Recommendations on the future Africa strategy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Brot für die Welt

misereor
GEMEINSAM GLOBAL GERECHT

Preamble

B rot für die Welt (Bread for the World) and Misereor welcome the development of a new Africa strategy by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). This strategy aims to find appropriate, solidarity-based responses to the dramatic challenges posed, among other things, by the escalating climate crisis and its direct and indirect impacts, the global pandemic and the severe Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The current context of global development is devastating: poverty is rising, approximately 300 m people are affected or threatened by acute hunger (and the number continues to rise rapidly), gender-based violence has increased, local markets have been destroyed, civic space has been further limited and the fragility of social security systems, including education and health, has become clear. All these factors mutually reinforce each other, thereby aggravating conflicts and increasing complexity.

By prioritising a feminist development policy, social security systems and just transition, the BMZ has taken the right decision. It is also an important decision. The revision of Germany's existing Africa policy on the basis of these three priorities and in close consultation with civil society representatives offers important impetus for finding new answers to the challenges of our time, particularly for the benefit of those people who are most affected by the various current crises. Brot für die Welt and Misereor are pleased to be able to participate in this process and, in coordination with our manifold civil society and denominational local partner organisations, to raise awareness of the concerns of the impoverished.

Building on the diverse debates about a coherent German Africa policy in recent years, we have defined a number of aspects and cross-cutting themes in this document that, in our opinion, should be taken into account when formulating the strategy alongside the three priorities in order to enable inclusive and effective implementation through maximum participation and transparency.

Human rights, the rule of law and civic space should be at the heart of all African-German relations, including official German development cooperation.

Civic space must be defended and broadened, and the framework for active participation of civil society must be created. A human rights-based political strategy helps establish inclusive (local) governance as well as an atmosphere of trust between government institutions and civil society.

In the African context, Churches, Muslim religious communities and African Traditional Religions (ATR) greatly influence values, ethical attitudes and the motivation for transformational processes relevant for development. Religious communities in particular can make an important contribution to sustainable development and peace as religion forms an essential part of the lives and perspectives of many people in Africa and Europe.

"Leave no one behind" should be a guiding principle; marginalised groups and their basic and security needs should be paramount in all development activities. We are obliged to follow this principle not only for humanitarian and moral reasons, but also because these groups, not least young people and women, often have huge as yet untapped potential, and their resources can help find solutions.

The coherence of all political approaches, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, must be the underlying principle of all future relations between Germany or the EU and Africa. The 2030 Agenda sets a universal framework for action, which also makes changes in Germany and Europe necessary in order to enable sustainable development around the globe. Coherent peace and security policies are only possible when different departments cooperate.

Wherever possible, the focus should be on local approaches that draw on existing economic activities and the needs of the local population, for instance in the case of the decentralised, on-site development of renewable energies. Resilience and hope are fostered by establishing education and health structures that seek both to meet people's needs and to professionalise local skilled workers. Peace processes too need to include local actors and concepts.

In all this, it is of the utmost importance to overcome post-colonial patterns of thought and behaviour in partnership and dialogue with the local population. This can be achieved through transparent policy-making as well as through project planning and implementation that actively involves civil society. ●

Picture: Schwarzbach/Misereor

Mathematics lessons at St. Joseph Primary School in Uganda

Building a
house
in Congo

1. Social security

In many places, the traditional social security systems that existed all over Africa before the colonial era have become fragile due to colonialism, industrialisation and globalisation. At the same time, government security systems and social insurance schemes have not always managed to mitigate the emerging risks that people face. In many societies, the gap between rich and poor has dramatically widened, while an institutionalised solidarity-based insurance against life risks is mostly lacking. The climate crisis and, more recently, the pandemic and its socio-economic impacts are further aggravating the poverty of part of the population. The consequences are evident in many countries – in the form of food insecurity, which is rising again, and political crises that are born out of people's discontent.

