

Africa Policy in a World of Turmoil

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Africa is a continent in a state of economic, social and political turmoil. We want to contribute to an equitable process of transformation, while recognizing that the diversity of the continent calls for a differentiated set of political responses. Our efforts in that process must be directed toward fostering fair and democratic societies. Amid a growing youthful population, young people in particular are adding their voices to the political debate. At the same time, the still very high population growth presents huge economic and social challenges. Africa is catching up fast on the digitization front and overtaking us in places. The continent's lower median age gives it an advantage in this regard because of the significantly greater openness toward new technologies. Climate change is already affecting national economies in Africa, thereby driving internal African migration. In a globalized world, all these trends are increasingly affecting world politics. At the same time, the current global situation is driving trends in Africa. Global systemic rivalry is impinging on Africa. African countries will necessarily bear some of the consequences of the crisis of multilateralism, because without concerted action on the part of the global community, realization of the 2030 Agenda looks unrealistic. That would be a huge backward step in the sustainable transformation of Africa. Trends in Europe and Africa are heavily interconnected because of the geographical vicinity, and a new approach to our neighbouring continent is necessary as a result. German and European policy toward Africa needs to address the internal African process of transformation and the continent's increasing geopolitical importance.

The two main international challenges to our social democratic policies are the global systemic rivalry between authoritarian government systems and liberal, open societies, as well as the crisis in which multilateralism now finds itself. Systemic rivalry primarily manifests itself in Africa in the growing number of African countries following the China model of governance and development. Amid such systemic rivalry, it is crucial to show that, and how, democratic governance and open societies provide the best models and means of resolving the big issues facing society in a participatory, equitable and sustainable way. At the same time, democratic societies are the basis for long-term stability because only they provide a framework for a peaceful balancing of interests.

Climate change, terrorism, capital flight and inequitable access to resources are global problems that no country acting on its own can resolve. Despite the current crisis of multilateralism that is seeing countries withdraw from international treaties and flouting internationally recognized standards and regulations, it is imperative to foster international cooperation through political dialogue. That applies more than anything to cooperation with self-confident and democratically legitimized African governments and their supranational alliances. Whether or not global governance goals such as the Paris Agreement on climate change or Agenda 2030 will be achieved will increasingly come to depend on political decision-making in Africa.

The current Africa policy of the German government is fragmented and addresses the above challenges only in part. An array of political initiatives of different government departments see the issues from the perspectives of their ministries, which are largely motivated by the issue of migration. This political "impulse" is right but not sufficient and results in a situation where political initiatives and offerings are contingent on the expectation that they will help to avoid migration. The unfortunate result is that correlations are simplified and confounded, with partners being led into actions that may curb migration in the

short term but fail to bring about structural transformation. Political action based on clear strategic positioning is lacking. This is regrettable because, while a focus on boosting economic growth and employment makes sense, the rationale in terms of migration reduction is difficult to convey to partners in Africa.

Our Africa policy in future must avoid limiting our focus to a single isolated aspect in a bid to achieve quick and direct solutions. Quick answers are not an option given the diversity of socio-political transformation in Africa. Instead, a strategically oriented and adequately differentiated Africa policy must consistently combine a variety of issues underpinned by a clear political objective.

Migration and security are high priority areas if only because of the geographical vicinity of the two continents, as are economic relations. The key political mission from a social democratic point of view, however, is to find equitable responses to local and global political upheaval. That means exploring ways to maintain access to resources in the face of climate change and to achieve growth at levels sufficient to enable inclusive socioeconomic prosperity. Part of that transformation process will be to ensure that basic political freedoms and the rule of law are protected and strengthened.

The coronavirus pandemic will accentuate many of these existing challenges in Africa. Handling the fallout from the crisis will mark German and European Africa policy for years to come. In addition to acute medical and humanitarian aid, the main thrust will be to cope with the economic consequences of the crisis. The EU and its Member States will have a key role to play in these efforts.

Since donor-recipient asymmetry no longer features in development cooperation, the question is how political interaction with our neighbouring continent – in its entirety, with the African Union (AU), with regions, with individual countries – can become more of a relationship between partners. The fact is that, in a globalized world, developments in Europe and Africa will have ever larger and more direct mutual effects.

