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Greater Commitment to Africa – The Case for Enhancing the German-African Dialogue

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Introduction

In Germany, the general public will interest itself in Africa¹ to any extent worth mentioning only in conjunction with spectacular events like the recent disastrous flooding in the south of Africa or the conflicts in Zimbabwe or Sierra Leone. In all other respects, the continent is firmly established at the very bottom of the foreign-policy agenda, and opinions about the political and societal *status quo* as well as about the future outlook range from sceptical detachment to total resignation, even among those who have been committed to working for Africa for years.

As the interest shown in Africa not only by Germany but by the entire western world keeps dwindling, there is a very real danger of the continent being marginalised politically, or even drifting into full-blown isolation. The long-term consequences of politically neglecting and/or ignoring the continent may endanger Africa's future and may even prove harmful to the western world as well.

In Germany, the following three reasons are most frequently quoted for the low opinion held of most Black African countries in the field of foreign policy. These are:

- First, it is said that from the point of view of practical politics, interest in Black Africa is nil or, at best, no more than marginal.
- Second, it is maintained that Germany is prevented from any sustained political or economic commitment by the conditions that prevail in Africa: Economic decline, pervasive corruption, political instability, and ethnically-motivated civil wars combined to render the risk of investing in Africa prohibitive in comparison with other regions. This being so, it is understandable that Africa's share in the foreign trade of Germany should be no greater than a minimal 2% or so.
- Thirdly, it is argued that it is difficult to find sound partners for co-operation that are politically credible as well as efficient.

Upon closer inspection, however, these arguments, which are frequently given in one breath, cannot convince. Therefore, the central proposition of this paper will be that there are numerous

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the term 'Africa' designates the 48 states of sub-Saharan Africa.

- political,
- economic,
- value-related, and
- ecological

reasons why Germany should commit itself in Africa.

To be sure, new framework conditions and challenges call for changes in Germany's African policy. It would be inappropriate merely to 'carry on as before', and in the long run, it would even counteract our own interests. Our conclusion – which we anticipate here – will be that it is both necessary and feasible for Germany to enhance its general political as well as its development-policy commitment so as to avoid missing future opportunities or detracting from the value of past efforts. Given the fact that past experience in development-policy cooperation as well as in foreign policy has not been entirely negative by any means, current challenges demand new sustainable concepts.

Africa, a 'Continent of Crisis'

Africa's image in Germany is based on the exotic appeal of safaris and the – politically more important – general perception of the continent as either a region of wars and disasters or as a 'continent of losers'. There are even some who contemptuously refer to Africa as a 'continent on the dole'.

Unfortunately, these *recurrent stereotypes* are based on hard facts. Even after four decades of independence, the majority of the 48 states of sub-Saharan Africa belong to the world's poorest countries. Statistics published by the World Bank as well as by a number of UN agencies, while differing in certain details, agree without exception that compared to other continents, Africa is lagging behind in almost all fields indicating social and economic development. Thus, provisions for healthcare and fresh-water supplies are wholly inadequate; average life expectancy, low to begin with, is declining further because of the AIDS epidemic; and undernourishment or malnutrition are widespread, particularly among children. These pitiful conditions under which the majority of Africans live result from a great many factors which influence each country in a variety of combinations.

The theory of dependence, with its idea of neo-colonial exploitation mainly by western states and corporations, as well as similar glib theories to *explain the continent's under-development* will not stand up to an empirical test. Besides structural causes like the burdens inherited from colonial times (unbalanced production structures), natural disasters, and others, the decline of the continent was due just as much to misdirected economic policies, political instability, and corruption – or 'bad governance', as it is called in the terminology of the '90s.

That the continent's public image is dominated by crises and disasters is due to economic problems on the one hand and the frequency of wars on the other. Here are a few figures to show what we mean: For years, the average growth rate of the population, estimated at 2.8%, was higher than the average rate of growth of Africa's national economies, which amounted to about 2.4% per annum from 1990 to 1995. In many states, per-capita incomes shrank in the period from 1965 to 1990. Of the worldwide total of foreign direct investment, only 2.4% found its way to sub-Saharan Africa in 1996, with the lion's share going to commodity-exporting countries like Nigeria and South Africa.