In development cooperation, this is illustrated by the increasing need for basic emergency aid. Simultaneously, in some partner countries we see strong efforts to find autonomous solutions to such emergencies, based on findings from social science as well as traditional mechanisms, combining "classical" concepts like social insurance or social benefit schemes with more recent concepts such as the Universal Basic Income (UBI) or community-based housing programmes. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to support the establishment of public social security systems;

▶ to support, in dialogue with partner governments, the development of fiscal systems that generate resources for social security by redistributing existing funds within the respective country and by reducing cash outflows to other countries;

▶ to support innovative social security projects such as the one introduced to the political debate by the Basic Income Coalition in Namibia;

▶ to put a special focus on the right to decent housing as well as the rights of particularly marginalised groups to be heard and to social security in line with a feminist development policy.

2. Just transition – energy justice

While about half of Africa's population does not have access to electricity, energy needs, greenhouse gas emissions and the demand for raw material in the Global North continue to be much too high. Therefore, a socio-ecological transformation in Germany is necessary to provide credible support for a just transition in Africa and to overcome energy poverty.

Although energy needs are rising, Africa's potential in terms of renewable energy remains largely untapped because the necessary investments are rendered difficult by the high cost of capital, over-indebtedness, a lack of infrastructure, an absence of political governance and coherence (in the respective countries but also on the side of donors) as well as fossil power structures.

At this specific time, when energy prices have exploded, leading to further energy poverty and more famines, a growing number of plans to access fossil energy sources (in particular fossil gas) on the continent are emerging. As further investments in long-term fossil infrastructure would be extremely damaging to both local development and the climate, creating alternatives is imperative.

Moreover, it will be important to increase the means for international climate financing and to facilitate more measures of mitigation and adaptation and of addressing harms and losses. Africa's population, especially marginalised and vulnerable groups, are particularly affected by the impacts of the climate crisis such as increasingly frequent and violent weather-related disasters like flooding and droughts. However, they have not yet received appropriate funding from international climate financing. ●

Solar lamps and turbines provide light and energy in Congo

Picture: Soteras/Misereor

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to focus on transformative programmes and the corresponding political governance instead of on individual projects, thereby integrating support for decentralised energy solutions into the political framework (e.g. reliable feed-in tariffs);

▶ to support civil society organisations and movements in order to strengthen their position in bilateral cooperation, in private investment initiatives and in global initiatives such as the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative and to foster the decentralised development of renewable energies;

▶ to draw on existing economic activities and the needs of the local population, to invest in educating local skilled workers and to support job creation.

Mother and child in the drought-stricken Sahel in Niger

3. Inclusive feminist development cooperation

Structural disadvantages are still an inherent part of the lives of women and girls in many African countries. In many places, they neither have access to education, work or income nor can they independently exercise their rights. Domestic violence, early marriage, teenage pregnancies and a high maternal mortality rate are still indicators of the systematic discrimination of women and girls. Due to the pandemic, these numbers have risen. Women are falling victim to sexualised and gender-based violence more frequently and more systematically than before, in particular in conflict areas and fragile contexts.

This persistent inequality must be overcome so that women and girls in all their diversity can develop their potential and participate in social, political and economic life on a par with men and boys. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to advocate systematically for the equal participation of all people in social, political and economic life and to take the SDGs, in particular SDGs 1 and 5, as a continuous reference for inclusive policy-making;

▶ to fight for the comprehensive implementation of human rights for all humans – irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, colour or other characteristics – and to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders in order to secure the freedoms necessary for a life of dignity and self-determination for all;

▶ to support processes of a culturally sensitive critical examination of stereotyped role models and to seek dialogue with Church-based actors;

▶ to strengthen women and girls in all their diversity – e.g. by ensuring equal access to education and vocational training, empowering them to independently exercise their rights, actively involving them in conflict resolution, providing special protection in violent conflicts and wars or by offering medical and psychological support to victims of sexualised and gender-based violence.

4. Civil society and human rights

In many countries, shrinking space is an issue for civil society organisations. For our African partners, this not only means surveillance, public defamation and limited financing options. It also often puts them at personal risk. Human rights defenders in particular are being threatened, arrested and even murdered. Attacks on social movements and activists are manifestations of a global crisis of democracy; others include an increase of so-called fake news, misinformation and disinformation and even complete internet shutdowns. Shrinking space not only affects non-governmental organisations (NGOs) but also massively harms a country's political, social and economic development. A strong and independent civil society is both the prerequisite for and the driving force behind social and political development. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to prioritise human rights and civic space as well as the strengthening of regional and national human rights institutions as a basis for all African-German relations and development cooperation and to actively advocate for freedom of opinion and freedom of the press;

▶ to involve German embassies in the protection of human rights defenders and the monitoring of clarifications of human rights violations and of criminal proceedings following crimes against human rights defenders and other civil society actors.

