

UPF Stuttgart, Germany's conference: Africa's Century - Challenges for Europe

Karl-Christian Hausmann
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Stuttgart, Germany -- More than 100 participants joined an online conference on the topic "Africa's Century -- Opportunities and Challenges for Europe."

UPF-Germany, in cooperation with UPF-Austria, organized the event on December 3, 2020.

Chantal Komagata, coordinator of UPF in Europe, moderated the program. The role and responsibility of Europe toward Africa were considered from four different perspectives: that of an African diplomat, a European politician, a political scientist, and, last but not least, one who is involved in the cultural sector.

Karl-Christian Hausmann, the president of UPF-Germany, introduced the topic. Africa is experiencing an enormous population explosion, and many countries are trapped in an economic-demographic vicious circle. The consequence, he said, is a growing pressure to migrate. According to estimates given by the United Nations, the population of Africa will increase from 1.3 billion today to nearly 2.5 billion by 2050.

Africa's rapid population growth will change the global balance, Mr. Hausmann said: Today Africans make up 17 percent of the world's population; by the middle of the century this figure may be 25 percent, and by the end of the century, according to U.N. estimates, almost 40 percent of the world's population may be African.

Four-fifths of the approximately 20 million young people who surge onto the job market in sub-Saharan Africa every year are not able to find good, regular employment, Mr. Hausmann said. According to a survey conducted by the pan-African research network Afrobarometer, every second young person between the ages of 18 and 25 considers emigration. Most cite the poor economic situation and a lack of prospects as the reason.

But there are also developments that give hope, Mr. Hausmann said. The number of those who live in absolute poverty has fallen considerably, and a middle class has grown. Last year the African Union agreed on a free trade area, which can be expected to lead to greater economic exchange between the individual states.

H.E. Mamadou Kone, honorary consul of the Republic of Mali in Austria, spoke on "The Prevention of Involuntary Migration through Qualitatively First-Class Education."

H.E. Kone stressed the great importance of vocational training. He stated that there was a discrepancy between the vocational training received by the target population -- the young people in Mali -- and the opportunities offered by the government. This results in high unemployment and the emigration of women and young people.

It is necessary, he said, to introduce high-quality employment training, which enables people to participate productively in economic life and to earn a living. He gave as an example training for the extraction of raw materials so that workers do not need to be engaged from abroad. Livestock breeding, fishing, agriculture, information technology and trade are some of the other fields that require good training. These are the conditions to establish a business and create employment, he said. International developmental aid must keep this kind of development in Africa in mind.

Rainer Wieland, a member of the European Parliament since 1997 and one of its vice presidents since 2009, explained that Africa is mainly perceived in the context of climate, poverty and wars. But a lasting

policy for peace in Africa unfortunately does not receive much attention. The causes of Africa's difficulties, which often are incompletely understood, must be tackled, Mr. Wieland said. However, developmental policies (the little sister of foreign policies) still receive little attention in the European Parliament.

European policies must be much better coordinated and harmonized, Mr. Wieland said. Although Europe in the future must spend more money, that money must be better spent and invested more in structures, he said. It is necessary to make a level-headed evaluation of the effects of developmental aid and the conditions by which it should be appropriately attached. But the key to a positive development in Africa is education.



Professor Dr. Werner Patzelt, a political scientist, said that Africa is without a doubt important and will become more important. If Africa is unable to offer prospects to the 2.5 billion people who will live there in 2050, there will be a massive migration to Europe, he said. It doesn't have to happen that way, but there are driving and attracting forces involved. We can have an influence on these forces if we recognize them.

It does not help to only refer to Europe's regrets about colonialism and imperialism, he said. It is more important to focus on the deficit in education and ethnic conflicts or responsible governmental action. The building and establishment of political stability is decisive. Not in the sense of Westernization -- Africa and the Africans can develop constructive possibilities themselves from their traditions, he said.

Professor [Dr. Titus Leber](#), a filmmaker, author and creator of multimedia productions, pointed out the importance of positive utopias for Africa.

He referred to the book *Afrotopia* by Felwine Sarr. He cited Akon City in Senegal as an example of a planned city in which more than \$2 billion already have been invested and which could be realized in the next five to ten years. Akon City was inspired by the Hollywood film *Black Panther* and its land of the future, Wakanda, Dr. Leber said.

The new Museum of Black Civilizations, located in Dakar, Senegal, bears witness to the spirit of innovation and an optimistic future outlook for Africa, Dr. Leber said. Cultural initiatives are particularly important in conveying hope, especially to the young population of Africa, he said.

In his closing remarks, Peter Haider, president of UPF-Austria, spoke about the Africa Summit that was held in 2018 in Dakar, Senegal, which was organized by UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon in cooperation with the president of Senegal, H.E. Macky Sall.

The summit drew about 1,200 participants, among whom were heads of state and government, religious leaders, traditional office-bearers and representatives of the economy. In 2019, summit meetings and high-level conferences were organized in São Tomé and Príncipe, Niger, South Africa and other countries.

UPF of Africa and UPF of Europe and the Middle East cooperated in organizing an online International Leadership Conference (ILC) from September 11 to 13, 2020, on the topic "Opportunities and Hope at a Time of Global Crisis: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universal Values."

"Research and innovation must be reviewed to determine how Africa's larger resources can be used for the well-being of its population," Mr. Haider said. "Parliamentarians stressed that the nations of the world must strengthen Africa, which will be populated by one-third of the world's youth by 2050. Business by mutual partnership and not charity is a priority, and there needs to be an improvement in positive awareness of such possibilities."

During the ILC, a passionate call was made to recognize the role of women in religion and to accept

women as equals in terms of humanity and spirituality. "Africa's future depends on how the topic of women is tackled," commented one ILC speaker, who stressed that African politics should support women's enterprises, which move the national economy predominantly in the informal sector.

The Vienna chapter of UPF had another very concrete experience with the community of immigrants from the Horn of Africa who now live in Austria, Mr. Haider reported. Over ten years ago, a Sudanese -- who is now the president of the United Nations Correspondents Association-Vienna -- and an Eritrean -- who now represents his country at the United Nations in Vienna and Germany -- came together at a UPF-organized meeting. Normally, people from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan would not come together because of disagreements between their countries. But because UPF is an organization for peace, they were hopeful that it could work out here.

The speeches -- both of the men run the Horn of Africa news agency -- were broadcast in different languages over the Internet. One message was received: In Vienna, dialogue and a peaceful meeting of people from the Horn of Africa are possible. "We held several events, always with a coffee ceremony and good food from the region," Mr. Haider said. "It was very well received that we Europeans listened and spoke not about you, but with you."

Later, on their journey homeward, the country's representatives celebrated the recognition of Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, as a World Cultural Heritage site, in the premises of UPF. The project has now been called the Horn of Africa Peace Initiative. And finally in July 2017, peace was made between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In spring 2018, UPF cooperated with representatives from Eritrea and other embassies of the Horn of Africa to organize a one-day conference at the United Nations in Vienna. Last year a new government came to power in the Sudan; unfortunately, in the past month there has been serious conflict in Ethiopia. But there is big hope for a "New Horn of Africa," as much as is possible without conflict and with development in the direction of peace and prosperity. And we wish this for the whole continent of Africa. "If Africa is doing well, then Europe is doing well!"

All the speakers agreed that a new strategic cooperation between both continents is needed.