At the moment, Africa's share in global trade is down to a mere estimated 1.5% or so. Intra-African commerce accounts for no more than about 10%. The multitude of wars and violent conflicts that are happening on the continent often exacerbate economic crises, rendering any successes that may have been achieved in development null and void. For this reason, most observers fear that the continent may be increasingly marginalised economically as globalisation progresses, the only countries exempt from this process being a few that are rich in natural resources, like Nigeria, South Africa, and the two Congolese states.

Similarly, the *image of a continent of crises and wars* similarly reflects African reality to some extent. Depending on the method of reckoning, as many as 19 violent conflicts may be identified. Whereas in some instances only part of a state was involved, such as the Casamance region in the Senegal, there were other states where civil wars completely disrupted the entire structure of government (Liberia, Somalia). At the moment, the danger is most acute in Central Africa, where the conflict in the Congo, in which a number of other states within the region are massively involved, might throw the entire region into chaos. There are even some observers who fear that what is happening now is merely the beginning of another 'Thirty Years' War' such as the one that devastated Europe in the 17th century. Similarly, the military border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia is far from a permanent peaceful solution.

Withdrawal from Africa

In the '90s, the pace at which the international community of states was withdrawing from Africa was accelerated by the deep economic and social crises of various African states, as well as by the increasing number of armed conflicts. The growing understanding between the two superpowers after the late '80s and the dissolution of the Soviet Union late in 1991 marked the beginning not only of the withdrawal of the Eastern European states from Africa, but also of a marked decline in the western world's geo-strategic interest in the continent. Step by step, the western states, headed by the U.S., reduced their level of commitment. Only France clung for a time to its traditionally close relations with the Francophone states on the continent. It was the re-organisation of the country's African policy after the mid-Nineties, the increasingly critical attitude of the general public, and the failure of the economic resources that had hitherto underpinned its expensive African policy that finally induced France to join the general withdrawal movement.

At the same time, the decline or – at best – stagnation of development co-operation in Africa was a manifestation of the fact that donor countries were growing increasingly jaded at the continuing decline of the continent despite 40 years of development aid. In contrast, the industrialised countries were focussing their attention increasingly on the economically successful states of Asia and, albeit to a lesser extent, Latin America, which were perceived as more interesting partners in trade and investment. When the Asian crisis of 1997 arrived, this optimism was dampened somewhat, but the general trend remained almost unchanged.

The withdrawal of the western states from Africa was marked by the closure of embassies and the slashing of development co-operation funds as well as much more gravely by the fact that crises were ignored, a particularly tragic case in point being the genocide in Rwanda. Still reeling from the shock of the failed intervention in Somalia, the western states – again headed by the U.S. – held back from purposeful military intervention to prevent this genocide, although experts were aware that it had been planned beforehand. That this constitutes a political and moral failure of the West has meanwhile been admitted by the American president, Mr. Clinton.

The lack of interest in current developments in Africa increasingly displayed by western states, the media, and large parts of the general public lends a growing appearance of realism to the vision of 'impending anarchy' described in 1994 by

Robert Kaplan in a phrase equally impressive and biased. Quoting examples from West Africa, Kaplan conjured up an apocalyptic image of the continent's future that was composed of ethnic civil wars, high crime rates, a total lack of values, and social deprivation.

It is almost ironic that this withdrawal from Africa with all its potential consequences should take place at a time when encouraging developments are beginning to happen on the continent.

Prospects of Sustainable Development in Africa

While all the negative developments that have been roughly sketched out above are certainly correct in fact, they do not reflect African reality entirely; rather, they tempt to obscure our view of the positive developments of the last decade, of which there are no less than four that deserve mention. These are:

- 1. Economic growth and increasing regional integration;
- 2. The spread of democratic principles and the growing strength of civil societies;
- 3. The emergence of African conflict-handling initiatives; and
- 4. The rise of groups of young leaders who are willing to undertake reforms.