Activists from South Africa campaign for climate justice

Picture: Misereor

5. Governance / the rule of law

Unclear political conditions and a lack of legal certainty for actors of transformation from civil society and the private sector are a major obstacle to development in many African countries. In some countries, there is no separation of powers and only limited press freedom. Moreover, the opportunities for those affected by government measures to take legal action are scarce – in many instances leading to an imbalanced relationship between government and civil society and consequently to problems in nation-building and a low acceptance of government institutions. Furthermore, a national fiscal system that is unable to generate the funds necessary to maintain basic public services (education, health care, infrastructure, police) leads to an enhanced dependency on external donors and is a breeding ground for systemic corruption.

In this regard, it is much more important that the political system laid down in a country's constitution is implemented in a way that is reliable and that respects the rule of law than what political system was chosen in the first place. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to address and insist on compliance with the rule of law in partner dialogues within the framework of bilateral development cooperation and also to stress the importance of a reliable legal framework for civil society and business organisations;

▶ to support the strengthening of government structures such as the fiscal administration, the legal system and the police, including through the transfer of know-how and exchange programmes;

▶ to use the exchange with partner governments and in particular the EU-AU dialogue to stress the particular importance of civil participation for resilient and peaceful political development;

▶ to support multilateral organisations and mechanisms that can contribute substantially to global good governance (international justice, United Nations Human Rights Council, etc.).

Cultivation in the drought-stricken Sahel in Niger

Picture: Schwarzbach/Misereor

Meeting before Catholic Sunday Mass with priests in Niger

6. Fragile statehood

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the number of fragile states has been growing around the globe since 2010. Six of the top ten countries on the Fragile State Index 2021 published by the Fund for Peace are situated in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2015, not one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had been met in fragile states. Similarly, the success of the 2030 Agenda will strongly depend upon whether lasting improvements can be made. Due to substantial deficiencies in – or rather the almost complete absence of – national (care and government) structures as well as immense social tension and conflicts, the affected countries are extremely fragile in all sectors.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, repressive measures under the cover of lockdowns have in some cases further undermined the already low acceptance of government structures. In addition, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children have been exposed to an alarming increase in sexualised and domestic violence over the past two years. Their situation is aggravated by a lack of support mechanisms and a culture of impunity. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to act with flexibility and conflict sensitivity in development cooperation with fragile states while keeping in mind civil society organisations' possibilities for action;

▶ to tap into the specific potential of religious structures and to develop long-term stabilisation strategies based on social coherence in cooperation with local stakeholders;

▶ to ensure that risk analyses and early warning findings from different German federal ministries are shared both among the ministries and with internationally operating organisations and to use this shared information to develop and implement coherent strategies of action.
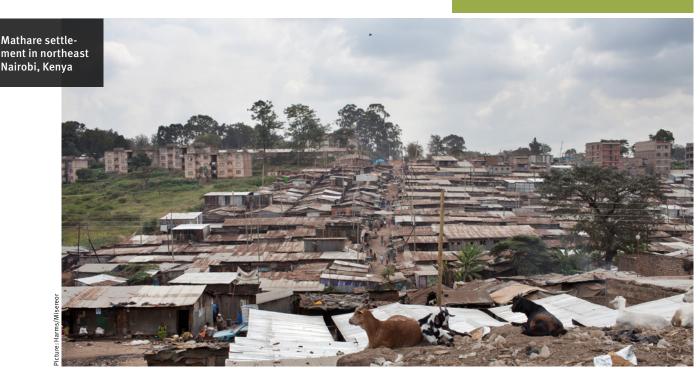
7. Peace and security

Coherent, feminist peace and security policies are only possible when different departments cooperate with each other. The implementation of the government guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace" has barely lived up to this requirement so far.

