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I would first of all like to thank Mr Thierry de Montbrial, Founding President of the World Policy Forum and President of IFRI, for having been so kind as to invite me to take part in this forum. An invitation which I have accepted with much pleasure and a deep sense of gratitude.

I am also delighted to salute the presence of a number of eminent personalities to this major symposium dealing with the fundamental science that is Geopolitics. The participation of such inspiring men and women from the world of culture and knowledge, those who draw the map of the world, confirms, if confirmation were needed, the essential role played by the World Policy Conference as a key hub in discussions on the development of international and diplomatic relations.

The various questions included on the agenda of the meeting this year demonstrate the extent to which time and space shape human beings and their political, administrative, economic and environmental structures.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa, the primordial Continent has an important place in this forum.

The summary of the theme clearly reveals the state of Africa, its current position and what it intends to become in the family of nations. Yes Africa is a land of paradoxes, yes Africa is a land with great ambitions.

In January 1789, on the eve of the French Revolution, the Abbé SIEYES in his famous pamphlet on the Third Estate wrote:

- "What is the Third Estate? EVERYTHING.

What has it been up until now in the political order? Nothing.

What does it ask? To become something."

Mutatis mutandis, this celebrated question could be applied to the Africa of today. For it seems to me clear, Africa is effectively Everything. Everything by its extraordinary potential, its immensity, its intense cultural activity.

However, it is nothing, or at least not very important in the international order of things at present. (Consider its share of trade and the global economy: 2% in 2010).

Despite this, it wants to become something... and it is undoubtedly in the process of achieving this.

Previously, an object of curiosity for explorers, prey to empire builders and the dream of missionaries, colonised over many centuries, Africa was finally divided up and shared out between foreign powers, more specifically European powers.

The balkanisation of this Continent, effected by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 hindered the course of its history and seriously affected its political construction and progress.

With the immense agricultural, mining and human potentials, available to it, Africa, Cradle of humanity (a point on which everybody is agreed today), could have created itself and have reached an undisputed level of progress. But



alas! Tossed about by contrary winds, shaken to its core by all manner of vicissitudes that blew it to either the shady side or the sunny side of the valley to use the language of geographers, the land of strategically important raw materials, comprising large countries described as geological scandals due to their numerous and precious riches, has remained the least-developed Continent on the planet. The "Terra incognita" victim of the predatory attacks of history, turns, turns, turns as if it had lost not only its bearings but also its charts.

This state of development of Africa is undeniably paradoxical, and incomprehensible, and even in contradiction to its true strength, its vital force. Can we understand and even less accept that the African Continent should be unable to take responsibility for itself and initiate a meaningful development process that would guarantee its prosperity and independence? There is no need here to dwell on its intrinsic riches and to list the details of all that it contains within its sub-soil and on its soil. I find this list irritating, annoying, distressing, so I will spare you the details.

As you know, the last five years have been exceptional in many ways for Africa. They have been testing years, marked by numerous political and humanitarian crises. This is particularly true for Mali, the future of which is a major preoccupation for us all.

But I invite you to see these years as years that have paved the way for numerous opportunities offered by: a relationship that we hope finally peaceful between Sudan and South Sudan, following the latter's independence; a Somalia, where for the first time in decades, there is a genuine prospect of an end to the crisis; a strengthening of democracy on the continent as a result of the popular uprisings in North Africa; a stabilisation of West Africa after the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire; the confirmation of the political and economic renewal of the continent. Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia, despite the difficulties and sometimes the steps backwards, have made clear progress in their quest for long-term peace. Of course, you will ask - "and what about Mali?"

Indeed, our populations are continuing to pay a high price for the ongoing conflicts in various places on the continent. The question of safety in the Sahelo-Saharan states and the fall-out from the Libyan crisis continue to be a major preoccupation, particularly in so far as concerns the proliferation of weapons of all sorts in a region wracked by numerous challenges.

But I can assure you that there are many elements that can be put forward to justify our optimism regarding the economic future of our continent, relating to the reduction of deficits and inflation, the growth of productivity, the emergence, relatively speaking of course, of a middle class, as well as the appearance of a generation of business men and women focussed on productive investment that creates both jobs and wealth.

For example, despite a difficult international economic climate, growth on the continent has remained strong over 2011, reaching on average 5 to 6%. A number of countries have exceeded this figure, some even approaching or achieving double-digit growth rates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is embarking on its future strengthened by significant assets – immense and varied natural resources; a security environment that is constantly improving; democratic governance that is being consolidated, despite the major challenges that remain to be overcome; economic growth that is now sustainable, supported as it is by endogenous factors; a young population whose talent is only asking to blossom and to thrive, in scientific and technological innovation, sport, art and music.

These assets must not, however, cause us to lose sight of the scale of the challenges that still face us. There are a billion Africans and we must work to ensure that each and every one of us is free of want and fear. We must grasp the issue of youth unemployment and take full advantage of the economic potential of young people in the service of development. This is all the more essential as this sector represents over half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa in 2012 and is expected to have the largest regional population in the world ahead of East Asia and South Asia in 2050.



