

# PATRICK ACHI

## Prime Minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure and a very great honor for me to take part today, in the name of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, in the 14<sup>th</sup> World Policy Conference in Abu Dhabi.

First, I would like to send HE President Ouattara's greetings to His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan for the relations of friendship and cooperation between our two countries, as well as to all the guests and participants here today. I would also like to thank His Highness for the warm welcome and all the facilities that have been put at our disposal since we arrived in this beautiful country.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Thierry de Montbrial, Chairman of the French Institute of International Relations, for inviting Côte d'Ivoire once again to this leading geopolitical conference, which offers decision-makers, researchers and opinion leaders from the five continents a unique opportunity to debate global issues and discuss options and solutions in order to overcome crises and achieve a brighter future.

Lastly, I would like to recall the memory of the late Prime Minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly, who passed away last year. He attended this forum several times on behalf of Côte d'Ivoire. I would like to pay tribute to him.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African that I am will speak to you today with his head, but perhaps even more with his heart, so great are the historical, acute and striking challenges the continent faces as the pandemic draws to a close. The world's future must be written with Africa:

- (i) For the common good of the planet we share;
- (ii) For its economic and social prosperity, to which African youth will make a crucial contribution;
- (iii) For its migratory stability, by experiencing the fastest demographic growth ever recorded in such a short period of time, thanks to a sustainable socio-economic integration on the continent;
- (iv) For its essential natural resources, indispensable for the world's progress, and having over 60% of the world's undeveloped arable land;
- (v) Lastly, for our protection of primary forests, which are crucial to the ecological balance and to the primordial, vital balance of our planet and all our lives.

But while Africa is the continent of the future, it is also an emerging continent that must meet the towering challenges of a world beset by increasingly entangled crises.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Covid has seriously upended our lives. It has also changed the course of the continent's destiny. In a matter of months, the pandemic interrupted more than 25 years of steady growth, disrupted value chains and deeply increased inequality.

Côte d'Ivoire looks like an island of resilience. Its 2% growth rate in 2020 attests to the strength of our resurgence under HE President Ouattara's leadership. However, according to the IMF, the economies of sub-Saharan Africa shrank by nearly 2% in 2020, one of the worst drops ever recorded. Extreme poverty threatens to stalk nearly 30 million people.

In 2021, global growth is expected to reach 6% to 7%—twice the estimated rate in Africa, even as the continent's growth must outpace the rest of the world's to meet its many challenges, the main one being creating jobs for its immense and increasing population of young people.

The pandemic has thrown Africa off track, threatening not just the forward march of its peoples but also of the whole world, which could lose the future key driver of global growth.

Let us take a clear look at things: Africa does not have the necessary means to succeed alone. Granted, much has been done: the G20 has suspended debt service for certain countries, the IMF and the World Bank have granted exceptional financial aid and the Covax vaccination program is underway. But will that be enough? We doubt it.

Regarding the health response to the pandemic, it now seems clear that the target of vaccinating 40% of the continent with the first dose will not be reached by the end of 2021. Only 6.5% of the population has so far received at least one dose, compared to over 55% in Europe and the Americas.

The world's leaders are aware of how urgent action is. We must commend and thank the American president, who announced on September 22 that the number of doses delivered under the Covax program will rise to 1.1 billion, i.e. an additional 500 million. Last weekend, President Emmanuel Macron announced that France is doubling its contribution to 120 million doses.

But more needs to be done, and more quickly, to reach the vaccination coverage rate set by the African Center for Disease Control and Prevention—between 60% and 70% of the population by mid-2022. Failing that, new variants may appear and spread that could ultimately evade vaccinations and cause harm to everyone.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regarding the recovery strategy to deal with the pandemic's socio-economic impact at a time when Europe and the United States are rightly deploying cumulative stimulus packages of

over \$2.5 trillion, the IMF has estimated that African countries will need \$285 billion of additional funding by 2025.

This is a minimum. The amount should actually be about twice as high if African countries are to be put on the same path as the developed countries.

But as you all know, at this point there is no stimulus package or monetary creation mechanism in existence to harness such resources across the continent, even as the infrastructure needs linked to rapid population growth are immense. The pandemic has not stopped those needs, which are roughly equivalent to 20% of GDP.

If I only focus on the situation in my country, Côte d'Ivoire's population will rise from around 26 to 36 million between 2020 and 2030. This means that eight million jobs must be created by the end of the decade to integrate these committed, creative, ambitious young people into the national economic fabric and offer them clear, sustainable prospects.

