

# Why the West must take another Look at Africa

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1. My speech acknowledges, appreciates and refers to the many of you, working in different places to improve the lot of their fellow men and women for a dignified existence. The world needs, people – men and women, committed in theory and in practice to issues of sustainable development and the promotion of those fundamental values which guide all human activities - life, respect, inclusion, tolerance, community, personality, faith in the good in humanity, hard work which pays, innovativeness, belief in the youth, integrity of creation, and inclusion of the poor. Is it too much to demand from our brethren in Europe, America and China that the African continent and its peoples merit respect and dignified treatment in international and world affairs? You champion a cause that promotes the freedom of people, contribute to international co-operation, work for peace and live in harmony.
  
2. Ladies and gentlemen, you know as much as I do that the truth concerning the continent of **Africa** is that it has a pride of place in the universe and the history of mankind as the pioneer continent, according to studies in palaeontology and archaeology, recognized as the **cradle of civilization**; the **origin of humankind**; the birth place of the scientifically proven **homo sapiens** and **home erectus**; the continent with the seven longest rivers - Nile, Niger, Senegal, Congo, Orange, Limpopo, Zambezi. The Victoria Water Falls and the fascination of the Kilimanjaro mountains that retains snow at its tip in tropical Africa with the equator sunshine not melting the snow, remains one of the wonders of the world. The existence of flora, nature, games and reserves makes Africa natural, musical, artistic, original, beautiful and blessed. Yet this is a continent our brothers and sisters from the Western and the Eastern hemispheres

of our one globe have all exploited in the past and continue to exploit to this day, without qualms or even a change of course. Africa has suffered the slave trade of over 400 years from Europe, America and the Arabs. The scramble and partition for the continent of 1884/5 took place in Berlin with European nations gathered to share what belongs to another and thus, began colonialism, near hundred years of conquest, division of lands and acquisition of territory which effects still are present and explain partly, the turbulence, wars, violence and governance problems many countries on the continent have to this day. From the 1960s with the end of colonial administration and the dawn of independence, many African nations have suffered the heat and effects of the cold war (between the Soviet Union and the USA), continuing neo-colonialism and in our times, the negative effects of globalization, exploitation, land grabbing, forced migrations, climate change and unequal treatment in world affairs.

3. Stella Orakwe, Nigerian born journalist posted in the New Africa magazine what many already know about the bias by Western Media reports on Africa. In general terms, Africa is not taken very seriously in the West. What is printed in broadcast consists mainly of reports on disasters. **“Africa does not count. Africa is full of countries that do not matter. And countries that do not matter contain people who do not matter”** (Nov 2002, New Africa magazine). The British magazine “Economist” had carried a cover story on Africa with the title **“Continent without Hope”**. And Hans Hielschler, desk editor responsible for reporting on Africa in the German Spiegel magazine revealed in a past write-up that **“Africa is not in demand, not even in journalistic terms”**. The statistics are revealing: In year 2011, reports on Africa filled only 23 pages, a continent of 55 countries, accounting for less than 2.5 percent of its foreign news coverage. By comparison, the 125 pages on only one country the USA accounted for 13 percent; Europe less the former Soviet Bloc held 147 pages with 15.2 percent; and Asia, including Afghanistan with 206 pages made 21.2 percent. There is a growing **Afro-pessimism** and the continent seems to have largely lost respect and equal treatment in international relations. But why is the Black continent now largely written off as hopeless? How has the image of Africa changed so negatively in the West, from

the high hopes to sad disillusionment and curiously too, over a continent upon which the West depended largely for centuries, for most of its mineral, natural and human resources and as a dumping ground for trade and finished products at NO FAIR DEAL? Yet, it is a well-known fact that the European Union is yet to give enough priority to its relations with its nearest neighbour Africa.