Like all political action, BMZ's Africa strategy should follow the United Nations' approach of "human security", which includes the protection of the individual from violent conflicts, crises, natural disasters and disease as well as access to resources and prospects in life, such as food security and food sovereignty. Adequate investments in measures that help overcome hunger, poverty, illness and unhealthy environmental conditions and that support education are essential in order to render a life in dignity, safety and justice possible for all people in Africa.

Moreover, there is a need for a human rights-based political strategy that prioritises inclusive (local) governance as well as an atmosphere of trust between government institutions and civil society. The equal participation of all groups of society and of all genders must be kept in mind at all times and be demanded, especially in terms of peace-keeping and civil conflict prevention and management. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to ensure coherence in Germany's federal foreign and security policies, in particular in the face of regional conflicts such as the current ones in the Sahel, based on an honest evaluation of the interventions in Afghanistan and Mali;

▶ to gear all practical and political measures to the approach of "human security" while implementing the guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace", to develop specific instruments for crisis anticipation and prevention, civil conflict management and peace-keeping and to consistently apply them in cooperation with African states;

▶ to integrate the experiences and voices of religious actors and civil society groups, in particular young people and women, and to place their own, sometimes traditional peace and security concepts in the respective African country context at the heart of all planning of measures.

Mathare settlement in northeast Nairobi, Kenya

Picture: Harms/Misereor

Soldiers on the road to Kotido, Uganda, distributing food

8. Migration policy

Most migrants in Africa move within the continent, while the vast majority of refugees are internally displaced persons (IDPs). In this context, migration is not a "security risk" but rather the norm that is vital for survival and that can make a valuable contribution to the continent's political and economic integration. Therefore, it is counter-productive to development policy and beyond comprehension that EU member states make great efforts to pressurise African states into cooperation with regards to repressive asylum and migration policies. An example is the Post-Cotonou Agreement, which threatens states that are unwilling to cooperate with the removal of trade preferences or development funds or the reduction of visa quotas. In addition, externalising a repressive migration policy leads to severe human rights violations, human suffering and the strengthening of authoritarian regimes in Africa. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to recognise, in accordance with the AU's Agenda 2063, the regional mobility of nomadic life, seasonal labour migration or climate change adaptation and to provide targeted support where needed;

▶ to strongly enhance support for refugees in Africa, especially IDPs and those fled to neighbouring countries, and at the same time to guarantee the acceptance of persons in need coming to Europe via safe routes;

▶ to stop making trade or development policies dependent on the cooperation of African states with regards to the readmission of refugees or the containment of migration or refugee movements;

▶ to instead establish fair migration partnerships that

• recognise the developmental potential of migration and take concrete steps to facilitate regular migration to Europe (including temporary migration, in particular for young people);

• take seriously the development-policy risks and opportunities of a brain drain, which can result from the targeted recruitment of skilled workers in specific fields (e.g. the health sector).

Picture: Schaerzbach/Misereor

Dry season
in Niger in
the Sahel

9. Climate

Although Africa contributes little to the greenhouse effect – the CO_2 emissions of the entire continent are lower than those of Germany – it is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world with regard to the climate crisis. African states are particularly vulnerable because of their geographical location, and their inhabitants are vulnerable because of their poverty. Moreover, weather extremes lead to more casualties and greater economic damage in low-income states than in high-income states and often cause the displacement of large numbers of people. The poorest population groups in Africa in particular often do not have sufficient capacities to adapt to changed climatic conditions and suffer climate-related harm and losses. Agriculture in particular – and thus the food situation – is more affected by climate change, increasing weather extremes and rising temperatures than is the case on other continents. Despite the enormous challenges, less than 20% of total German climate finance currently flows into adaptation measures in developing countries. To mitigate the causes of climate-related damage and loss and forced migration and flight, the Paris Climate Agreement – in particular immediate and radical emission reductions – needs to be implemented with ambition. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to develop a coherent, interministerial strategy for German climate and climate foreign policies that enable the global implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, aligned with the 1.5-degree goal, and to provide sufficient resources for its implementation;

▶ to strengthen voluntary climate risk insurance initiatives (InsuResilience) that have a clear focus on Africa, integrate them into social security systems and make them pro-poor;

▶ to establish direct access to German climate adaptation funding for national and local civil society-led adaptation projects, e.g. via German embassies;

▶ to design adaptation measures in such a way that local civil society is already involved in the development process.