The priorities thus emerging for our German and European Africa policy are as follows:

Priority 1: An Africa policy with a global context: multilateral and European.

German and European Africa policy must work toward shaping cooperative and rules-based relationships between the two neighbouring continents. Amid global systemic rivalry, it is all the more important for Africa and Europe to advance joint projects that will encourage peace, freedom and prosperity north and south of the Mediterranean.

Therefore, teaming up with Africa to encourage a rules-based international order and strengthen regional and multilateral agreements, forums and institutions such as the African Free Trade Association (AfCFTA) is important. Support and cooperation with African regional and multilateral institutions, in particular the AU and its suborganizations, is imperative. Germany and Europe have been heavily engaged in this area for years.

Although the many German Africa initiatives of recent years underline the growing political role of the African continent in Germany and are evidence of an attempt to place cooperation between the neighbouring continents on a new footing, these efforts relate to individual African countries and constitute a trend toward increasing bilateralization of German cooperation vis-à-vis Africa. The trend in favour of increasingly working together with individual Compact or reform partners merits criticism because the current bilateral cooperations tend to undermine subregional and continental integration aspirations rather than strengthen regional approaches. Bilateral foreign policy and development policy must not be

to the detriment of regional cooperation in Africa, however. Therefore, our bilateral and multilateral approaches need to be even more effectively linked and aligned with each other.

Increased integration and cross-continent cooperation are important both in Europe and in Africa and should be part of our policy on both continents. This includes increasing our engagement as a European stakeholder in Africa policy. European Africa initiatives need support. In the light of the current global systemic rivalry, a European-based Africa policy for Germany is the only option if we want to retain political weight in the competition with other global stakeholders. The goal must therefore be to step up our efforts to develop European offerings for EU policies other than trade policy; this would include a European infrastructure policy, for example.

European policy on Africa absolutely must go beyond migration issues, which have seriously strained relations between the countries of the two continents over the last number of years, in particular since the Valletta migration summit in 2015. The negotiations on a new Post-Cotonou agreement and the coming EU-AU summit in 2020 must therefore be used for constructive building of relationships as partners. Current European initiatives and investment campaigns such as the Juncker Plan (additional investment funding for Africa and a comprehensive intercontinental free trade agreement between the two continents) point in the right direction. In the face of global systemic rivalry, standing up for democracy and the rule of law must continue to be a priority. In addition, we as social democrats should advocate for sustainable economic development, employment that provides a living wage, gender equality, and joint discussion of necessary levelling of the international political and economic playing field.

The current global systemic rivalry means we need to come up with attractive proposals for partners in those areas where Germany and the European Union (EU) have special experience and expertise to offer, for instance in the educational system, civil crisis prevention, regional integration and in establishing a single currency area. We should always combine these proposals for cooperation with promoting and calling for democratic and open societies. Acting as partners must also mean calling for responsible political action on the part of African states both in Africa and in the international arena. Concrete steps:

- Systematic and consistent assistance of African regional integration processes, the African Union and its suborganizations to overcome economic, societal and political challenges.
- UN Security Council: initiate and support joint European-African initiatives on the Security Council.
- The EU Commission's Africa strategy published in March 2020 must be used as a basis for a joint European Africa policy that goes beyond trade policy and migration.
- Use the next EU-AU summit to advance the implementation of joint African-European cooperation.
- Enshrine a commitment to the multilateral system and to further shared cooperation on international basic values in international institutions in the Post-Cotonou Agreement.

Priority 2: Identify interests – think strategically – act credibly

German and European interests vis-à-vis African countries need to be identified for our Africa policy. It is important not to confound short-term objectives with long-term strategic interests. It is a matter of strategic importance to find partners in Africa to strengthen multilateralism and to jointly tackle global challenges such as serious inequality and climate change.

German and European interests must be viewed and prioritized in line with the times. This means it is not enough to address security policy concerns, resource security and the migration issue. Compliance with social standards and labour standards in the individual countries and along global value chains is clearly in the best interest of Germany and Europe. The normative framework for the pursuit of interests and strategic targets is the 2030 Agenda, which contains the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the community of states as a blueprint for global action. This collection of values includes human rights, combating poverty, education, decent work, and equality.