1. Economic Growth and Increasing Regional Integration

Despite numerous civil wars, economies on the continent have been expanding for four years at an average rate which in many countries markedly exceeded that of population growth. According to the World Bank's most recent report, which covers the period of 1997/98, the gross national products of almost all African states, those involved in civil or other wars alone excluded, have been growing markedly in general terms as well as per capita, such as, for instance, in Uganda (5.8%), Ghana (4.6%), Mozambique (11.3% before the inundation), the Ivory Coast (5.7%), and Botswana, where growth rates have been consistently high for decades and still amount to 5.5% today.

Looking further ahead, growth rates in southern and western Africa may be expected to receive a further boost if the processes of democratic consolidation and economic reform now going on in South Africa as well as in some countries of West Africa continue to prosper. Although the starting level of which economic growth was extremely low in some instances, there is no denying that economic success has indeed been achieved. This success is one of the fruits of market deregulation in most of these countries, where private initiative was legalised, exports were boosted, and more pragmatic economic policies introduced in the '80s. Success was further enhanced by relatively good harvests and the high prices obtainable for oil and agricultural commodities.

While scientists still dispute about the causes of this success and particularly about its sustainability, businessmen and politicians in the U.S. as well as elsewhere have long since formed their own conclusions: In the United States, where Congress has recently passed a foreign-trade act specifically designed to promote trade with Africa, the continent is once again regarded as an interesting business partner.

In the German economy, similar efforts are made to revive interest in Africa through an initiative called SAFRI. While investment in Africa is regarded as difficult, profit prospects are good as a rule. At about 25%, return on investment ranges well above the average. One of the factors indicating renewed faith in the economic strength of the African countries is the fact that the German Investment and Development Society (DEG), whose operations are based on business criteria, is planning to expand its African activities.

Furthermore, there are some efforts of regional economic co-operation and integration that have developed positively since the early '90s. As the majority of African states are limited in their development capability and their potential attractiveness to foreign investors by the smallness of their populations and market capacities as well as by the inadequate development of their production factors, co-operation and integration efforts have been overdue for a long time.

But it was only the threat of Africa being marginalised by the formation of regional blocks within the triad of economic centres of gravity formed by Europe, Japan/East Asia, and the U.S. in conjunction with the new consensus about market economy in Africa and the political transformation in South Africa that provided the impetus for more integration. Noticeable progress was achieved by the South African Development Community (SADC), the East African Co-operation (EAC), revived in 1999, and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). In the case of the SADC, co-operation is even slowly merging with integration because of a variety of sectoral programmes mainly relating to transport. While in some African regions positive results have been achieved on balance in economic integration, there are still obvious deficits, above all in political co-operation.

2. The Spread of Democratic Principles and the Growing Strength of Civil Societies

To the surprise of politicians and African researchers alike, a wave of democratisation swept almost all African states in the early '90s. In Benin, Zambia, Mali, Malawi, and elsewhere, civil-society organisations supported by a population frustrated by dictatorship and mismanagement succeeded in overthrowing autocrats and self-appointed 'life-time presidents'. The most spectacular event, however, was the transformation of the Republic of South Africa. After the system of Apartheid had been relaxed by Frederic de Klerk in February 1990, the conflicting parties in laborious negotiations hammered out a political compromise which resulted in the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1994.

Since then, democratic consolidation in the Cape Republic has been progressing in great strides despite momentous economic and social problems. Further cases in point include Benin and Mali, examples that are hardly known to the general public. Moreover, the leader of the Senegalese opposition, Mr Abdoulaye Wade, succeeded a few weeks ago in replacing in a democratic election President Abdou Diouf, who had been in office for decades but accepted his defeat. Ten years ago it would have been almost unthinkable that an election in Africa should be largely fair, and even more unthinkable that a president in office should accept defeat. This clearly demonstrates that the political culture of many African states has grown more democratic.