Before those eight million join the workforce, investments must be made in education, health, basic infrastructure (power, water, transportation, etc.), security, defense and, obviously, the fight against climate change.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, youth employment is the mother of all battles for Africa. We have no other choice but to succeed—for our nation, for the sub-region, for Africa and for all the other continents with which we share our destiny. Otherwise, the terrorist hydra and the specter of mass immigration will raise their ugly heads.

How can we face these challenges? By carrying out, I believe, three primordial transformations.

The first transformation, ladies and gentlemen, involves financing our economies. As we have said, our needs are enormous and our own financial resources limited, which means that we must turn to the financial markets, where the cost of borrowing remains high for our nations, especially those that must earmark a substantial share of their budget to fighting terrorism.

Africa as a whole has been compelled to rely heavily on borrowing over the past decade. The cumulative public debt soared to \$1.4 trillion in late 2019 from \$650 billion in 2010. Falling growth due to Covid has only made matters worse at a time when donations and public development aid have decreased and loans at preferential rates from multilateral banks still fall short.

It is therefore absolutely essential to provide African countries with access to large-scale, low-cost resources enabling them to invest in social sectors and infrastructure to create an ecosystem that can hasten their development.

That is why the issue of the IMF's SDR decided at the Paris Summit is fundamental. The continent's current share, \$33 billion of the 650 issued, will barely meet 10% of identified needs between now and 2025. If the developed economies redistributed 25% of their SDR, the amount would triple without increasing our countries' debt level. This would not be just a good deed or an altruistic act. It is a fight for our future and, therefore, for yours. As President

Macron recently said, “It is the investment with the highest return that can be made in the short term.” I fully agree with him.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The second transformation aims to make private sector development a top priority, a matter of national urgency.

The quality of private sector companies and the pace of their growth are the keys to overcoming two of the continent’s major challenges:

- The creation of enough wealth and revenue to fund immense social needs as well as the transport and energy infrastructure critical for the private sector’s buoyant growth;
- The mass creation of jobs to meet the needs of dynamic young people eager to become integrated into the economic fabric so that they can enjoy a dignified and decent life.

This transformation could be smiled at as if it were an obvious fact. But, like all obvious facts, it deserves to be continuously recalled so that our countries can put more emphasis on a valued, organized and supported entrepreneurship culture to promote our youth, one of the most dynamic in the world.

We must also continuously keep in mind that the private sector is the real driver of wealth and job creation.

In this context, Côte d'Ivoire’s “Vision 2030”, part of HE President Ouattara’s Côte d’Ivoire Solidaire project, aims to:

- (i) Double our per capita GDP again within 10 years;
- (ii) Cut our poverty rate in half by continuing the dynamics launched nine years ago;
- (iii) Extend our life expectancy by 10 years;
- (iv) Create eight million new jobs.

The strategic levers include the acceleration of our agricultural power and its integration into global value chains and the creation of a powerful industrial base with national champions in the agro-, textile, clothing, housing, pharmaceutical, energy, mining, digital, tourism and cultural industries. The goal is to achieve a private sector contribution to investment of 25% of GDP within 10 years.

According to recent work published by the IMF, if current trends continue, by the end of the decade Africa’s private sector will be able to provide additional funding for physical and social infrastructure equivalent to 3% of sub-Saharan Africa’s GDP each year. That is \$50 billion a year, based on 2020 GDP, and a nearly 25% rate of private investment, which currently stands at 13% of GDP in the region. This will be a revolution with considerable ripple effects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,



It is important to recognize that the first two transformations mentioned above cannot come about without a third, concomitant, fundamental one: quickly upgrading our administration and governance.

This is not just a matter of legal and tax reforms to improve the business climate. No, here I am talking about the mindset and practices that need to change on every level in order to reach our development and prosperity objectives.

Under HE President Ouattara's impetus, the government of Côte d'Ivoire has created a full-fledged ministry to promote good governance and fight corruption. The goal is clear, actions will be taken and the results will meet expectations.

The imperative need for a cultural transformation of our government's administration must be emphasized in order to increasingly make it tomorrow's indispensable ally of business growth, and much less the regulatory or human brake that it may sometimes be today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Moments of crisis redouble the life of men," François René de Chateaubriand wrote in *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*. I want to believe that the extraordinary times we are going through, which has quickly imposed many unprecedentedly complex, multiple challenges on Africa, my continent, will also be one of redoubling ideas and commitments.

Yes, these tempestuous times are also a time of ambition, reinvention and solutions for:

- This African century, which is just beginning, to keep all its promises despite Covid,
- The nations of the continent,
- Their youth, women and workers,
- And all the other players on this Earth we share, which the Africa of tomorrow, with its ingenuity and energy, will have the heavy and challenging task to make grow and preserve.

"It always seems impossible until it is done," Mandela said.

Thank you.