Today, approximately 62% of the global population of Africa is under the age of 35 and over 20% is aged between 15 and 24. By 2020, over 70% of African youth will be under the age of 20.

Approximately 10 million young Africans enter the jobs market each year. Many of these young people are, given the continued weaknesses of our educational systems, still ill-prepared for this market. The result in particular is that 71% of young Africans live on less than 2 dollars a day.

The events and developments of the “Arab Spring”, in particular in Tunisia and Egypt, have confirmed that solutions must be found as a priority to the legitimate preoccupations and worries of young people who are, after all, the majority component of society, and who are becoming ever poorer, ever more discontented, and at times even, increasingly militant or radicalised.

In a world that has embarked on the path of unbridled globalisation with, amongst other things, its new lifestyles linked to the glorification of the star system, the devaluing of effort and work in favour of enrichment, easy money, and idleness, many young people in developing countries and not only Africans, see their future as lying with what they think will be an El Dorado, often imagined to exist in Europe and the United States and are inclined to do whatever it takes to get there, even at the peril of their own life, as they have the feeling that at home all they have to look forward is disappointment and discouragement or even feelings of injustice and revolt...

Disappointment for those who have completed their education and are having trouble finding a job appropriate to their qualifications. Discouragement for those who do not have any qualifications and who are destined to a lifetime of precarious jobs. Feelings of injustice and revolt for those who have been deprived of all hope and who feel that they have been forgotten, ignored and rejected by society...

This situation is a constant preoccupation for all African decision-makers. Indeed, African leaders have increased the efforts employed thus far by Africa to create and promote suitable conditions in order to better take into consideration and to acknowledge the needs of Africa's youth as well as its current situation. This has led in recent years to numerous initiatives and activities undertaken in all regions of the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is determined to engage and win the combat to improve the competitiveness of its young talents in the international market place. Everyone knows that with its energy, its capacity for innovation and initiatives, its creativity and its aspirations, i.e. its potential, youth is a capital that no State or society can allow itself to ignore or to waste.

It is a driving force and an essential resource for sustainable development both nationally and at the continental level for Africa. Furthermore, by the values that they have and affirm, young people are involved in society's changes and developments.

Here in Africa, we believe in our young people, we firmly believe that the future lies very largely with their dynamism, their enthusiasm, their energy, their courage. Young people are in fact the leaders and managers of tomorrow. The foundations of Africa lie in their ideas, in what they will do. Forward-looking, they are the vectors for the emergence of an Africa where life is good, an Africa free from want and fear.

All this provides us with many reasons to be optimistic with regard to prospects, but this challenge cannot be taken up without a reform of our education system and a repositioning of our universities, that have become mass universities, served by mass teaching methods with a whole range of problems that place increased pressure on State resources.

We must create, we must invent or learn from others what is suitable for our context and our stage of development.

Asian countries have been able to intelligently solve this problem of the pauperisation of universities by accepting that there exists a perfect symbiosis between the economy, society and education.

Our countries, whether taken individually or collectively, must urgently move towards a coherent and above all proactive agricultural policy, supported by an industrial vision of development, sole capable of providing the required



quantity of high-quality jobs for these young people. The improvement in living conditions in the countryside and a policy designed to encourage young people to set themselves up there to work for themselves and to create jobs in turn must also be urgently implemented in order to deal with the difficult question of youth unemployment. We must realize that at both the regional and continental level, the size of the markets, the quality of infrastructures the speed of the methods of transportation, are increasing wealth creation. Africa and its States will not be able to create new islands of prosperity if they do not adopt a policy of transformation of the raw materials capable of supplying this vast market of several million souls in finished products and gradually turn their backs on the policy of cash crops and exporting gross raw materials. This is the price of the emergence and transformation of Africa and its repositioning in the family of nations.

In this spirit, Regional Economic Communities (REC) have been set up in each of the sub-regions of the Continent. The same is true for numerous instruments of concerted and joint development:

The Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa (CSSDCA);

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD);

The Declaration on political governance, economic governance and corporate governance.

By these Acts, the African States are asserting a strong political will that clearly reveals their ambitions for the peoples on the Continent and consecrates their undertaking to promote democracy and its fundamental values which are: justice, equality, honesty, transparency, the obligation of accountability, the participation of citizens in managing public affairs, among other things.

The burning desire of Africans is to contribute to the emergence and the revitalisation of their Continent.

The emergence of Africa in this century is not a myth.

Africans are fully aware of the fact that the territorial political unity of the Continent is the first condition of its genuine development, its greatness and its strength. It is therefore their intention to increasingly strive to bring about this unity. This is a fundamental trend that the current differences and disparities will not be able to destroy. A long-term but unavoidable task based on a variety of different approaches. This is a challenge, a real challenge for the peoples of Africa.

Thank you.