

ALAIN ANTIL

Director of the Ifri Sub-Saharan Africa Center

Thank you for all the talks.

My first question is of an economic nature. As the Prime Minister just said, Nigeria has Africa's largest economy. It is quite entertaining to recall how, in accounting terms, it achieved this. It simply worked on the statistics. Financial institutions had been asking Nigeria to update GDP statistics for several years. At the turn of 2014-2015, I think, Nigeria's GDP was actually more than 40% higher than the rate posted the year before. To go along with you, Prime Minister, we are talking about economies that are generally not well known.

According to overall developments south of the Sahara and per-capita GDP, between 2000 and 2015 we saw not only very high GDP growth, which somewhat overlaps with what Mr. Zinsou demonstrated, but also a way out of poverty and a fairly quick, visible improvement in living conditions. Since 2015, we have seen different dynamics. We saw a deterioration even before Covid. In some years, per-capita GDP growth was even negative. In addition, there are a number of questions about re-leveraging. I would like to know if these issues are just temporary or if we are re-entering a cycle of a kind of economic stagnation, as we experienced between 1980 and 2000.

My second question will be much shorter. As has been said several times, including by the first speakers, one challenge is urbanization, which is growing at a faster pace here than anywhere else. Two figures speak for themselves. In 2010, sub-Saharan Africa had slightly over a billion people and about 33% of them lived in cities. By 2050 – 40 years later and 30 years from now – 50 to 60% of people will be living in cities out of a total population that will have doubled. According to a rough estimate, we will have 650 to 700 million more city-dwellers in about 40 years. This is clearly a major issue.

It is great news because cities are the engines of growth. They drive the transformation of societies at every level, including economically. However, cities tend to absorb all of a country's investment, leaving behind other areas that sometimes see the economic strides made in the past 20 years from a distance, even a very far distance.

This may seem like a caricature, but I would say that within some countries there are actually several countries. There are big cities with high standards of living, facilities and services. The environment changes the further you move out from the periphery and secondary cities. As soon as you get to rural and deeply rural areas, you see that 15 or 20 years of high growth has sometimes left huge swaths of the country untouched. This is a major governance problem that I want to ask you about. How can this be addressed? There are several priorities at the same time. How can choices be made?



I would like to thank you all for participating in this workshop and reassure you that I am as disappointed as all of you are that we did not have time to delve deeper into the exciting issues you raised.