4. If I achieve nothing with this presentation, may it only be that I bring you, distinguished audience that **the time has come to challenge and change this attitude of Afro-pessimism, replacing it with an “Afro-optimism” that believes in the future of Africa and a new dawn of its peoples.** This future may not be too long in coming for we can all shape it into reality. **The German Government with its people have done great in trying to keep the African consciousness on the centre stage with Madam Kanzler, Angela Merkel and her team of experts especially, at the BMZ and the Ministry of the Economy working hard in enlightened self-interest, to prevent an upsurge of Migrants flow from Africa to Europe by promoting the topic of A MARSHALL PLAN with AFRICA.** I am encouraged by the positive reaction of the German government to this topic primarily as INITIATOR, hopefully also finding more support with European governments, the G-20 and others. The Marshall Plan with Africa is intended to improve the collaboration between the two very near neighbours and continents since antiquity, who – unfortunately - are so far apart in the way, they operate, that much greater co-operation is called for at this time. Africans do not want to migrate and live elsewhere normally. If they do so, this is because the national and global social-economic and political environment forces them into migration, e.g. when wars, or famine or lack of water and other catastrophes emerge. The subject of ETHICS is fundamental in the discussion of a Marshall Plan with Africa because the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Ethics are intrinsically bound together. They entitle all people to a full life of dignity and happiness. To reach that point is possible for humanity today with all the reservoir of knowledge and technology available.
6. Marshall Plan makes us remember history and learn from it. The elderly Germans share this experience but many others do not have the privilege. For many Africans, a Plan

to massively promote and engage the continent on development, progress, authenticity, recovery and social-political cohesion would run well on the brand of the name of its recent and greatest son, **NELSON MANDELA**. He led South Africa out of apartheid into freedom by denying himself his own freedom for nearly 30 years in prison. The best way to teach others is to practice, what you teach, by a life of action and integration of thought and deeds, beyond words. Nelson Mandela has this integrity and Africans know him and believe him. But we shall not debate the matter of the name of the agenda anymore. The name Marshall stands in the post Second World War Era as a saving grace of help and human support for the Germans and many other European nations. **But of course, African solutions to problems need African concepts to sell. Otherwise, we shall always repeat the paternalistic presumption of helping people by making them alien to ourselves. The best help is self-help**, as ancient African wisdom teaches us. Enough of this. Let this great programme be a MARSHALL PLAN, but a MARSHALL PLAN with AFRICA and AFRICANS and not a plan for Africa.

7. I would like to share the following reflections welcoming humanity through this project of a Marshall Plan with Africa: There is Hope for Africa. The huge potentials of the peoples, near 2 billion human beings most of whom are youthful. The history with abundant mineral and natural resources, its markets of tomorrow, the fastest growing region in the world if the statistics are correct; The hopes include the massive land area, water resources, geographical and other weather conditions; the cultural heritage, youthfulness and strength. Africa is deep with spirit and spirituality, wisdom and courage and has refused to die or to give up to suicidal tendencies as other parts of the world do at this time, despite all abuse and exploitation over several centuries by the rest of the world. ***“We’re just beginning to glimpse the beginning of a new economic system ... this is the first economic system to emerge since the advent of capitalism and its antagonism socialism since the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ... it has long term effects on our children and grandchildren...”*** Jeremy Rifkin

8. Realising that the richest continent on earth is Africa, the cradle of humanity, it also holds the greatest potential to save our planet from destruction. It is vital, actually crucial that all efforts be made to make Africa a success, otherwise first Europe and then the planet and humanity will fail. We must re-invent our economic system from one based on individual consumerism – as we followed it for the past centuries – to one based on solidarity and collaborative commons. Trickle-up economic economies must be nurtured, trickle-down does not work. We have no choice. Africa is Ali-Baba’s treasure chest that has been taken over by the Great Gatsby bankers of our epoch.
9. **Growing birth rates may spell the doom of the North African and sub-Saharan African nations and create massive problems that no one can easily solve.** Therefore, a clear understanding and concerted action of all stakeholders – civic, social, cultural, religious, economic and political thought leaders - through massive awareness towards responsible parenthood is imperative in these countries. Yet, falling birth-rates may spell the end of the Western European countries. How to find the balance in geo-population political and moral discussions remains a matter for the people, not only the parliaments. Wisdom has its own ways and it teaches the wise, that is those who listen and wish to learn.
10. Bewildered bankers try to uphold the economy with negative interest rates, yet let’s be frank. Europe’s “plundering” of Africa and of other parts made it rich. **Today, it’s Europe’s turn to fund the blooming of Africa, and thereby assure, that its aging population and economy will continue to thrive. Europe will soon see half its jobs lost to robots and technology.** How technology will change the game for Africa is not yet clear. But with Africa’s population on course to triple by the end of the century, it is from this youthful energy that the world may have a chance to survive.
11. We shall have to take on board the truth that **you do not make the poor rich by making the rich richer and hoping that the riches will trickle down, because they do not. Paradoxically it works the other way round. You make the rich richer by making the poor rich because then they have more money to spend.**

To start the cycle, you must first invest in the poor, enlarging their capabilities, enhancing their skills and boosting their initiatives. This is logic which works for the world at large as well as for individual societies and organizations, but it always calls for short term sacrifice by the rich in the beginning. It is now time to stop war, stop slavery and realise the obnoxious footprint the East's and West's lifestyle has on our planet. We have to start to respect our one and only earth. People need energy, food, lights, jobs, employment, innovativeness, creativity, electricity, especially green and clean energy, such as the solar hope, which has in Africa the largest potential as the sunlight is there always shining. Important are as much education and massive primary and secondary health care; skills empowerment and water provision and sustainable livelihoods.

