

Supporting Sustainable Development Goals

Paris, France, 22. October 2016



By Patrick Jouan

On October 22, at the Paris Education Center - Espace Barrault, was hosted a Peace and Development Forum on the theme: “Africa – France: Decentralized Cooperation Projects”, that brought together African NGO leaders, intellectuals and diplomats, as well as French people involved in development and concerned by Africa. The forum was organized jointly by the French UPF chapter, particularly with participants from Brittany, and the French WFWP chapter. Mr Adama Doumbia, Secretary General of UPF Africa, came all the way from the Ivory Coast to meet with participants and report about UPF activities on the African continent.

Various aspects of peace and development were addressed throughout the day:

- Humanitarian projects run by associations providing charity and aid, sometimes on a people to people basis.
- Empowering people eager to progress but needing training and capacity building, calling for experts to provide a community with training and assistance.
- Diplomatic and political networking allowing African States to find new ways for investment in peacebuilding with a vision – a process requiring to work at the State level and with international organizations.

A great benefit of the meeting was to raise people’s awareness on dimensions of development they had never thought about. Indeed, the main factors behind development are good will and a sense of responsibility, which may prompt people to mobilize their moral resources, money, time, skills and relationships.

Promoting peacebuilding in Togo: cities and regions for peace



Mr. Patrick Jouan, vice-president of UPF in France, introduced the morning program which was attended by the First Secretary of the Embassy of Togo and a substantial delegation of Togolese leaving in France.

Mr. Laurent Ladouce gave a presentation on Dapaong, a city in Northern Togo, explaining why and how it should become an international city of peace. He stressed that this required a long-term vision and a profound cooperation between center and periphery.





Then **Mr. Koumtchane Siangou** talked about his experience in that same Northern Togo region. As the leader of the association “Together for Togo”, he decided to address the bitter divisions between the Dapaong population and police forces through a non-violent approach. With the support from the local Catholic bishop and other religious leaders, he managed to create a better understanding, which was very helpful during the 2015 presidential elections. The next step will be to hold a forum of empowerment to address pressing issues of unemployment in the North of Togo.

That morning presentations showed that development is in part highly political and includes various paradigms, such as a creative vision of the future, a genuine dialogue between State and civil society and a combination of greater freedom and greater human security.

Rebuilding a school in Senegal with young people’s good will



In the afternoon session, **Mrs. Benedicte Suzuki**, WFP representative in the North of France, presented a humanitarian project. She and a few other women in Northern France created an association inspired by the philosophy of WFP, and they mobilized 8 young people from Europe, some of them involved in the STF program. They were paired with 8 young people from Senegal, and together they worked on the renovation of a school in Dakar. Moreover, they could mobilize sponsors for the tuition of many children in that school. Her report was full of anecdotes that moved every one because it showed the profound human dimension of development. It is all about loving others, even when they live in a completely different world.

Empowering communities with sustainable assistance



Mrs. Nelly Cambervelle presented a different and complementary view of development: not charity, nor merely

aid, but building proper financial and management structures for true entrepreneurship in Africa. One of her focus is to empower female entrepreneurs, who otherwise would remain limited to very traditional roles. In her experience, women working together are sometimes more reliable for some types of entrepreneurship. She gave several examples, particularly in the remote region of South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She insisted that a key factor in sustainable assistance is to create a whole business sector with one product or activity. Empowered people will know how to empower and recruit other people once they get the spirit and the know-how.



The day ended with a testimony from **Thierry M.**, a young engineer in the water business working for a well-known French multinational that sponsors development projects involving its employees. These water-based development projects need to adjust to local conditions, sometimes in very remote areas. The main task, he explained, is not to build the water infrastructure, but to empower a whole community, especially children and youth, so that they become more careful with the use of water in daily life.

Most participants commented that the main lesson they gained from the day of meeting was the amount of good will and genuine love that is needed for development.