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A new breed of dependency

Europe's Africa policy should be about more than just investment

During this year's G20 summit in Hamburg, heads of state and government of the world's leading industrialised and emerging economies will work to intensify the group's cooperation with Africa. The leaders plan to sign a "Compact with Africa", an initiative of Germany's G20 presidency which provides a framework for supporting private investment on the continent.

Despite the summit's African focus, European economic and trade interests will still get most attention in Hamburg. However, a *progressive* Africa policy would adopt a global approach to foreign, security and development policy. November's Africa-EU Summit 2017 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, will be the ideal setting for Germany and the EU to show that European and African policy goals will not play second fiddle to Europe's own growth agenda.

Heads of states and governments from Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia and Guinea attended the recent G7 Summit in Sicily, and some African guests will also be coming to Hamburg. Their presence, however, does not hide the fact that summits such as these play host to an exclusive club of the most economically powerful nations. Apart from South Africa, not one African nation is a regular member of the G20 working process.

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Social democrats are demanding a paradigm shift in the way policy towards Africa is shaped, not just a declaration of intent. G20 countries whose policies have negatively affected poor countries are now creating investment partnerships with selected states through an initiative called "Africa 2017". Employment and growth in Africa are expected to reduce migration to Europe. But this neoliberal approach strengthens the postcolonial structures that fostered Africa's dependence on the West. It

is far from fair.

Cooperation with African countries should not be limited to issues surrounding migration. Given current global political shifts, we need to revise our relations with Africa.

A progressive Africa policy takes a cooperative approach to transforming African and European societies and economic systems socially and ecologically. It places justice, peace, sustainability and a willingness to help each other centre stage. Any policy initiative for Africa must acknowledge that European colonialism created structures that continue to negatively impact Africa's political, social and economic development. The way to create truly cooperative partnerships is through international agreements and targets like those in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement, as well as concepts from Africa like the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The G20 countries should informally contribute major political points to the Africa policy and strengthen global institutions through coherent interdepartmental action. For its part, Germany should take the lead in presenting its multitude of Africa policy initiatives in a transparent and organised manner to its African partners. The EU needs to get more involved. Germany should coordinate with its close ally, France, and avoid conflicting initiatives. A "Marshall Plan with Africa" proposed by Germany's Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gerd Müller, has only led to confusion.

A progressive G20 Africa policy means opening up the G20 framework and supporting the participation of various social groups. The current dialogue with civil society is welcome but insufficient. The Labour 20 (L20) Process, the (civil society) Civil 20 Process and the G20 Think-Tank (T20) Process deserve to have more influence. Deficits of democratic legitimation could be corrected creatively by using the procedure outlined in the 2030 Agenda within the High-level Political Forum.

The Compact with Africa seeks to create better conditions for private investors in Africa. Of course, economic development through increased investment can help to develop our neighbouring continent. But the investments must be differentiated, sustainable and equitable. They must also be integrated into an appropriate framework for industrial and agricultural economic policy. Investments that do not comply with international obligations to protect human rights and respect ILO core

labour standards cause more harm than good. Special attention must be given to the quality of new jobs and no additional structural deficits created. We also need to review options for comprehensive debt relief. The compact needs a verification mechanism that guarantees the observance of relevant standards and guidelines.

The compact should prohibit illegal financial flows and capital flight through money laundering, tax avoidance and corruption. Thus far only "good performers" like Ivory Coast, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia have been selected for partnerships with G20 states, which suggests that no investments will be made in the poorest, weakest states who need them most. However, reaching long-term development goals requires strengthening those bodies that promote functioning democratic systems, as well as economic and development policies to reduce poverty. Continuing to back authoritarian-led developing countries is not in our best interest.



Niels Annen
Berlin

Niels Annen is Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office since 2018. He previously worked as a policy officer in the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and was a senior resident fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Washington D.C.