All in all, the evidence shows that marked progress towards greater democracy is being made. By 1999, elections that were more or less free had been held in more than 40 states of Black Africa. The media were given some leeway, a civil society that was independent of the state was forming, and the human-rights situation was improving. Civil-society organisations are of particular importance with regard to the renewal of our dialogue with Africa. By this, we mean the totality of all groups that are independent of the state, show interest in political participation, and support political tolerance and personal liberty.

Although each individual group must be scrutinised to establish whether it really is part of 'civil' society, most groups authentically represent segments of the African population. This makes them important partners in traditional technical development co-operation, and even more so for western donors endeavouring to promote democracy and human rights. At the same time,

they help create the societal pressure that is necessary to strengthen women's rights. Strengthening these rights, in turn, is an important prerequisite for overcoming the AIDS problem, which in some countries is threatening the very fabric of society. Moreover, functioning civil societies are indispensable in fighting corruption effectively.

To be sure, democratic developments on the continent have suffered some setbacks, occasioned, for instance, by the resolute resistance of autocrats, as in Zaire; a military putsch, as in Niger; a weak and disputatious opposition, as in Kenya; the outbreak of civil war, as in Congo-Brazzaville; or an upsurge of Islamic fundamentalist movements, as in the Sudan, Nigeria, and elsewhere. Even so, indisputable progress has been achieved even in countries that were unable to complete the transition to democracy or fluctuate between democracy and dictatorship, such as Cameroon.

In almost all cases, *political liberalisation* as well *societal pluralisation* have taken place. All in all, processes of democratisation everywhere are labouring under difficult conditions and are far from over. In many states, lively debates about what institutional form of democracy might reflect local conditions most closely are still going on. In Africa, democratisation 'blueprints' make little sense; the truly crucial element is the implementation of democratic principles, such as the separation of powers and a system of checks and balances. Similarly important parts are being played by *decentralisation* and *federalism* as *structural principles of new constitutions* in societies that are highly heterogeneous both ethnically and regionally. Moreover, the renewal of the constitutional debate shows that the continent is turning its back on colonial models, which were often very badly adapted to local conditions.

3. African Conflict-handling Initiatives

The creation of a *conflict-solving mechanism* by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) indicates that African states are now seriously prepared to deal with the large volume of manifest or latent conflicts. In 1993, following an initiative by its then Secretary General Salim A. Salim, who hailed from Tanzania, the OAU resolved to establish a conflict-solving mechanism focussing on diplomatic mediation and the dispatch of observer missions.

As the OAU has expressly stated that it is willing to co-operate with the UN and the Community of West African States (ECOWACS), it is even conceivable that any military intervention by these organisations to resolve local conflicts might receive the support of the OAU. It is nothing less than revolutionary that the OAU mechanism is designed to cover domestic conflicts as well, for it implies that the OAU is modifying its views on national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic conflicts, two principles which it has rigidly supported so far.

Next to a dearth of financial and logistic resources, one of the weak points of the OAU mechanism is the decision to dispense with military capabilities. Following this, both the Americans and the French ventured to lend financial and personal support in training Africa's Blue Helmets. Mainly with the support of the United States, about 4,000 soldiers from a variety of African states were specifically trained for peace-keeping missions under the *African Crisis Response Initiative*. However, the track record so far shows that neither the numerical strength nor the equipment nor the motivation of this United Nations peace-keeping force are sufficient to achieve success in a military conflict in a highly-armed region like Central Africa.

