



# AMINATA TOURÉ

President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Senegal, former Prime Minister of Senegal

## Robert DOSSOU

I am going to give the floor to Aminata Touré. As Minister of Justice, Ms. Touré signed with me the agreement between the African Union and the Government of Senegal for the trial of Hissène Habré. I signed for the African Union. She signed for the Government of Senegal. She led this fight to the end and, for the first time, Africa tried a former head of state on African soil. After that, she became Prime Minister of Senegal. Currently, she chairs the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of the Republic of Senegal.

## Aminata TOURÉ

Thank you, Mr. Dossou. We did indeed work to organize this trial to show that Africa can take charge of itself, including in the judicial sphere. I'd like to focus on that because I am resolutely an Afro-optimist. I am in favor of Africa, which is standing up, which is resilient, which agrees that there are things to be done and which is resolutely moving forward. I am not for an Africa that only complains. In fact, this is no longer the mindset of an entire generation. I was born after independence. What I have learned is that services are funded by the Senegalese government and that you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps. I believe this is Africa's destiny. I believe Africa must be able to define itself.

From this perspective, I would like to appeal to the media. I think if there is one continent that concentrates the most prejudice in the world, whose image is the most abused and negatively portrayed, it is Africa. You see that when you live abroad. I had the pleasure of living in the United States for nine years. I never saw a positive image of Africa on CNN, although this is starting to change with the programs abroad. It is almost the same on most international media. Of course, they don't talk much about trains that run on time. We often hear about Rwanda, but there are many other good examples. I think it is time, as Africans, that we blow our own horn and celebrate our successes, because there are many of them. I would like us to take the phrase "If we do nothing"—and this is to tease my friend Karim Lotfi Senhadji—and turn it around to say, "If we continue to do well and do better", because we need to cultivate this optimism, not as wishful thinking, but based on hard facts.

What are the hard facts? Growth in 2020 across the continent will be 4.1%. I'm not the one saying this, it is the African Development Bank and the World Bank. That is double what we see in Europe. Senegal peaked at 6.5% in 2019 and we think we will reach 7%. The target is double-digit growth, and that is possible.

As the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire said, today we are moving towards a middle class of almost 800 million. This means we will have consumers. It means our economy will be able to move forward. McKinsey says total income in Africa will reach 2.6 trillion by 2020. I think that's not bad for wealth production.

I think it is important to cultivate Afro-optimism and get rid of Afro-pessimism, which actually costs us a lot of money. It translates into more expensive loans. It translates into insurance that costs more, often on the basis of false information.

I will give you an example: immigration. Of course, I heard Ms. Guigou's proposal, which is a very good one, but we have to meet certain preconditions. The OECD, which is a serious body, says that Africans make up only 10.4% of the 121 million migrants living in the countries of the North. Yet when you turn on your television, you get the impression that Africa is going to invade Europe because 20 young people have escaped from an immigration detention centre. That is what is in the popular consciousness. This also has consequences in European countries. We have to understand that.



There must, however, be an awareness of interests. Europe, the OECD says, risks losing 10 million inhabitants between 2030 and 2050. Questions will arise: who will pay pensions? What kind of staff will there be to maintain the standard of living, to look after an increasingly ageing population? Meanwhile, Africa is already moving towards having a billion working-age people by 2030. Perhaps what this means is that we need to sit down around a table and have an honest, sincere discussion and not commit ourselves to what looks like chosen immigration. They take the doctors, the nurses, the engineers, and we keep the rest. That will not be possible. If we want to live together in harmony and find common ground that is the kind of dialogue we need to have.

It is a shame that this meeting is confidential. I think that Africa's size, 54 countries, means that we should talk about it in the open and not just here. This is a proposal we are making to the organizers because it is important for us to be having this discussion today.

Obviously there are problems. My friend, Sheikh Tidiane Gadio, talked about one of them, security. Africans are not asking for their security to be taken care of. I was discussing this with Minister Védrine earlier. We must understand that we have a common destiny. Let's imagine the worst-case scenario where Mali falls, Burkina Faso falls, Libya. Then we would begin to see what a real invasion looks like.

We have an interest in working together on security. That means strengthening our international discussion mechanisms, starting with the United Nations, where you still have an old pattern that no longer corresponds in any way to the reality of today's world. How many BRICS sit on the Security Council? Africa does not have a permanent seat. It is organized, it needs to be modernized. I am speaking in the presence of a great figure from the United Nations system who represents the Secretary General in West Africa. These are issues that we must address together. We have a common future, because we have a demographic model where we are going to depend on each other no matter what we say. The Japanese see their population aging and falling, but they are building more and more robots to maintain themselves. However, we know this is not sustainable in the long term. At some point we are going to have to sit down and talk.

Of course, we have to deal with the problems. Corruption is an issue, but it is an issue for the whole world. This is another stereotype that we have suffered from for a long time: Africa, the land of corruption. However, the biggest corruption scandals are not in Africa: Enron, Exxon, Madoff. This isn't just an African specialty, but we do need to strengthen our mechanisms for fighting corruption in Africa. This is extremely important. First of all, it allows us to safeguard our resources, to put the money where it needs to be put, but also to continue to build trust. Young people are not there just watching the elite driving nice cars and being in nice houses and doing nothing. If we do not take care of it, corruption will also be a factor of instability.

Progress has been made in many countries. I think that has been noted. The African Union held a meeting last year on the issue of good governance, which means there is an awareness at the African level, and this must be strengthened. It must become the norm for governance. Today, an international mechanism makes cooperation possible. These are good models. When I was minister of justice, action was taken and it continues to be taken. President Sall remains committed to this.

There is also a growing willingness in countries, and I believe this was said this morning, to take charge of our own future and how we want to plan our development. It is good to see that the World Bank and the IMF have made great strides in their culture of partnership. In 1980, I was in high school. I was taking the baccalaureate and remember the disastrous decision that was taken, under the pretext that we had to restructure our economies: we abolished all boarding in high schools because it was considered too expensive, but this led to a drop in the level of girls' secondary school enrolment. When you are in a village, you have to go to the high school in the next town. If there are no boarding schools, you get married because there is no other alternative.

Those are the kinds of long-term consequences we have experienced. Fortunately, now there is a different vision. In Senegal, this is reflected in the Senegal Emerging Plan, which will run from 2013 to 2035. What I welcome here is that it will outlast the term of the president, who has worked on this issue. In 2035, he will no longer be here. What we need, and I believe Dr. M'Pelé said this earlier, is first of all a shared vision of short-, medium- and long-term



development. What enables us to do that is solid institutions. It is a solid national consensus on how we organize our elections and the participation of women and young people.

Perhaps I will end on that point. When people talk about women, they often make it a soft issue, but it is an important and serious economic issue. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of this international trend, but I think sometimes it is just a slip of the tongue where African women are made responsible for a lot of things when today they produce 70% of Africa's food. At present, we find them in all sectors, despite the cultural and social handicaps they face. They need support from their State and support from their society.

Progress is emerging. The case of Rwanda is well known: 52%, Madam Minister, of women in parliament. In Senegal, the figure is 47%. In France, I believe it is much lower; in the United States, it is around 16%. In other words, Africa is making progress, despite the difficulties, which we recognize, because I am not in denial. However, we do not sufficiently recognize all the important progress that has been made, the conquests and battles that have been fought. It is precisely by taking charge of our own history, by communicating ourselves about what we are doing in relation to our partners, who are excellent partners, but sometimes not such good partners, that we will move forward together and take our Africa even higher. Thank you.