



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

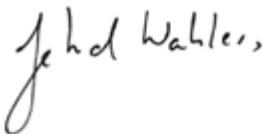
The middle class is growing in an increasing number of countries. According to the World Bank's definition, this class includes people with incomes between ten and 50 U.S. dollars per day depending on the country. While the middle class comprised approximately 300 million people around the world in 2005, forecasts envisage this number rising to 1.9 billion by 2030. And with its size, its political importance is growing as well. This trend has attracted public attention once again in recent times, particularly in connection with several emerging economies. In China, an expanding middle class with increasing access to technical equipment is exchanging opinions about social developments in digital space. In Brazil, demonstrators from the middle section of society are capitalising on the attention the country is attracting because of the World Cup to voice protests against the government and against rising prices. In Bulgaria too, an EU Member State that is still lacking in terms of political and economic development, there are signs of a new civil society slowly forming. In his article in this issue, Marco Arndt describes it as a "tender shoot in the process of growth, which has not taken deep root in society as yet".

However, it would be premature to assume that the rise of the middle classes would lead directly to positive effects on global democratic development. Various hopes linked to the middle class have so far not materialised. Economic growth and rising incomes by themselves do not result in progress in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and civic participation. If they feel that the governance in their country is deficient or if the economic upturn does not yield dividends in the form of democratic participation, members of the middle class frequently respond with annoyance, with withdrawal into the private sphere and into consumerism. In this issue, Kristin Wesemann and Daniel Schlierenzauer report that members of the Argentinian middle class share ideas "on what constitutes a good life: education, security and a better future for the children. However, these personal aspirations do not produce political will. People do not fight for a better school system, but send their child to a private school".

The middle classes can further political and socioeconomic change both at national and global level. However, once they have become established they can also block it just as easily. The middle classes can be agents of change, but they frequently do not seek to play this role. This is due to the fact that within wholly democratic, participative and socially integrated systems their own privileges and hard-earned status may become jeopardised – the middle classes are feeling the pressure from below.

These findings make for an uncertain prognosis about future positive developments. In many countries with a growing middle class, there is little effort to conduct structural economic and tax reforms or democratic reforms, and traditional power structures remain unchallenged. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung therefore promotes the concept of the Social Market Economy in its international development cooperation. We encourage political approaches aimed at combatting poverty sustainably and at expanding and strengthening the middle classes. These two aims go hand in hand. The mostly quantitative growth of the middle class needs to be complemented by a more far-reaching agenda of structural change. This should include reforms in the education and health systems, in the area of social security, in the tax and banking systems, in bureaucracy and public administration, as well as the fight against corruption and efforts to strengthen the rule of law and good governance.

Through our political consultancy we want to support efforts to prevent a situation where we would face “growth without development” a few years down the line. Because then, the years of economic upturn would represent lost years in terms of our core objective – Mission: Democracy!



Dr. Gerhard Wahlers  
Deputy Secretary General

gerhard.wahlers@kas.de