

AMADOU GON COULIBALY

Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is truly a pleasure for me to be taking part in the 2018 edition of the World Policy Conference in Rabat. I would thus, before making any remarks, convey to His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, the greetings and expressions of friendship of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara. On his behalf, I would like to voice my delight at the excellence of the friendly relations and cooperation between our two countries. I would like to thank Thierry de Montbrial, President of the French Institute of International Relations, for having involved me in this important meeting, which - every year since 2008 - has offered decision-makers, researchers and opinion leaders the opportunity to discuss the challenges of today's world.

Ladies and gentlemen, over the past two decades, Africa has made remarkable progress in many areas. At the economic level, Africa's annual economic growth has remained, with the exception of 2016, above the world's average with rates ranging from 7 to 10% in some countries. I would express my delight at the fact that the Côte d'Ivoire, in recent years, has been at the level of these countries.

Public and private investment in sub-Saharan Africa has been showing marked growth, in particular foreign direct investment, which has risen from USD 25 billion in 2010 to over USD 42 billion in 2017, making for an increase of 68%.

At the social level, the extreme poverty rates in Africa have dropped from 57% in 1990 to 43% in 2012 and 35% in 2015.

Lastly, at the political level, democracy and individual freedoms have been strengthened, with a significant decrease in the number of conflicts.

As you can observe, the continent's image has considerably improved, to the point that the newspaper *The Economist*, which had dubbed Africa, in May 2000, a "hopeless continent", has turned that title into "rising Africa", then "aspiring Africa".

I would now like to share with you some data about our continent. Africa has come out of the century of violent coups and armed conflicts as means of gaining State power; however, political and institutional stability remains to be consolidated on the continent. Some sub-regions of the continent are still facing terrorist threats. Despite the considerable efforts made these past years, Africa needs, according to the African Development Bank, approximately USD 108 billion per year to meet its infrastructure needs. To give you an example, the 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa with a combined population of about 800 million people generate about the same amount of electricity as Spain, which has a population of 45 million. On a scale of 0 to 1, sub-Saharan Africa posts an average score of 0.40 for a global average of 0.57 in the World Bank's Human Capital Index assessment that was launched on October 11th in Bali.

The African continent is now home to 60% of the world's unused arable land and abundant mineral and energy resources, including renewable ones. Our continent is home to six out of the ten most dynamic economies in the world in terms of growth, including Côte d'Ivoire. The African continent's fundamentals are solid for a continuation of its growth trajectory.

Lastly, I would emphasise that by 2050, according to the United Nations, one in four people will be African, the population of young Africans under 15 will be of about 850 million and our workforce will be the largest in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, the above information illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of our continent. However, Africa has solid foundations for becoming a pillar of global growth and prosperity. To this end, it is the responsibility of African leaders to put in place policies and strategies to take up challenges, in a world that is constantly changing, in a world that is less and less predictable. Indeed, as several prominent figures have said, the

recent example of Asian countries, particularly China, with its GDP per capita multiplying by 56 over the past 40 years, and the emergence of nearly 700 million people from poverty, shows that it is possible. In my view, Africa's governments could focus on 7 priorities.

The first would be political stability, peace and security. All across the African continent, these points are essential factors to consolidate the development of Africa. In this regard, the international community should support regional initiatives for conflict prevention and management. Moreover, regarding the fight against terrorism, operations such as the one led by the G5 Sahel deserve financial and logistical support. For example, on these security issues and the type of cooperation in which we could engage, I would remind you that, when President Alassane Ouattara was President of ECOWAS and the crisis in Mali broke out, the good coordination between ECOWAS and France made it possible, through Operation Serval, to stop what would have been a disaster for the West African sub-region.

The second priority lies in closing the infrastructure gap. The aim here is to improve the competitiveness of our economies. To do so, we need to mobilise more tax and savings resources, but also step up our bilateral and multilateral financial cooperation and promote public-private partnerships. In Côte d'Ivoire, we invest approximately 30% of the State budget annually in infrastructure financing. In the electricity sector, for example, we export electricity to 7 countries in the sub-region and our energy capacity, which has increased by 55% since 2011, and is now 2,250 MW the target being 4,000 MW by 2020.

The third priority, as I see it, is the education and training of young people. We must lay the emphasis on education, and this over an extended period: we must make education compulsory from ages 6 to 16. We also need to pay special attention to the area of vocational training in order to take up the employment challenge. The same goes for innovation, and the sector of science and technology, including information and communication technologies. I would also like to point out that in Côte d'Ivoire, we invest about one third of our budget in social spending, which includes education in particular, and health.

The fourth priority is to improve the business climate. This remains a priority for speeding up private sector development and attracting foreign direct investment, as the recent *Doing Business* ranking shows: the number of African countries in the Top 100 has doubled, from 5 in 2010 to 10 in 2017. African countries are thus on the right track. However, it is imperative that they continue their efforts.

