is still by far the largest regional organization in the number of its members (49), but recent admissions indicate growing disparities within the African community. In 1976, Angola was finally admitted to the Organization (after liberation and civil and diplomatic wars), as was the island state of Seychelles. Djibouti has now joined as well, thus increasing the potential for conflict-escalation and coalition-formation in the Horn of Africa. Clearly, Angola's own development prospects are considerable – particularly as regards oil, minerals, agricultural products and manufacturing – compared to those of either Seychelles or Djibouti. The eventual inde-

pendence of Zimbabwe and Namibia – to say nothing of the future of South Africa – will only increase such disparities.

Three other new "states" have not been admitted to the OAU. The controversial declarations of independence of the Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Sahara over the last two years are also indicative of growing tensions on the continent. The two "homelands" created in South Africa's attempt to make *apartheid* respectable through "decolonization" have been recognized only by the parent regime in Pretoria. In contrast to this diplomatic isolation by African and other countries, the Sahara Arab Democratic Republic has been recognized as a legitimate government by some radical African states; but it has not been accepted by the OAU. All three pariahs have produced diplomatic and border issues that cannot be dissociated from the activities of liberation movements in the Sahara and in southern Africa.

#### Resources

The other major cause of growing inequality between states – aside from such additions to their numbers – has been the uneven distribution of resources on the continent. The OAU is not only the largest regional organization in the world, it includes the largest grouping of least-developed, most-seriously-affected and landlocked countries. Furthermore, it contains members of the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other states with considerable production and resources of energy, minerals, primary products and manufacturing. Indeed, the rapid rise in the price of oil and related commodities such as fertilizer, food and machinery has intensified inequalities, as resource-rich states have been able to weather the global recession while others have gone rapidly into serious debt. The coincidence of drought in the Sahel has further aggravated these emerging inequalities.

Because of dependence, inflation, debt and unfavourable terms of trade, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa lamented recently, "there has been no marked improvement in many African economies since 1960". "The African economy," he added, "today still exhibits all the characteristics of underdevelopment. And, compared with the other regions of the world, Africa has fared worst." Dr Adebayo Adedeji also pointed out that there was "increasing economic disparity among African countries".

So, while less than a quarter of the continent's states have enjoyed reasonable rates of economic growth, most have suf-

*Inequalities intensified by rapid rise in oil price*