12. The German Marshall Fund of the United States has all the reason to be at the forefront of this initiative for Africa. Very soon, at least one third of the planet will be populated by people of black decent, because they are so resilient. It is time to join the winning side. **Why today, as you read this, are over 20 million people starving to death in Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria, South Sudan and more widely in Africa, the richest continent on earth? And they are the potential migrants of the next decade? Humanity must do something. Yes, humanity can. Germany can lead and it's time also to lead in such a moral and humanistic business plan, as is the "Marshall Plan with Africa and Africans".**

13. Following the money trail brings us back to where? Is this the only way for the West to assure its survival? Let us go back to basics: <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history/videos/marshall-plan-announced>. We must turn today's reality around by aggregating our various complementary capabilities, those of the West and those of Africa, and start by giving these 20 million people a future, as well as the many, many more people, that soon will have no alternative than to land on Europe's beaches, if they not drown in the Mediterranean, or be the target of bombs

made by the Western military-industrial complex that even General Dwight D. Eisenhower warned us against <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y06NSBBRtY>.

14. The irony is not lost, that General George C. Marshall, Jr. Nobel Peace Prize recipient, who did so much to better the lot of Europe, would see his protégé Eisenhower already forewarn us of the military-industrial threat that is now upon us. We must rise to the occasion, and go forward and save our planet from destruction, in a cooperative effort.
15. **Agriculture in this Marshall Plan Agenda is key** – access to financing, seeds and seedlings to farmers; access to international and national markets of farm yields through massive investment in the agricultural fields including technology and modernized farming methods; support to small farm holders; commercial agricultural schemes; mapped soil characteristics across countries and launched irrigation projects. People, who can feed themselves, usually don't do revolutions nor do they migrate. Migrations start when there is no hope for food, or survival, or development. Then, in many cases, people are ready to die in the Mediterranean sea to reach the islands and shores of Europe.
16. **China has emerged on the African scene to compete, create jobs, explore resources, take the place of Europe by daring the current and doing, what Europeans have refused to do, namely the realization of massive infrastructural investment in the continent.** They do this successfully. **And Africans are ready to pay for it and can pay for it with their resources – human and material.** Europeans have experienced Africa over centuries and have an edge on the continent – language, integration, colonial history, religious affiliation as children of Abraham. Europe has quality products, reliability, jobs creating ability, experience with technical schools and the dual system. Also, it has a transparent banking system, democratic principles, governance styles and control mechanisms, which are useful lessons for the African people. Europe can, in a cooperative way, counteract the increasing presence of China and Chinese products in Africa. **It continues to baffle the mind that over ONE BILLION AFRICANS and their MARKET is tending to go EAST while they are on Western European shores. Africa lies**

**just on the other side of Granada in Spain.** The MENA regions can unite the TWO CONTINENTS – Africa and Europe!

17. It is time for Germany and other Western European nations, including the USA, to take another look on Africa. And for this second time, it is **WIN-WIN scenario that is envisaged, founded on principles of mutual respect and equality.**

18. Finally, engaging only the Middle East and North African (MENA) Regions as a strategy to fight migrations from Africa is as selfish and short-sighted as was colonialism during the centuries. It is time to engage the entire continent – and the partnership must be inclusive, also in managing the funds and taking into account the ideas on both sides concerning the Marshall Plan with Africa and Africans. Besides governments, which often portray inefficiency and bureaucratic bottlenecks, the partnership on Religion and Development (PaRD) should be integrated, as should be the civil society, the private sector, eminent elders and their councils and cultural leaders, micro finance banks for rural access, women groups, co-operatives etc. Such groups shall take over co-responsibility in a transparent process in each nation, as the MARSHALL PLAN STAKEHOLDERS-COUNCIL for each nation. The stakeholders-council should help to make for the success in this great endeavour. **The time for Africa is NOW. It is also a time for optimism and renewed HOPE for what humanity can do together.**