In order to avoid accusations of double standards, fostering democracy, human rights, employment sufficient to provide a living wage, and rule of law can only be achieved by consistent political action. Some countries are admonished for failure to uphold principles such as free and fair elections or labour standards while other countries' transgressions are ignored. This undermines the standards per se and harms the credibility of Germany and Europe as value-led global stakeholders.

A policy based on partnership, which is invariably demanded and proclaimed particularly vis-à-vis Africa, primarily requires an attitude of appreciation on the part of representatives of other states shown in the form of respect, appropriate ceremony, travel diplomacy and, finally, the development of shared political initiatives. Cooperation as partners also means addressing the partner's self-imposed goals and asking how we can support those aims. There are a number of approaches for doing so on the African continent. The most prominent examples are Agenda 2063 of the AU, and regional and continental free trade arrangements such as AfCFTA which seek to advance the integration of the continent. As an EU member, we have valuable experience in overcoming challenges and finding workable approaches to regional integration and free trade areas which we can share with our African partner. However, acting as partners also means measuring African states by the standards, they set themselves, and expecting autonomous action and initiatives – that is, policies that are inclusive, democratically legitimized and for the common good.

Concrete steps:

- Do not take up causes “proactively”; rather enter into dialogue with the appropriate African stakeholders to identify and explore strategic options for action. Examples would be:
 - Dialogue on establishing and maintaining collective security in Africa and Europe (“Peace Project Europe”). This should tie in with suitable offers of support for further reinforcement of the African Peace and Security Architecture. Initiatives for stabilizing the Sahel must be a priority.
 - Dialogue with African states and in particular with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AU on regional economic and currency areas. This should tie in with suitable offers of support for establishment of the AfCFTA.
 - Develop concrete offers of dialogue on strengthening multilateral cooperation in the face of global challenges (global security issues, climate action, Agenda 2030). This should tie in with concrete offers to strengthen the role of African states in global governance institutions.

Priority 3: Strategically deploy resources appropriate to Africa's role

The world order is currently undergoing a paradigm shift, with Africa playing a major role in that process. If Germany and Europe want to be active participants rather than mere onlookers, we and the EU need to pivot in the right direction. The new EU Commission has sent out a signal to that effect in its first hundred days by drafting a new Africa strategy.

Africa is an important target of the global geostrategic positioning efforts of nations such as China, Russia, the United States and others. Global competition for dominance of the international order is once again impacting on power relations in Africa; meanwhile the race is on for access to African markets and resources. Germany and the EU must define their interests in this geostrategic shuffling for position, but must meet African states and the African Union as fair partners. For us, it is also about maintaining and strengthening the multilateral world order.

On the trade and investment front, but also in the battle for hearts and minds in civil society, in the arts and in science, we urgently need to improve our offers not just qualitatively, but quantitatively and visibly. A primary aim is to develop new steps in cooperation **together** and work **together** to solve the pressing challenges on the African continent.

If we are to interact with African nations as important and equal partners, we need consistent and strategic deployment of resources – in Europe and in Germany.

Germany is perceived as a trustworthy and responsible partner in Africa. The Foreign Office has built up a wide-ranging and long-standing presence with effective and reliable networks. However, its current resources and structures are not sufficient to meet the new challenges in areas such as security and conflict resolution, economy, development cooperation, migration and humanitarian aid, and it is losing ground in the increasing competition for hearts and minds in African society. The region's positioning in ministries and German embassies on the ground in the form of suitable staffing structures is an important indicator of the importance we attach to the continent. Only with appropriate investment in resources and equipment will it be possible to convey with any credibility that we are keen to deepen our commitment in response to developments in Africa.

Implementation of the numerous German Africa initiatives of the last number of years without additional investment is therefore difficult to imagine. Launching a diplomatic mission to the AU in Addis Ababa would be a sign of appreciation of Africa's role.

