A. Global Context: Africa’s location

1 Globalisation – increased speed and scope of cross-border economic and financial activity
2 Contemporary political economy - broad issues obscured by bland references to “globalisation”, “global village”, etc. Realities include:
   o Dependency and unequal exchange
   o Exposure of the “weak” to the merciless logic of “the market”
   o Manipulation and selective application of international norms – from trade rules to acceptance of jurisdiction of international tribunals
   o Fragmentation of state functions, leading to the development of new, semi-formal regulatory mechanisms and institutions of interested/influential parties, as complements/alternatives to traditional intergovernmental institutions
   o Exploitation of uni-polarity
   o Differential power of regional economic blocs

3 Africa’s reality
   o Large political gestures at level of continent (OAU to AU; NEPAD, etc.) and sub-regions: great potential, but how much departure from old essentials, given conditioning effect of external context?
   o Trend to electoral politics and formal democracy
   o Decline in incidence of civil strife, but no reduction in virulence of those that continue
   o Very recent trend to average 4+% GDP growth per annum, but masking persistence of raw material export dependency, de-industrialisation and “jobless growth”, and compounding the fragility of most African states

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1 “Disequalizing globalization: three reasons:
   - Global markets reward more fully those countries and individuals with more of the most productive assets.
   - In the global economy, negative externalities raise new costs for the vulnerable and compound the risks faced by the already weak and disadvantaged.
   - In the global economy, existing rules tend to benefit most those countries and individuals who already have economic power; it is natural that the richer and more powerful manage to influence the design and implementation of global rules - even those rules meant to constrain them - to their own advantage.”
(Nancy Birdsall, “The World is not Flat: Inequality and Injustice in our Global Economy”, WIDER Annual Lecture 9, 2005)
o Failure of leadership (political/intellectual), leading to self-confidence and self-reliance

B. Knowledge generation and development

4 What is the nature of the knowledge ↔ social production nexus? Reasonably clear in cases of knowledge generated in course of, or specifically for, production. How about knowledge generated outside social production, e.g., in classrooms, labs, research stations (basic research?)

5 Specifically, how determine/assess the contribution of knowledge institutions to MDGs? What transmission modes?
   a) direct application of specific findings for policy and prescription, e.g., in agriculture, health, education, economy, etc.?
   b) general education and “scientification” of society for increased self-awareness and self-help → spread of scientific thinking, etc., to widest circles → enhancement of innovation potential at all levels of society: what role for universities?
      o “Education for all”? But, given limited resources, how ensure quality?

C. ICT revolution

6 ICT as both opportunity and threat
   a) How optimise opportunity for knowledge generation and application? enhancement of quality of life for all?
   b) How contain/combat potential of ICT for erosion of human rights and security? Exacerbation of social divisions (haves and have-nots), within and between countries? Regions?

7 Who has access ICT: limited coverage in Africa – specifics (coverage, cost)? Causes? Solutions?

8 Who controls content?
   a) Issues of hegemony
   b) Issues of diversity of sources vs. undue homogenisation
      o Capacity & orientation of local knowledge institutions to contribute effectively
      o Rootedness of institutions in communities, relation to local knowledge sources, innovativeness
      o Role of local, sub-regional and continental networking

9 Privileging of certain kinds of knowledge – Western as against traditional?

10 Coordinating role of AAU: Mandate given by AAU General Conference, Cape Town (2005) to play focal point role in ICT and networking matters on the continent; reaffirmed at Conference on African Research and Education Networking, Tunis (2005); Regional Workshop on National Research and Education Networks, Accra (2006); with funding from Partnership for HE in Africa, IDRC, and ACBF.