Museveni: Education not key to solving Africa's problems

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KAMPALA. President Museveni has pegged the countless problems ravaging Africa such as wars, poverty, diseases, hunger and underdevelopment on policy blunders made by technocrats and political leaders, and urged fellow leaders to stop 'ideological meandering".

The President advised leaders to come out clearly and build on strategies that will help transform their people, especially using the vast natural resource wealth.

Mr Museveni, speaking at this year's Tana High-Level Forum on security in Africa last Saturday, also observed that education was not the solution to solving problems dogging the continent as it is widely perceived or as other key note speakers before him had averred.

"That if you educate your people, everything will be okay? This was part of the mistake in 1960s," Mr Museveni was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his press secretary Ms Linda Nabusayi.

"This fragmented vision is incorrect; if you educate people but you don't have infrastructure including electricity, where will they work? How will they work?" he said at the two-day summit under the theme: "Managing Natural Resources In Africa: Challenges and Prospects" held in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia's second largest city after the capital Addis Ababa.

The summit, held for the sixth time, was attended by among other leaders, the host Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the key note speaker, chairperson of the Forum, former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa acting executive secretary Dr Abdalla Hamdok.

Mr Museveni contended that while Africa is at a structural disadvantage in that 'great ideas' that have transformed some countries cannot be applied to the rest of Africa, the ideas conceived at the Tana Forum can be spread through 'osmosis'.



Reasoned. President Museveni greets former Nigerian president Olugegun Obasanjo (left) during the 6th Tana High-Level Forum in Ethiopia on April 22. PPU PHOTO

"We are not like China. In China when there is one good thinker...the whole China follows them. Here, you may have good ideas localised in Ethiopia but they do not apply to the whole of Africa."

Africa's natural resource wealth, according to the Forum; oil and gas reserves, is estimated to be worth 12 per cent of global oil reserves, nearly two thirds of the world's arable land that enables farming and among other precious minerals almost 40 per cent of global gold deposits.

The Tana Forum was conceived as an independent platform on peace and security in Africa for leaders to come up with robust responses to the superficial resource-curse plaguing the continent. It brings together current and former heads of state and government, policy makers, civic society, and academia from across the continent.

Touching on the subject of oil, the President said having discovered commercial oil volumes 10 years ago, his government has moved slowly and cautiously to embark on commercial production.

"I was told Uganda does not need a refinery because it was not productive and not economic, that means those with refineries are Mother Theresa's working for nothing. I went to Iran and asked how many refineries they have and they said they got nine and building another six. I said no refinery no oil. It is still in the ground until we agree," he said.