Increased deployment of existing resources is not enough for an intelligible and effective Africa policy; *strategic* deployment of these resources is what matters. The numerous Africa initiatives of the federal government have shown that consistency in political action on the part of the federal government continues to present a major challenge. To develop effective and long-term approaches, we need a coherent set of priorities that form the basis for coordinated action on the part of the ministries. Successful establishment of an interministerial steering committee at state secretary level is an essential step in the right direction. Now it must prove its worth by the actual coordination of priority-setting between individual ministries. On a European level, too, reinforcement of consistency in policy is possible and should be demanded by the federal government. Coordination with our European neighbours and institutions must be at the heart of these efforts.

Concrete steps:

- Appointment of a minister of state specifically for Africa in the Foreign Office.

- Allocation of additional funds in the 2021 national budget to the Foreign Office for financial back-up of our Africa policy
- Increased staffing for regional units in ministries and German embassies.
- Establishment of a German diplomatic mission to the AU.
- Establishment of an Africa policy task force at EU commissioner level (and expansion of the EU delegation to the AU)
- Mandatory coordination of Africa policy initiatives and verification of their consistency by the interministerial steering committee.
- Measures to strength applied regional science through government and private funding.

Priority 4: Innovative areas of action

Our Africa policy needs clear priorities, innovative areas of action and multifaceted networking. It makes sense to set priorities in urban areas because cities are centres of socioeconomic innovation and political change. Many of the fundamental issues around coexistence will play out in cities. An estimated 1.4 billion people on the African continent will be living in cities in the year 2050. Shaping urbanization and the provision of public goods in cities will be instrumental in determining whether young people in Africa will have the means to engage in social and democratic participation in their societies. Whether African nations find equitable answers to the challenges of climate change will be determined in urban spaces.

The future of urban areas is not the only determining factor. Another is the – primarily infrastructural – connection of rural and urban spaces to mitigate the pressure to urbanize, and to counteract new inequities between city and countryside. Urban and regional planning are becoming increasingly important.

Our approach should be to contribute actively to shaping urban development and innovation. As a European stakeholder, we are keen to offer our expertise in urban development. Encouraging town twinning also has the potential to reinforce exchange and partnership between the continents.

Climate change and climate justice is at the centre of public interest in Europe and Africa and offers opportunities for cooperation between Africa and Europe. Socioecological transformation calls for massive expansion of smart, carbon-neutral infrastructure especially in cities. Given the long life cycle of most physical infrastructural investments, the international community faces a crucially important choice: whether to invest in old, carbon-intensive infrastructure or in new structures that are resource- and energy-efficient.

Initiatives to foster vocational education are another necessary priority. To strengthen local value addition in African nations and thus achieve positive employment effects, needs-based vocational training is key, as is laying the necessary foundations in primary and secondary schools. Close coordination between governments, businesses and educational institutions is a prerequisite for this. Germany has recourse to immense experience in this area and can develop suitable proposals, based for instance on the university of applied sciences model, selected practice-oriented university courses, and the dual education and job training system. Another objective is to go further in funding young entrepreneurs and start-ups, which often form the backbone of the informal economy and are set to play a significant role in the context of digitization and the fourth industrial revolution.

While government relations between the two continents are now institutionalized, non-government organizations both inside Africa and in the European-African dialogue have not been adequately included in many cases. To normalize relations with our neighbouring continent at all the various levels and in every

area, inclusion of additional stakeholders such as civil society organizations, political foundations, trade unions and the arts on both continents must be stepped up in the framework of the Foreign Arts and Education Policy (AKBP). Easing of visa requirements is a prerequisite for more intense collaboration. As the European integration process shows, youth exchanges and university exchange programs are key to fostering closer cooperation at the political level.

Concrete steps:

- Adapt existing German and European offers to accommodate urban and regional planning on the African continent.
- Improve on existing German and European offerings in support of vocational education. Tie in economic and investment funding initiatives with educational policy.
- In bilateral agreements, develop new exchange programs between conventional German and African universities and universities of applied sciences.
- Develop a framework on a multilateral level to facilitate investment decisions in favour of a “green” infrastructure.
- In terms of the development of urban infrastructure (energy, mobility, housing, digitization) and connectivity infrastructure (railways, waterways, etc.) the EU could develop attractive offers with European infrastructure consortiums and provide extensive administration know-how as well.
- Experience-sharing between local municipal officials (e.g. mayors) and civil society initiatives for sustainable urban development in construction, transport and citizen participation should be strengthened and expanded.