

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos/Romy Chevallier: Africa's Expectations of Germany's Chairing of the G8 and the EU in 2007

For a long time, Africa has been one of the subjects of the G8 summits: At some of them, the visions developed for the continent were grandiose; at others, they were modest. With every summit, however, relations with the European Union attained a new depth. Since September 11, 2001, the fundamentals of Africa's importance have changed. There are many people who regard the poverty prevailing on the continent as the reason why so many Africans become radicals and why migration to Europe is on the rise.

The G8 and the EU have launched a large number of initiatives partially motivated by geopolitical and strategic goals and partially by altruistic intentions. Especially with regard to the latter, special attention will have to be paid to delivering on the commitments made at previous summits and on clearly defining framework conditions. At the moment, the chair of the two organisations – the G8 and the EU – is held by Germany, which should build on the commitments that have already been made, without ambitions or ambiguities. Its task is to select a number of exemplary projects, and to stay the distance as it implements them: After all, an early withdrawal from a project could mean failure, which would help to nourish afro-pessimism. In the past few years, Africa has played an active role in conflict resolution. However, the resources provided by the EU are limited, and it is very important not to be discouraged by the magnitude of the task.

The conflict in the Congo may be the biggest challenge. The country has a considerable potential of natural resources but, in its role of a permanent factor of instability in the heart of the continent, it also threatens the development of its neighbouring countries. To be sure, the presidential elections were a significant step on the path towards normalisation, but democracy still is unconsolidated. Therefore, it makes sense for German troops to remain in the Republic of Congo, for the consequences would be fatal if the peace process should fail. And next to the question of Congo, there is the more general problem of financing the African Peace Facility. In view of the weakness of the AU, the deployment of the AMIS, for example, would not have been possible without the support provided by the EU. This year, South Africa will take its seat in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member. This being so, Germany and the country at the Cape could work together in New York to resolve the problems facing them.

Political dialogue must be given priority, especially where sensitive issues are concerned. Many African states have already worked out an agenda for good governance – the only way towards improving the people's living conditions. Therefore, the African peer review mechanism and the resultant process of national dialogue deserves to be supported. The EU's governance initiative might prove important in this context. To support the APRM, provisions should be made for promoting not only institutions but also individual states on the continent. What should not be forgotten, however, is the involvement of civil society. As it forms the basis for the success of the entire process, civil society should receive organisational and financial support.

It is to be welcomed that both the G8 and the EU have committed themselves on several occasions to increasing their aid volume in the years to come. What would also be desirable is a revival of the Doha Round: Germany should motivate the EU member states to go along. To achieve this, the EU and the USA would have to remove the obstacles Doha confronts in the field of agriculture, for example. Especially Europe's current views on agriculture and market access have left a sour taste behind, not only in Africa but also in the developing world as a whole. If Africa is to be symmetrically integrated into the global economy, it must not be

deprived of the opportunity to carry on trade and increase its competitiveness in key sectors. What is more, economic partnership agreements (EPAs) also play an important role as mere negotiations about them enforce structural changes in the regional integration of eastern and southern Africa.

The purpose of the millennium development goals is to encourage countries to increase their productivity so as to force the pace of growth and development, at the same time enhancing their attractiveness to investors and their integration into the region. To make any progress, Africa must develop an adequate infrastructure and strengthen the private sector. Germany's intention to follow a policy promoting growth, the private sector, and investment is to be welcomed. In this context, the EU Partnership for Infrastructure and its financial fund are also of great importance.

In cooperation with the EU and NEPAD, the German presidency should develop concrete objectives and time limits for the various infrastructural projects and encourage the European economy to join in. Its contact would be Africa's business world which, however, should not be seen as an object of charity. At the beginning of this year, South Africa took over the chair of the G-20 Finance. Together with Germany, the country might use the chance to work for the integration of the developing countries into the worldwide economic and financial system.

One country which has considerably expanded its engagement in Africa for a fairly long time now is China. Africa itself does not at all rate this as negative. Here, a comment made by the ambassador of Sierra Leone in Beijing speaks for itself: 'The Chinese are doing more than the G8 to make poverty history. [...] The Chinese just come and do it. They don't hold meetings about environmental impact assessment, human rights, bad governance and good governance.' Europe should try to understand the complex relations between China and the African states, and meet them with constructive ideas instead of paranoia.

Africa has become a subject in the dialogue between Europe and China. Increasing political stability on the continent might become the subject of a trilateral dialogue in the future. After all, as China's influence on African soil is increasing, it becomes more and more important for Europe to identify possible areas of cooperation with China.

As new players emerged, Africa's environment has changed, and now Europe is called upon to meet this challenge. In doing so, it should not lose sight of its own strategic interests, but neither should it dispense with defending its traditional position with regard to human rights, democracy, and good governance.