4. The Rise of Groups of Young Leaders who are Willing to Undertake Reforms

In many states of Africa, you feel that the country is on the move. Although the phenomenon is difficult to quantify, it is a fact that a new self-assured stratum consisting of dynamic entrepreneurs, executives from a variety of non-governmental organisations, and well-trained journalists who may have gathered experience abroad is increasingly gaining influence in the economy and in public life, particularly in urban centres. Most of these people are genuinely interested in the welfare of their respective countries, and they are equally genuinely committed to democratic values and market-economy principles, in sharp contrast to the sympathy felt by earlier generations towards socialist ideas.

One aspect of the pioneering mood prevailing on the continent is the idea of an '*African renaissance*' propagated by South Africa's president, Mr. Thabo Mbeki. In his thinking, the *foundations* of such an African renaissance would include *democracy, respect for human rights, market economy, regional integration, active efforts to settle conflicts, and the amalgamation of*

traditional African values with modern democratic principles. Although no clear concept of African renaissance has emerged so far, and Mbeki certainly uses it to pursue domestic-policy goals, agreement on fundamental values and goals between the western states and international organisations such as the UN on the one hand and African leadership elites on the other has reached unprecedented proportions.

Risks that Threaten Africa's Development: The Starting Point for Enhancing Outside Support

All in all, these four tendencies represent a historic opportunity of positive development on the continent, despite the highly different levels to which they have progressed in each country. This opportunity, however, is all there is so far; there is no secure trend of development. In the main, this opportunity is confronted by bad governance and a political culture that obstructs development. While modern institutions do exist, they have often remained alien to the nation. Traditional loyalties are stronger than loyalty towards the state and the common weal. Not least among the factors that contributed towards this development are national frontiers drawn without regard to the historical evolution of ethnic communities. In Africa, the process of state formation is not over yet, forcing the continent to cope simultaneously with the problems associated with that process as well as with the problems of adapting to globalisation.

While it is true that the fate of Africa rests mainly in the hands of the Africans themselves, it is equally true that in view of the wealth of problems awaiting solution, support by Germany and by the community of states in general is of outstanding importance.

This being so, support efforts should universally aim at improving local framework conditions as well as political culture in general. This implies:

1. Enforcing the governmental monopoly on force to stabilise domestic affairs;
2. Establishing and guaranteeing legal certainty and the rule of law;
3. Introducing federalism and decentralisation to facilitate domestic conflict settlement and participation (e.g. through local self-government);
4. Establishing the State as the guarantor of economic freedom and social justice (social market economy) and
5. Promoting global competitiveness.

Germany's Goals and Interests in Africa

In the *perception of the general public*, the *humanitarian motive* forms the mainspring of German policy towards the African states, supplemented here and there by specific economic interests. However, a closer look reveals numerous other points of interest relating to Africa:

Economic Interests

African countries are interesting not only because they are suppliers of raw materials but also because they offer potentially lucrative markets. Provided that the upswing presently prevailing in some countries proves durable, that other states at least succeed in stabilising their affairs, and regional co-operation produces larger markets, export opportunities in Africa will proliferate. However, any increase in foreign investment will be predicated on improved conditions for market access.

Security-related Interests

Now that the East-West conflict is over and globalisation is gathering speed, the times when security policy was confined exclusively to military aspects are long past. Threats have become more diffuse and indirect, and the meaning of security has expanded in consequence. Germany's security interests in Africa are mostly of a medium and long-term nature. Criminals and international drug and arms traffickers all thrive on civil wars, unscrupulous military governments, and the decay of governmental authority, and the sufferings of refugees from wars and poverty are compounded by them.

The spreading process of governmental decay, which may range in scale from regionally limited erosion of governmental authority to the complete disruption of the governmental monopoly on the use of force, enables trans-national criminal networks to establish themselves securely. Once a state has become incapable of enforcing its monopoly on force, the resultant power vacuum is frequently occupied by so-called warlords who set up economies based on robbery for their personal profit, confounding all development efforts and even threatening the stability of neighbouring states. It was by warlords of this kind that the Liberian civil war was carried into Sierra Leone.

Given the improved conditions of transport and communication prevailing today, Europe and – consequently – Germany are bound to be confronted by the consequences of these developments in the long run. This being so, it is of crucial importance to counteract these developments right now by enhancing our commitment in Africa.

