



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

The world is complicated and full of contradictions, which occasionally forces people to relinquish supposed certainties and revise old prejudices. There are also prejudices circulating about Africa. Former German President Horst Köhler once referred to this succinctly when he said: "Where Africa is concerned, many people think mainly of words beginning with a 'c': crises, conflicts, catastrophes, corruption...." Of course, these associations have some basis in truth. The millions of people who are currently fleeing from countries such as Syria, Somalia and Sudan are illustrating this yet again right now. That said, one should not make the mistake of simply lumping over 50, in some ways very different countries together. South Africa is not Eritrea, and besides having the poorest countries in the world the "Black Continent" is also home to some of the fastest growing economies. The fact that Africa has more to offer than poverty, hunger and war is also illustrated by changes in the media landscape, which Christian Echle investigates in his article in this issue.

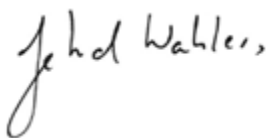
Another scenario full of contradictions involves the plans of the Nicaraguan government to push through an infrastructure project competing with the Panama Canal with the aid of a Chinese investor. Where some stress the hoped-for economic benefits of the planned "Nicaragua Canal", the topic of the article by David Gregosz and Mareike Boll, others see potentially dramatic consequences for the region's fragile ecosystem – quite apart from the questionable feasibility of the gigantic project.

Karsten Dümmel's assessment of the situation 20 years on from the Dayton Peace Agreement and of developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina is also anything but clear-cut. While there have been indisputable benefits, such as the immediate ceasefire on all fronts and an end to the war, there have also been problematic developments such as the creation of highly ineffective state structures and discrimination against ethnic minorities. Whether the country, which many already consider a failed state, will eventually find

its way into the European Community depends on whether it will succeed in initiating and implementing a reform process that is long overdue.

“Rich in Resources – Yet Still Poor”, that is the contradiction at the center of the article by Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé on the so-called Major Mining Projects in Senegal. Although the country is rich in natural resources such as gold, iron ore, phosphates, heavy minerals and oil, the Senegalese government has so far not succeeded in translating these riches into socially just, sustainable and environmentally compatible development. Should this development fail to materialise in the future, the country may drift into political and social instability, or even into chaos, as has happened in many other countries rich in resources.

The article by Hans-Hartwig Blomeier, in which he looks back on the general election in the UK, finally shows that one has to exercise caution even where apparent certainties in the EU are concerned. Despite London bookmakers offering odds of 10/1, David Cameron and his Conservatives succeeded in achieving an election result that now allows them to govern on their merits. The fact that Cameron invited some self-declared Eurosceptics to the cabinet table on the one hand while making efforts to keep the UK in the EU on the other is yet another of the multitude of contradictions that pervade this sphere, not just the articles in this issue of the *International Reports*.



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