

AMINATA TOURE

Former Prime Minister of Senegal

Sean CLEARY

Our third speaker, and one of our most distinguished, is of course the former Prime Minister of Senegal, who also had a distinguished career at the United Nations before assuming that role, and she too is going to speak about changing paradigms and changing narratives.

Aminata TOURÉ

I will have a different tone from my good friend, Minister Gadio. I am an Afro-optimist, so I will start by saying that much good news comes from the continent. According to the IMF, sub-Saharan Africa is now the second fastest growing region in the world, trailing only Asia. According to the Emerging Market Private Equity Association's latest survey of institutional investors, sub-Saharan Africa is poised to see the greatest increase in new private equity commitment across the emerging market over the coming years, edging out Brazil, China and India as the most attractive destination for deals. The third good news: according to the African Development Bank, one third of the continent is considered middle class, spending between 4 and 20 dollars a day. By 2060, more than a billion Africans are expected to join them. The African middle class is mostly urban. The African urbanisation rate is already 37% compared to China, and larger than India. Africa will be the fastest urbanising region from 2020-2050.

My good friend talked about the issue we are having with stability, which we acknowledge, but stability has made significant progress since the end of the Cold War and, since then, the number of armed conflicts has fallen from more than 30 to about a dozen, even though violence is still a reality, as you said, in South Sudan, some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia. Yet, democratic elections are now becoming the norm. There are still some challenges – I was observing the election in Kenya – but good news is also coming out from Senegal, our great country, Ghana, Cape Verde, Mali, Guinea, and even Gambia, so I think democracy is making much progress.

We do believe that we have to make African resources work for the African people. Africa is estimated to contain 80% of the world's supply of platinum and cobalt, half of the world's gold supplies, two thirds of the world's manganese, 35% of the world's uranium, and 75% of coltan, an important mineral for electronic devices. Africa has, it was said by the Minister of Morocco, around 600 million hectares of uncultivated arable land, so the future of mankind's nutrition might be in our hands. African leaders born after the independences want to do business differently with the rest of the world, and the BRICS are good news for us, as monopoly, as you know, is not good for business and it has not been necessarily good for us.

Other good news – and who does not want to hear that: we are young. Africa has the fastest growing and most youthful population in the world; over 40% are under the age of 15-20, and we do have 200 million youths in Africa. Of course, it has come with challenges, and I think the Minister talked about some of them, but we also have to know that a larger population means a larger working population, which means more disposable income, as more people per family are able to work, which leads to improvement of living standards. A large workforce now, and in the future, also means more taxpayers, so more money and more funding for government. Yet, we agree, this requires very specific investment from the African government. We need to tackle our challenges with our historical resilience, and we know that. I do not think that any people has been through hardship as Africa has, yet we are here and resilient.

Economic growth has not been inclusive enough, we agree, and despite a growing middle class, one third of Africans, way too many Africans, still live in absolute poverty. What we urgently need to do is to develop a continent-wide, social safety net programme to ensure universal access to health, to education, water, electricity, and decent housing for African people, including those living in rural areas and who are often left out. What I am talking about is a social African compact, so to speak. The growth has been associated with increased exportation of non-renewable, natural resources, with a heavy impact on the soil, water and forests. We then need to learn from ongoing greening



industrialisation experience across the world. The African economy is still largely based on raw material extraction, with little to no value in terms of employment creation, so this is also something we need to look at. Yet Africa is seeing its diaspora coming back, mostly highly educated young Africans, movers and shakers, venturing into technology, supply chain, energy, especially in solar and bioenergy. Africa leads the world in mobile adoption, and we see cross-sectional, business opportunities, like mobile banking, a virtual education system, and so on. The African services sector holds tremendous economic promise; in fact, growth in services has been twice the average world rate over the period 2009-2012.

We also have to improve good governance and be further accountable to the African people. This entails actively fighting corruption with legal frameworks and effective institutional anti-corruption bodies, and for that we also need to cooperate with the West, with Europe and America, because usually when the money leaves our national budget, it finds its way into the western banks.

We also need to further fight impunity and human rights violations. We need to strengthen the rule of law and it is very important to insist on improving the participation of youth, because we have a huge bulk of young population, and of women. I talked about it yesterday, and let me tell you that women produce 70% of the food in the continent, so there is no way you will make headway or progress in the agricultural sector if you do not take into consideration their needs and rights. We also have to address minorities, as was said, and we have to deal with diversity.

As an African, what we would like to see from the rest of the world is: we need a better understanding of the rapidly changing day-to-day reality in Africa, with less cliché, no patronising, because we also know that some of the attitudes are inherited from the colonial past, so we have to be conscious of that and fight it, because Africa is changing, as I said.

There are new and younger African leaders who are grounded in their own culture, yet fully conversant with international standards and international cultures, and a new generation of very educated young Africans who look at the world through a different lens from their parents. That is perhaps what China understands better than many of its competitors in the continent, because they have been colonised, they have been oppressed, so they have more empathy, and they perhaps understand more quickly how we may feel, which is something the Western world needs to understand. We also need different business patterns. That is what we expect from our foreign partners with the slogan, 'Fair must be fair', and we do know that in all deals that we try to make happen, we are paying much higher because of insecurity, it is said, even though a country like Senegal is a very peaceful one. Having gone through different processes peacefully, it happens that our loans are, most of the time, more expensive than any other country, because Africa has, I believe, the worst public relations strategy.

When we talk about Africa, we move from HIV and AIDS, and then to Ebola, but in between there have been many grateful things that happen on this continent. Those of you who were at the reception yesterday may have seen a young lady from Mali. That energy that you saw, that is also what we are seeing and feeling every day in the continent. We also need to build solidarity, to tackle challenges such as corruption, terrorism, illegal migration, climate change impact, and solidarity in sharing progress.

Thank you.