10. Agriculture, food security and agroecology

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the weaknesses of conventional agriculture, fishing and food systems in Africa. The population in regions and countries that are highly dependent on imports from the world market was and is more affected by hunger as a result of inflation than others. In contrast, producers who practise agroecological farming and who mainly supply domestic or regional markets are less affected by the negative consequences of the pandemic. With regard to the latter, there are many positive examples in communities with large numbers of people from African Instituted Churches. These producers have so far been largely excluded from the development and crisis response measures of many states (agricultural research, advisory services, financial services, etc.), as their funding policy continues to focus on conventional agriculture according to the Green Revolution model and on export orientation for the world market. The upheavals in the world market as a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine also show the vulnerability of many African states to crises as a result of their dependence on imports of basic foodstuffs and fertilisers. Russia uses wheat exports to Africa as geopolitical leverage to be able to push through its interests.

The food situation on the African continent is aggravated by the serious consequences of climate change, by armed conflicts – such as those in Ethiopia – and by a steadily deteriorating security situation as a result of attacks by terrorist groups in many of the Sahel countries. In many parts of West and East Africa, conflicts over the use of natural resources are on the rise, mostly because there is a lack of – or misguided – land use policies by national governments or the displacement of local producers (small farmers, fishermen, pastoralists) as a result of the allocation of land or water rights to investors. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to put the focus of cooperation with African countries on agroecology, food sovereignty and the right to food and to give these topics high priority during government negotiations at the highest level;

▶ to promote agroecological approaches in a targeted manner, especially in the field of agricultural research, agricultural advisory services and agricultural financing, and to stop promoting Green Revolution approaches;

▶ to consistently align agricultural support programmes to local and regional markets and to put the focus of these programmes on the strengthening of food sovereignty;

▶ to extend the work of existing ecological knowledge centres in Africa to other countries with the help of local initiatives and to triple the funding for these centres;

▶ to foster South-South-South-North (Africa-Asia-South America-Europe) exchange on agroecology similar to the exchange that exists in some areas between Africa and India.

Picture: Schwarbach/Misereor

Seeds from Uganda for sustainable agriculture

11. Education – a key to human development

With SDG 4, UN member states have committed themselves to "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. In reality, however, one in five children between the ages of 6 and 17 at global level is not in school, and in many African countries the figure is even higher. If nothing is done to counteract this, the demographic development will lead to dramatic aggravations in terms of access to and the quality of education.

In Africa, school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened the prospects of millions of children. In addition to the lack of food during the pandemic, technical equipment for distance learning was also lacking and internet access was a luxury. For this reason, school lessons could often not take place. To this day, many children have not returned to school. It is still difficult to quantify the potential losses for the young generation in terms of their future. ●

Mathematics lessons on the blackboard at St. Joseph Primary School in Uganda

Picture: Schwarzbach/Misereor

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to pay increased attention to achieving the global education goal (SDG 4), taking into account country-specific or local approaches – bilaterally or through multilateral mechanisms;

▶ to place importance on the quality of (primary) education as well as the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities, in addition to funding infrastructure and teachers;

▶ to find ways and means to fill educational gaps in school or out of school for the generation of young people who have been excluded from the education system because of the COVID-19 pandemic;

▶ to focus more when promoting vocational education and training on the special conditions of the informal sector with regard to the future prospects of young people and less on the expansion interests of German companies in the hope of a supposed trickle-down effect;

▶ to raise awareness of the fact that school and education in many African countries take place in fragile contexts of violence and conflict, and to always attach importance to peace education and Do-No-Harm approaches;

▶ to strive for a targeted integration of the Church's expertise and resources and for constructive cooperation with the Church and distribution of tasks in countries where Church structures play an important role in the education sector, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Rwanda.

