

GERMAN LEGISLATOR: WHAT AFRICAN NATION-STATES MUST DO TO DEVELOP

ELIAS MHEGERA

A PROMINENT development strategist and German politician, Charles Huber, has called for proper political management in order to enhance economic development in African countries.

Huber was responding to Business Times during an exclusive interview which followed his presentation of a paper as a function held at the Serena Hotel in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday this week.

He was on a formal assignment for the International Democratic Union (IDU) at the invitation by the Tanzania's vice-president, Dr Mohamed Gharib Bilal, and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

Huber is a member of Parliament in Germany from the Christian Democratic Union ranks who is widely recognized as a leading development strategist for Africa where he has his roots, from a Senegalese father and a German mother.

Noting that political stability is an important requisite for development, Huber called upon Tanzanian authorities to understand that.

"We have seen countries like Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo which could have

been economic giants but they have stagnated due to intra-rivalries," he stated.

In that regard, he stressed the importance of enhancing entrepreneurship for the youth, as well as functional infrastructure in order to enhance the continental market.

"Africa is one, and Africans are one regardless of the regional arrangements like ECOWAS, EAC and SADC," he pontificated, adding that poor infrastructure makes it difficult for such potential sectors like tourism remain largely underutilized... Africa has an excellent chance of earning enormous incomes through its tourism and hospitality industry.

Huber also called for improvements in the manufacturing sector, especially agro-processing, in order to engage disgruntled farmers who have been largely sidelined in the national economy.

The German legislator counseled that the provision of quality and all-inclusive education goes hand in hand with skills development and jobs creation. Quality education may be expensive, but it is inevitable in bringing about meaningful and sustainable socio-economic development anywhere in the world.

Contributing to the debate, Richard Shaba

said the current trend of providing scholarships to African countries should change. Instead of providing scholarships to a few people from Africa who pursue purely academic studies abroad for years, training should be provided to many, many more students specializing in self-employment skills within the African continent!

"We are facing a major challenge here, where we groom academicians who are not suitable for the available jobs, thus rendering them virtually useless" in the present context, he said.

Entrepreneurship should start at the family level where, for instance, the simple packaging of coffee, cloves and other spices like garlic can be done if family members are empowered through training and capacity building, Shaba says.

The general idea, he says, should be to ensure that every Tanzanian participates productively, and benefits directly from those endeavors!

In that regard, Shaba was supported by another contributor, Salim Zaggari, who said government support is essential in turning economic production at the family/household level into another kind of entrepreneurship on the lines of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). If these are nurtured and enabled to thrive, they could very well turn into big businesses!

To page 2

Zaggar called upon Tanzanians to emulate their German counterparts who eventually developed into a powerful economic empire not because of any kind of divisive sentiments, but because of focusing upon a defined vision of a strong and united nation-state.

He criticized the existence of Boards and Authorities in some production sectors of the economy, saying that some of them are introspective, out of fashion and have no really useful purpose.

"Tanzania is the only country where you find Boards which are there to control prices - much to the detriment of small producers," he lamented.

Also contributing to the discussions, Lusungu Mbilinyi from the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre urged federalism as contrasted with centralism, arguing that the latter routinely sidelines rural populations.

Federalism and decentralization would give an opportunity to exporters to go directly to producers and negotiate deserved returns with them.

He condemned the existing system which sidelines small producers in rural settings to the extent that there is a relentless increase in rural poverty invariably leading to considerable rural-to-urban migration.

Mbilinyi further charged that lack of involvement of rural populations has increased social stratification and desperation, thereby in a way promoting crime which has now reached an unprecedented rates.

Noting that Tanzania is not particularly poor as a country, Mbilinyi said the country has only fallen victim of poor governance down the years. There have been many incidents resulting from a singular lack of general good governance which inevitably result in adverse economic consequences in the long term.

Summing up the debate, Herr Huber stressed the need for continued social and political harmony.

"No one can achieve economic development by destroying what others have constructed over a number of years. Instead," Huber said, "the secrets to development are discipline, resilience - and focusing one's energy to the positives rather than the negatives."

Noting that Germany spends 176 million Euros every three years on enhancing development in Africa, Huber stressed that this money must be spent wisely...

"This can be achieved through engaging the people's representatives, including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other NGOs dealing with good governance!"

He cited other elements which are crucial in attracting foreign investment - apart from security and infrastructure - as environmental conservation and constructive engagement of the local communities around any project in order for them to acquire a sense of ownership.

Huber also called for the formation of a team of market analysts who can give advices to the government on pertinent issues of development.