Ecological Interests

Africa's immense natural wealth becomes manifest in its unique flora and fauna. Compared to other continents, reserves of fertile land (in some regions of Central Africa, for instance) and hydroelectric power are utilised only to a relatively small extent. Similarly, in spite of widespread deforestation in some regions, there are still large areas of unbroken tropical rain forest. It is in the interest of Germany to conserve Africa's biosphere, protect its tropical rain forests, and ensure that its resources of land and hydroelectric power are exploited only as far as sustainability permits. To serve the interests of future generations, therefore, the African policy of Germany should aim at supporting measures to control population growth, contain wars and conflicts that destroy natural resources, and ensure the ecological use of land and water, together with many other concerns (Agenda 21).

Political Interests

After the end of the East-West conflict and the achievement of re-unification, the importance of Germany on the international plane increased in a process that should not be confused with an increase in power. Because of this, the re-formulation of the country's own political interests has not yet been concluded.

Both the former and the present federal government have indicated their willingness to assume more international responsibility. At the same time, the expectations of Germany's partner countries in this regard have grown as well. One of the reasons why Africa is of interest to Germany within the international sphere is that powerful diplomatic support might be derived from the large number of African states represented in international organisations. The debate currently going on within the framework of the WTO about the shape of the future global economic order is yet another context within which the support of African states, particularly influential

regional powers like South Africa, Nigeria, etc., might be important in implementing German or European ideas.

Value-related Interests

Value-related interests are yet another item of considerable weight in the African policy of Germany.

These include:

- Human rights,
- Democracy and the rule of law,
- Peace,
- Overcoming underdevelopment, and
- Social justice.

These values relate to practical politics as well as to the world of ideas and the identity of a country, which they help to establish. Their idealistic dimension feeds on general solidarity with the victims of poverty and underdevelopment, which is ultimately founded in Christian beliefs. Besides, it forms the main reason why the volume of donations has remained so consistently high in Germany. The connection between values and practical politics is formed by the assumption that democratic states which enjoy a minimum of economic prosperity and social welfare do not represent an immediate threat to security (e.g. in the context of foreign aggression, international crime, or ecological over-exploitation). In this regard, the promotion of values in general and of democracy and human rights in particular belongs in the realm of preventive security policy.

In Germany more than anywhere else, the implementation of democratic values in foreign policy plays an important part as it reflects the country's own identity as a democratic nation. More than a mere postulate laid down in the constitution, the maxim that foreign policy should be value-based is an essential element of the rationale of the German State, to use an old term coined by Friedrich Meinecke. If elementary values were to be entirely disregarded or violated by Germany's foreign policies, the relevance and credibility of our own code of values and, by the same token, our self-interpretation as a democracy ruled by the law would be undermined in the long run.

Recommendations for Developing Germany's African Policy

Next to Germany's and Europe's long-term interests and their historically-founded responsibility towards the African continent, the hopeful developments that have recently emerged in Black Africa argue for not only maintaining but intensifying Germany's commitment there.

To this end, Germany's African policy must be modified to accommodate new framework conditions. The recommendations that follow should serve to initiate a debate about the goals and concepts of our future African policy:

1. *New Challenges Call for New Answers in Germany's African Policy*

Both the process of democratisation and the decay of governmental order are essentially political challenges with which technical and financial development co-operation in its traditional form cannot cope. The current emphasis on the goals of democracy promotion, good governance, and civil conflict resolution demonstrates that the two most important government agencies in this field, the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development and the Foreign Office, are fully aware of the importance of political framework conditions for development and democratic stability. While conflict handling, which includes conflict prevention and the follow-up measures that must be taken after the end of violent disputes, are still rather poorly developed even on the international plane, the promotion of democracy suffers from inconsistencies in implementation as well as in relations with international partner organisations.

