

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

A ROLE FOR TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE?

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Speech

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1. I plea for an Africa Consensus which brings the world together in support of Africa's own agenda. The first priority must be a better and more respectful engagement with the African people. Dignity begins with respect for the other as if we were the same. Therefore, we need a new and more comprehensive reflection on the notion of the other's property as driver of development. The ancient Roman notion of *proprietas* included several dimensions simultaneously: physical integrity, freedom of expression and the right to material property. Today, the debate on property rights and entitlements in Africa - but also elsewhere - must move beyond the polemic about land-grabbing or similar issues. It must reconcile freedom of property in all its dimensions with social responsibility. And it must relink property rights in all its aspects to human dignity. In its full sense, the notion of property must include the inheritance right for landowning titles and the right to private

ownership of natural resources and state-owned land. All too often the argument that public goods must be protected is a cover up for monopolistic interests in poor countries. I recommend to re-think the meaning of private goods for public ends in the post-2015 development concept currently under discussion around the world.

2. The most depressing current non-connectivity between Africa and its partners is migration. Migration can be considered a problem or an opportunity. Migrants can be seen as a social liability or as a contribution to the benefits of learning communities. Currently, we in Europe fail on both accounts and have left the issue to become a human catastrophe on the one hand and a source of fear on the other hand. To enhance connectivity and the benefits of learning communities on this pressing issue, we need to renew several of our usual perspectives and perceptions: First, the role of the African diaspora should not be underestimated any longer. We need a Mo Ibrahim Prize for successful role models among the African diaspora who contribute to progress and development in Africa. Second, the current wave of migration in and out of Africa reflects a huge failure of education systems across the African continent, decoupled from job perspectives and decent life chances. Connectivity of learning communities - inside Africa and across continental borders - requires enormous improvement in innovative education and sophisticated research structures in Africa in order to make the continent more resilient. Third, we in Europe need to re-conceptualize the very notion of African migration. The Africans who look for a passage across the Mediterranean represent only three to five percent of all migrants inside and across Africa. These people are not simply the victims of poverty, conflict and oppression. It would be more correct to describe them as victims of disillusionment with unsustainable progress at home. Those who risk their life

in order to get faster to the fulfillment of their life chances in another continent often represent the growing African middle class amidst poor and fragile environments. They want to contribute to modernization, fail at home and end in dire straits in Europe, if they make it. Out of enlightened self-interest, our political leadership must urgently move toward a convincing and human migration policy of the EU, the sooner the better.

3. In his Inaugural Address in January 1949, US President Truman proposed a vision which could well resonate at our conference today: "We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas...For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people." Truman's promise still waits to be realized. For Africa and its partners, time has come to advance new joint models of project cooperation. The most innovative approach I have come across so far is the concept of "reverse innovation": It looks for innovative technologies and solutions which originate in the rising demand of the emerging middle class in developing countries wanting to overcome poverty forever and yet can be of economic interest for research, development and production in the industrialized world: Customer-centric, low price-high volume, new core competencies, exploration mind-set for emerging economies - these are some of the key words of the strategy of reverse innovation (Vijay Govindarajan/Chris Tumble, Harvard 2012, p.36). But even new strategies will be confronted with old realities. The deficit in implementing the all too many fine development strategies across the global South is often the consequence of missing mechanisms of regulatory governance we practice them in the European Union and in the United States. Legislation needs implementation. And governance is more than fair and free elections. In the industrialized

world, governance is complimented by regulatory agencies of all kinds. Knowledge of and understanding for regulatory aspects of governance is essential to strengthen the resilience of African and other countries in the global South. Additionally, I would recommend stress-tests not only for banks, as we are doing now in the European Union, but also for countries, both in the South and in the North. Alleviating poverty begins at home and should be included as a key criterion for successfully passing any stress-test of nations.