



JULIETTE TUAKLI

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Nathalie DELAPALME

Ms. Tuakli, here you represent the essential voice of civil society that the Minister just mentioned. You are in touch with the everyday lives of people who do not work in the corridors of power nor at the head of big companies. From your grassroots perspective, can you tell us what they think about the free trade agreement? Do they believe it will improve their lives or, on the contrary, is it something they worry about? Thank you.

Juliette TUAKLI

Frankly, on a personal level, the CFTA could be rather alarming. It is certainly aspirational, and by 2063 I hope we will be able to witness this enormous transformation of our beloved continent. However, the realities on the ground are that we tend not to have strong domestic policies within our countries, particularly as they pertain to our public policies covering health and education of our future workforce. We have increasing inequities in our countries, major security issues and weak infrastructure. From what I understand, there needs to be some degree of secure intercountry political union in order to have a successful outcome for this agreement.

It is not surprising that Nigeria held back given the security challenges it is going through, as well as poor investment in its human capital and infrastructure; notwithstanding its potential. But it is not just Nigeria. The same applies to countries that have signed up to the agreement. It was most interesting to hear Elisabeth speaking about the need for a new order of engagement and an investment in the personnel of Africa. This is perhaps an opportunity for the Europeans to start investing and assisting in domestic investment in our youth, the same youth that we describe as the oil of the 21st century.

We really have to build our domestic policies to have a much sounder social contracts between the state and populations they should serve – these just do not exist right now, and yet are critical. Notwithstanding all that has been said, at the end of the day it will be our failure to invest in our populations, that will be the Achilles' heel of this.

Kudos to Morocco for what it is doing with its population, and its women in particular. Ghana has recently lost a huge champion of its agricultural revolution, who was also a personal friend. However, just before he died, the Ghanaian Government very proudly announced that it would invest 1% of its GDP in STEM education. After all the lobbying that had been done; it is really important for us to start looking more seriously at the type of education we are offering for both our male and female citizens. Ghana is no exception, and we have to start putting our money where our mouths are.

I listened to the earlier discussion on the EU and the possible future of the Euro whilst thinking about our CFTA, and it really deepened my concerns: Trust, Unity, Safety and Security are all areas in which we are weakest on this continent. Therefore, having any semblance of the movement of trades, goods, services and people remains a pipe dream. I am sorry for being pessimistic, but we have so weakened our investments in our young, not strengthened them, over the past few years on the continent. We have to reverse this trend.

I shall not repeat all that was said, but several important points were raised. The rules of origin being made simple is very important, looking at what is happening already on the continent, eg. China is our friend but could cause complications later with this. That is all I really have to say. It is not just about education. Our youth are educated; we simply do not have appropriate jobs for them, and this will increasingly become a critical problem with the CFTA.

Nathalie DELAPALME



Thank you very much Juliette.