Despite the frequently-emphasised heterogeneity of the African countries, it is possible to identify a number of overarching goals for a forward-looking African concept.

These include, among others,

- Political stability and security,
- Regional co-operation,
- Sustainable growth and environmental protection, and
- The development of innovative capabilities in the context of globalisation (science, education, the media, the Internet) which would at the same

time strengthen Africa's international importance as well as its dialogue capability.

However, we should not underrate the chance that such a concept might acquire symbolic value and some dynamism of its own in German and possibly even European politics.

2. The Debate about African Policy Must Be Renewed

The conceptual deficiencies of our African policy that were uncovered by the new challenges and the dynamism inherent in political developments in Africa call for intensifying the dialogue among political operatives, research scientists, and non-governmental organisations like churches and political foundations by which relations are maintained about the goals, options, and limitations of the future African policies of Germany and Europe. At the very start of this dialogue,

- Positive trends and obstacles to development should be analysed;
- Current policies should be critically reviewed; and
- New development approaches (best practices) as well as issues to be debated in the political dialogue should be identified.

One element in the dialogue among the groups that are concerned with Africa should be a debate about the motivations, the selection criteria, and the consequences of the plan to focus development co-operation on a few key nations in Africa where satisfactory progress has been made in both politics and the economy. Yet another indispensable debate should concern itself with the instruments and transactors of a new African policy.

3. *Germany's African Policy Should Reach Beyond the Limits of Development Co-operation*

Recent cutbacks in the commitment of many countries with traditional ties to Africa have opened up new fields of activity for Germany's African policy, which we should use in agreement with our EU partners to reflect our greater international responsibility.

Although five criteria were introduced in 1991 to regulate the award of development co-operation services, Germany's African policy has remained

essentially development-policy based so far. Its backbone is formed by funds awarded either bilaterally or multi-laterally (particularly in co-operation with the World Bank and the European Development Fund) in the form of loans and other assistance commitments.

As the historical burden on Germany's African policy is comparatively slight, and as both our country and its development co-operation activities are held in high esteem overall, there is a satisfactory basis for conducting a political dialogue and co-operating with the reform-oriented countries of Africa. Issues that might be debated within this dialogue include

- The support of African initiatives to enhance stability and security (OAU) as well as similar initiatives undertaken by the EU and/or the UN;
- The options of Germany and/or Europe co-operating with Africa within the framework of environmental initiatives undertaken, for instance, by UNEP;
- Exchanges of opinion and experience regarding concepts of regional co-operation and integration as well as their potential implementation;
- Bilateral interests in a globalising economy; and
- Possible ways of improving Africa's political culture (acceptance of political pluralism and tolerance, common-weal thinking, mitigation of ethnic and religious fragmentation, improvements in the legal standing and the promotion of women).

With regard to all these issues, Africa needs more advocates to speak for it on the international plane (within the G7, for instance). One of these advocates must be Germany. This means that Germany will have to increase its commitment not only in financial terms but also in terms of the human resources deployed, and we should not grudge Africa this service.

4. *Enhancing Development-policy Commitment in Africa to Set a Political Signal*

Against the backdrop of the need to consolidate the budget, the Federal Republic of Germany has been reducing its development-policy commitment.

There is talk about identifying key and partner countries, implying that Germany will be withdrawing from any country that does not belong to the key group, and will reduce its activities in the so-called partner countries. All in all, there will probably be one or two dozen countries with which bilateral governmental development co-operation will cease, and about one third of these will be located in Africa.

In view of current developments in Africa, this concentration of limited resources is a move that is basically reasonable and understandable but comes at the wrong time. Complete withdrawal would be a signal of discouragement to those states and societies of Africa where numerous promising developments are going on, as well as to non-governmental organisations and political foundations.

Agricultural assistance especially must not be abandoned but expanded. The urgency of land and agricultural reforms everywhere imbues it with an additional development-policy dimension.