A nurse vaccinates a woman in a rural area in Ethiopia in 2021

12. Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of healthy living conditions and functioning health systems for the African continent. Good health care is a prerequisite for the effective prevention and combating of diseases and for avoiding future pandemics and their drastic socio-economic consequences. The pandemic has also highlighted fundamental flaws in the current global pharmaceutical system as it became clear during the pandemic that a reorientation towards greater African independence from the global pharmaceutical market is necessary.

Precarious living conditions further drive the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS or COVID-19 and increase the impact on individuals, communities and societies. In many countries in Africa, state health systems are unable to provide adequate health care for people living in poverty. Private health providers, especially Church-based ones, are trying to close this gap. However, the increased incidence of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus and cancer pose additional challenges to these health systems. The emergence and spread of pathogens with pandemic potential are linked to and amplified by the imbalance between humans, animals and the environment. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to reliably support African countries' containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular through comprehensive access to diagnostics, medicines and vaccines against COVID-19 and support for appropriate local treatment programmes;

▶ to ensure equitable access to diagnostics, vaccines and medicines for all diseases in Africa in a multilateral context and to provide adequate funding;

▶ to promote the development and expansion of pharmaceutical production capacities and market access as well as technology transfer, especially of mRNA technology to Africa, e.g. to the WHO mRNA Technology and Transfer Hub in South Africa;

▶ to prioritise local health structures to achieve people-centred, grassroots (preventive) health care in the sense of Primary Health Care, while also integrating the experience of Church health systems;

▶ to incorporate One Health holistically, inclusively and cross-sectorally in multi- and bilateral cooperation with Africa to effectively prevent diseases caused, for example, by intensive land use and the displacement of people and animals from their natural habitats.

13. Promotion of the private sector and financing

Future economic relations between African states and Germany aim to open up new markets for sustainable investment on the continent and to expand African production capacities, among other things through cooperation between locally and globally operating companies and by leveraging foreign private investment. As important as it is to advance the economy and employment in Africa, it is also important to do so in a way that does not primarily serve German and European economic interests, but promotes local economies, strengthens local employment and ensures sustainable prospects for young people. Rapid market liberalisation does not necessarily provide purely positive impulses, but can also lead to massive social dislocation, more poverty and social inequality on the continent. Therefore, support for private investment by German companies must be strictly aligned with the SDGs. Moreover, the participation of civil society and a focus on local and regional employment impact and value creation are essential. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to consistently tie the promotion of private direct investments to proof of a relevant developmental impact and compliance with international agreements on human rights, social standards and environmental protection and to their reliable monitoring;

▶ to advocate for a binding and ambitious European supply chain law;

▶ to implement instruments of development cooperation to systematically promote the establishment of the necessary public framework conditions – especially in the areas of vocational training, good governance, public credit and banking systems, health care and social security – so that private investments can have a sustainable effect;

▶ to gear economic development in African countries primarily to the development of local value chains and the needs of local micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

A worker in a greenhouse in Uganda

Picture: Schwarzbach/Misereor

A woman in a fishing village in Uganda on Lake Victoria

Picture: Schwarzbach/Misereor

14. Trade

In terms of trade policy, a patchwork of different trade relations has developed between Africa and Europe following the largely failed negotiations or applications of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Individual African countries were forced to conclude agreements with the EU so as not to lose duty-free market access and must now open their markets to EU goods. The current practice of having to apply different external tariffs to EU imports not only destroys regional economic communities, but also minimises the long-term chance of an African single market as planned in the form of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Even though the establishment of the AfCFTA will be a long-term project, it could provide a sustainable framework for trade relations among all African countries if the envisaged liberalisation of more than 90% of trade is accompanied by effects analyses that describe economic, human rights and environmental effects, especially for small producers and vulnerable populations, and include appropriate safeguards and regulations. A fund to compensate for economic disparities within the continent must also be created so as not to leave Africa's weaker economies behind as the single market deepens.

