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Founder and Chairman of the WPC

The aim of this lunch debate is to have a conversation about Africa although it is quite a wide subject. Our panellists today are two former Prime Ministers. We have Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, who was Prime Minister of Ethiopia for six years and is well-known among those who are interested in Africa for his remarkable success. He is therefore highly respected and we are delighted to have him join us for this 11th edition of the WPC. May I also highlight the fact that in the Ethiopian political system, the Prime Minister is like the Federal Chancellor in Germany, so basically he is the country's chief executive. I reckon this is an important detail. So, he has had a remarkable career.

The second former Prime Minister with us today is Lionel Zinsou, who keeps honouring us by attending the WPC each year. He was Prime Minister of Benin for 11 months, which is a different kind of experience. He ran for presidential office in Benin and unfortunately, as it often happens, even to the best of us, he was not elected. But he is also French and he is very well-known in France and in the rest of the world for being a bright member of the business community, who has been very successful and has accumulated a lot of experience - another type of experience.

I am going to ask each of them to tell us, in a few words, what they believe in their own experience has been the most positive and the most negative. Afterwards, we will try to draw some lessons and conclusions from these experiences for Africa in general.