The fifth priority is the continent's industrialisation. To structurally transform itself, the African economy must first industrialise. As the government of Côte d'Ivoire and given the nation's strong agricultural base, to us it means processing our agricultural raw materials, in particular cocoa and cashew nuts, products for which Côte d'Ivoire is the world's leading producer with about 2 million tonnes of cocoa and 750,000 tonnes of cashew nuts respectively. Through local processing, in particular of cocoa, we aim to create jobs and increase our share in the value chain of the cocoa industry, which is estimated at nearly USD 100 billion, of which only 6% comes back to the producing countries.

The sixth priority consists of maintaining a robust macroeconomic framework. This is essential if we are to gain and consolidate everyone's trust and achieve stability in our development. We have carried out far-reaching structural reforms through which we have been able to improve our macroeconomic framework, and the growth rate in Côte d'Ivoire has been around 8% over the past 6 years and is estimated to reach between 7% and 8% for the period 2018 to 2023 with inflation under control below 2%, a debt-to-GDP ratio around 44-45% and a budget deficit which we expect will reach 3% at the end of 2019.

Lastly, as regional integration gains speed, this should enable companies to access large markets and facilitate trade. In addition to Côte d'Ivoire's participation in WAMU and ECOWAS, we are among the countries that signed the agreement on the continental free trade area, which will in effect create a common market of over 1.2 billion people. However, governments cannot achieve this alone; the private sector has a major part to play, and remains the main driver of growth. The private sector should improve its productivity and performance to reap the greatest possible benefit from the opportunities in Africa, focus on technological innovations as are other emerging economies, particularly in Asia, and lastly, work with government to find solutions to the factors that are hampering its ability to produce and export goods.

Ladies and gentlemen, the conference that brings us together today is an opportunity to reflect in depth on the challenges facing Africa and the world. I am delighted to see how timely its themes have been, particularly those related to the global economic challenges of the next five years, migration and the future of multiculturalism, youth employment, energy and climate, as well as security issues and financing for development. I remain convinced, in view of the quality of this assembly, that our work will result in relevant proposals and recommendations that will enable our States to implement appropriate policies for economic and social development in Africa and in the world. It is with this hope that I would like to conclude my remarks by reiterating my sincere thanks to His Majesty King Mohammed VI and the organising committees of the World Policy Conference, and wish us every success in our work. Thank you very much.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL

Dear Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to thank you for your extremely rich and varied speech. As we do not have much time left, I will only ask you one very basic question. We are all used to talking about Africa in general, and indeed, in discussing your speech this morning with your staff, we too asked you to talk about Africa, and you did so magnificently. But is it right to refer to “Africa” as we all do, constantly? Is it not as though we were saying America, and lumping all of North and South America together, or as though we were considering Asia as a single, homogeneous whole? Does talking about “Africa” make sense? My question is as simple as that.

Amadou Gon COULIBALY

I think there are elements that are common across the continent. These common elements may have to do with historical matters, the way in which different States have gone through stages of colonisation, have then become independent and face more or less the same challenges. In that, we have something in common across the African continent.

However, from the point of view of economic development and the realities as they are now experienced on the continent, I think we can also consider that there are multiple components. North Africa is already a component in itself, compared to sub-Saharan Africa. We have realities that are different and we have, as you can see, in economic terms, different degrees of progress. But in sub-Saharan Africa, you have sub-regions that are not experiencing exactly the same things and are not based on exactly the same elements of economic potential. Some countries primarily have agricultural potential, others have mining potential and some have other potential.

As a consequence, we can deem that simply talking about “Africa” is a globalising term that does not make it possible to identify the different problems and therefore to be able to solve them. In that sense, I agree with you completely. You now have the CFA in West Africa and the CFA in Central Africa, that is, the CEMAC zone and the BCEAO (Central Bank of West African States) zone which do not have entirely the same realities. You have one area that has a strong oil-based economy and the other that has an agriculture-based economy. As a result, they are not facing quite the same challenges and concerns, and this accordingly impacts the economic policies they pursue.

I am thus in full agreement with the idea that generalising is not appropriate for addressing issues, but we cannot deny the common foundation between all these African countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the common historical foundation, the common path to the Republic, and the challenges that are, in large part, entirely the same, but with very different means to take up these challenges.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL

Thank you very much for that excellent answer. The difficulty with the World Policy Conference is that we always want to keep going. Now we've just opened up a discussion. Mr. Prime Minister, let us simply say that your presence only further fuels the desire we already had to have ever greater participation of African personalities in the WPC in the coming years, and I hope that you will help us reach that goal. Thank you very much for coming. I also wish you a very pleasant stay in Morocco. On behalf of all our participants, all our members, I wish you all the best for the prosperity of your country.

Amadou Gon COULIBALY

I would like to truly thank you and tell you what a great pleasure it is to participate. Involving a growing number of African leaders and high representatives is very important in my opinion. In today's fully globalised world, it seems



obvious that all the policies we might deploy in our countries are influenced by the global environment. Our countries are not insensitive to changes in the interest rates in the United States. Our countries are not insensitive to variations in the dollar. We export raw materials that are denominated in dollar markets, etc. I therefore think it is extremely important, for these conferences as well as for future thinking about global governance, to include the role we can play at the United Nations, in the debates on managing all global conflicts, I believe that Africa's voice is necessary and can provide solutions in all global governance issues. I thank you in any case for the invitation.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.