Like many other European countries, Germany still has bilateral investment protection agreements with some African countries that grant special rights to German and other foreign investors. They contain dispute settlement mechanisms that provide for unilateral legal action in favour of large European corporations before non-transparent, private-law dispute tribunals. Social, human rights and environmental concerns play no role in this. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to support the implementation of a continental free trade area within Africa, with the option of offering duty-free access to all members for their export products within the framework of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences under the Everything But Arms preference conditions for low-income countries, and to help the African Union apply to the WTO for waivers of at least 10 years' duration so that it can protect economic sectors that are not yet competitive in relation to imports from other African countries;

▶ to terminate all Germany's bilateral investment protection agreements with African states and instead help governments formulate investment and market access rules for foreign companies that require them to comply with human rights due diligence obligations as well as social and environmental goals and minimum standards;

▶ to advance a reform of the multilateral trading system that enables African countries to better protect their agricultural and industrial production and services markets vis-à-vis industrialised and emerging countries, and to offer their own digital services.

Aerial view of Kampala in Uganda

15. Urbanisation

Urbanisation is one of the global megatrends. The number of people living in cities is steadily increasing and will reach over 60% by 2050. Ninety per cent (90%) of the world's urban population growth by 2050 is expected to occur in Africa and Asia. The 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) therefore rightly emphasise the importance of cities for socially, ecologically and economically sustainable (global) development. Measured against this claim and that of human rights-based development, the course of urbanisation in Africa is a cause for concern. Key challenges include precarious housing and infrastructure conditions, especially for people living in informal settlements and in neglected inner-city housing developments. Their housing and property conditions are often insecure, and residents are more exposed to health and environmental risks. Urban policy and planning are usually oriented towards the interests of privileged population groups and private investors, often resulting in forced evictions at the expense of the poorest population. Connections between a city, its hinterland and rural areas are not sufficiently taken into account, for example in the form of balanced and resource-conserving land management. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to consistently apply the Leave No One Behind guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda to vulnerable urban populations, especially those living in informal settlements and other disadvantaged urban areas;

▶ to promote good urban governance by strengthening the land and housing rights of informal settlers, regulating land and property markets and improving social and political participation;

▶ to identify the potential of cities for environmentally and climate-friendly development and beneficial social and economic interdependencies and resource flows between cities and rural areas in a context-related manner and to promote them with a view to contributing to socially and ecologically sustainable development;

▶ to put the development of infrastructures in the areas of sustainable mobility, water supply and drainage on the agenda of bilateral dialogues and ensure the corresponding know-how transfer;

▶ to focus on regional networks and forms of cooperation (in metropolitan regions, inter-communal, etc.) for a more resource- and land-efficient urbanisation.

16. Digitalisation

Digitalisation is currently considered one of the most important drivers of economic, political and social development in Africa. At local level in particular, there are numerous innovative projects that seek to improve the living conditions of local communities. Local solutions for local problems are meant for people who do not yet have access to education or health services. This enables democratic access to education and services (e.g. financial transactions or health care services). In the context of digitalisation, young people in particular drive development and should be included in the future development of the topic.

Digital solutions can improve people's living conditions, but they also entail risks. It is not certain whether innovative approaches alone will make it possible to reach disadvantaged sections of the population in the long term to enable them to participate more and to improve their livelihoods. Currently, it is mainly the wealthy and well-educated who benefit from the digital transformation.

In designing a fair, sustainable and equitable digitalisation (policy), the following must be considered: on the one hand, the potential of digitalisation for benefitting disadvantaged population groups must be strengthened and, on the other hand, existing grievances and risks must be minimised. The challenge will be not to forget that this process is a shared learning experience and that great importance must be placed on the sharing of experiences. ●

For the new Africa strategy, we recommend to the BMZ:

▶ to pursue equitable digital participation for all in cooperation with African partners, paying attention to the inclusion of particularly marginalised groups and the appropriate handling of data security;

▶ to assist African countries in bridging the digital divide through sufficient financial resources and, where necessary, knowledge and technology transfer;

▶ to support small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa that are committed to driving digitalisation forward in their countries – including non-commercial approaches from civil society – in order to be able to use digitalisation for more transparency of government action as well as sustainable and poverty reduction approaches;

▶ to support African countries in developing the framework to control and regulate digital monopolies, strengthen national and regional platforms and promote new digital education policies.

Photo project with young people in Kampala, Uganda

Picture: Schwarzbach/Misereor