If we look at yet another group of countries, those with which governmental development co-operation is impossible at present because of wars and other negative political developments (e.g. Zimbabwe, the Sudan) - called countries of 'potential' co-operation by the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development - we see that as many as ten other African countries might drop out of development co-operation altogether. In the event, development co-operation would continue with no more than about half of the 48 states of sub-Saharan Africa. Even in those countries in which governmental development co-operation no longer makes sense, however, NGOs – particularly churches and political foundations – may still find ways and means to encourage democratic forces in politics and society through their partner organisations. We recommend that more funds be made available for this purpose by the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development.

5. *Germany's African Policy Must Retain its International Credibility*

If the ambitious goals of German development policy which, among other things, regards itself as part of a global structural policy, are not counter-balanced by adequate funding, it is bound to lose its credibility both on the international plane and in the recipient countries. Despite the undoubted

need to re-organise the budget, this eventuality must be prevented. The funds required to finance a constructive African policy would be small compared to the billions expended on re-constructing the Balkan region and consolidating peace there; it would be 'good value for money' in foreign politics.

The assistance offered so far to consolidate and stabilise states where substantial progress has been made towards democracy and the observation of human rights is inadequate. The fact that negotiations between the Republic of South Africa and the European Union about a free-trade agreement dragged along for five years indicates that the EU member countries, Germany included, are not particularly eager to tone down some of their own interests – in the field of agriculture, for instance – so as to enhance the development opportunities of the African countries.

6. *Germany's and Europe's African Policies Should Be Complementary*

Progress has been made in the African policy of Europe, which lies at the heart of the European Union's development co-operation, as well as in political relations between the two continents.

While the last in the line of Lomé programmes has not brought with it any increase in funds worth mentioning, the programme's lifespan has now been extended to twenty years, and its focus has shifted on other matters. Among other things, its most important goals include enhancing the integration of the ACP states in the world economy, combating poverty, and according priority to the so-called 'political dimension'. If massive corruption should break out in one of the ACP states, or if human rights and democratic principles should be severely violated, co-operation services may be cancelled much faster in the future. Furthermore, it is intended to consult non-governmental organisations and civil-society groups in the future, and to involve them directly in the implementation of measures. As Germany's contribution to the 9th European Development Fund will continue massive at 23.5%, the federal government should make a more determined attempt to implement more of its ideas regarding the dialogue with partner countries in European development co-operation.

Within the last few years, a number of additional elements in European African policy have made their appearance. The final documents adopted by

the first African summit meeting in Cairo in April 2000 embody a degree of conceptual progress in relations between the EU and Africa. Until the next conference in the series takes place in 2003, the framework thus established will have to be filled in, a process to which Germany must make its own contribution. To this end, a widespread debate about the specific contribution Germany could and should make towards Europe's African policy must be initiated. In line with the fundamental principles of Germany's foreign policy, this contribution might focus on the promotion of democracy, *the importance of which is being increasingly emphasised by the EU as a body in its development co-operation and its politics towards Africa.*

There can be no doubt that it is in the interest of Germany that a European African policy should be formulated. However, such a policy could never supersede Germany's own African policy; rather, the two should complement each other.

7. *Africa's Lobby Must Acquire More Clout*

On the whole, the hopes which the 'African lobby' may have placed in politics, the media, NGOs, or research institutes were disappointed. As development co-operation with Africa is increasingly impaired by the general trend towards greater economy in foreign politics and towards budget cuts, it is becoming imperative that the forces of the African lobby should band together. The U.S. offers one example of an efficient African lobby being formed. In December 1997, the National Summit on Africa established itself as a national organisation dedicated to intensifying relations between Africa and the United States at all levels. Members of the organisation form a far-ranging coalition of non-governmental aid organisations, political foundations, politicians, research institutes, business associations, and African politicians.

At all events, it will be indispensable that our commitment in Africa should no longer be explained to the general public on the strength of humanitarian motivations and concerns alone; instead, the interests and goals of the African policies of Germany and Europe should be explained openly and legitimised by the same token.

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