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Third International Conference

**African Youth: "Time Bomb" or Historic  
Opportunity?**

Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire  
24-25-26 October 2014

**Summary of Discussions and Recommendations**

The AFRICA INITIATIVE GROUP is an important pan-African, independent, non-profit think tank which aims to bring together leaders from different sectors of African society who are motivated by a desire to instigate the breaks and disruptions needed to truly bring about change and to ensure a better future for Africa.

The independence and originality of the method inspired by the Aspen Institute and a determination to follow-up on the recommendations, makes the AFRICA INITIATIVE GROUP one of the main think tanks in Africa today reflecting on the future of the continent and a key partner for international platforms (African Union, G20, G8 etc.).

The following recommendations are the outcome of the Third International Conference. Two conferences have already taken place: *Peace, Economic Growth and Fair Development: What structural changes are needed?* in 2011 and *How to strengthen the effectiveness of the State in Africa* in 2012 (recommendations available at [www.initiative-afrique.org](http://www.initiative-afrique.org)).

The conference brought together around fifty high-level participants from the fields of politics, business, higher education, art and civil society, including youth representatives.

It took place over two and a half days, during which participants went beyond the limits of customary debates on youth, bringing in demographic, sociological and cultural aspects (on the first day) and the economic aspects of employment (on the second day).

Facts, priorities and recommendations emanating from this far-reaching analysis have been collated in a way to facilitate the choices to be made by public and private decision makers as well as civil society actors for whom this document is destined.

It should be noted that this conference took place a few weeks before the revolution in Burkina Faso...

The AFRICA INITIATIVE GROUP would like to extend special thanks to the sponsors who enabled the financing of the conference and the enrichment of its content.

In particular, we thank its President Charles Konan Banny for his support, the pan-African banking group Ecobank, the French Agency for Development, the French Council of Investors in Africa (CIAN) and all the members and volunteers who actively participated in its preparation.

## **Summary of the main conclusions**

- An in-depth, uncompromising analysis of the current situation of African youth resulted in four key factors, leading to a very bleak prognosis for the future, unless a genuine turnaround of current policies occurs, refocusing them on 2 new “tropisms”:**
- The first tropism repositions youth at the heart of politics, through five key actions.**
- The second tropism puts employment at the forefront of economic policy using 8 action levers simultaneously.**
- This sequence of actions will lead to a true shift in paradigm at the economic policy level, based on the urgent necessity for stronger relevant economic integration, which overcomes current linguistic and currency-related prejudice.**
- The engagement of young people, those who are the most concerned, in carrying out these recommendations will be a deciding factor in the success of this ambitious yet necessary change.**

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## Chapter I - Current state of African youth: an exceptionally alarming situation

### 1) A demographic factor with considerable weight, which must always be taken into account:

All of today's facts (photo) must be considered in light of (film) this considerable demographic growth data, which **represents a historic challenge for Africa that no other society has experienced in the history of mankind**. Of course, as the French saying states "the only genuine form of power or wealth is people", and it would be fairer to talk of "demographic catching up" than overpopulation, given the size of the continent. Nevertheless, this catching up, although legitimate, is problematic and must be anticipated realistically: **a large number of African countries will not benefit from the "demographic dividend" before the end of the century** (the 'demographic dividend' occurs when the number of 'dependants', both young and old, diminishes in relation to the active population), while it **counted for one third of the growth of Asian and south-eastern countries** between 1970 and 2000!

This suggests a recommendation, to all actors and in all sectors, to provide **projected population developments for all public and private budgeting projects**, as **decision intelligence**, so that the **effort put into these projects does not get annihilated by demographic growth**. It was mainly on the basis of this perspective that the conference reflection took place.

Another important comment: we note regrettably that in most cases, due to the lack of firm commitment on the part of governments and the lack of debate within civil society, these **population related issues do not figure as priorities for public policy** and are considered more or less taboo subjects, which is regrettable.

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that without changing habits or introducing coercive measures, a proactive policy simply aiming to **respond to the currently unsatisfied demand for family planning (approx. 30% of women)** is to be encouraged. This would be very profitable in terms of a cost-benefit ratio, releasing **money, which could then be invested in education, health or vaccinations!**  
([How to benefit from the demographic dividend? AFD 09 - 2011](#))

### 2) A silent tsunami.

**Africa is undeniably the youngest region in the world** (2/3 West Africans are under 25 years of age) with 200 million youths aged between the age of 18 and 24. This figure will hit 340 million in about twenty years.

However, while childhood holds a special place in the society, the **place of youth is generally poorly defined and complicated**. Young people are often forced to construct their identities "against" communities and groups, rather than with them.

The definition of youth by age is somewhat fluctuating and unclear in a **system of unspoken gerontocracy** (some men are still be called "young" in their forties!).

But across the continent, **a majority of today's youth** lives in a situation, which could be called "**the ultimate symbol of human insecurity**":

Young people accumulate all the ailments of our society: **mass unemployment, idleness, lack of purpose and opportunities and lack of education!**

Young people are also **frustrated because they feel betrayed** with regards electoral promises: once they have finished playing the role of kingmaker during the election campaigns, youths feel they are victims of **intergenerational indifference and exclusion**.

There is a **considerable gap between different youths, which continues to widen**: those who are well off, and the many others who are not. And also between urban youths and those from the countryside, where the health situation amongst others, is particularly unfair and precarious. The feelings of frustration which result from these gaps continue to increase, aggravated **by the invasion of a certain kind of consumerism**, ever present in the media.

**The internet**, which opens up a virtual world to youths at very little expense, further reinforces the contrast between an egalitarian mass culture and the reality of their lives, which does not even provide them with the minimum means to exist. **Closed horizons** make this virtual world even more attractive, with the risk of losing most points of reference...

### 3) The weakness of transmission systems

In the face of profound changes occurring within the African family and a general collapse of the strong traditional structures of solidarity, social surveillance and education (rites of initiation, for example), the transmission of knowledge and values increasingly taken over by public systems has proven to be deficient:

**Education is in great difficulty**. After the terrible challenges caused by the *structural adjustments* of the 1980s, an enormous effort had to be made at the budgetary level. This **mostly responded to the quantitative challenge** of school numbers, but resulted in a **significant deterioration in the quality of teaching**: programmes remain archaic, teacher absenteeism is frequent, corruption infiltrates grades and exams, and the overall level has dropped considerably.

**Universities**, while very congested, are disconnected from the needs of the market (2/3 of students are taking literary subjects) and thought of as "**factories for unemployment**".

Some universities have become places of corruption and violence, in an environment, which has become unmanageable.

The most serious issue is the **gap, which is being created between education and society**: previously, parents were proud of their children's schooling. Today, for many, a degree is no longer a sign of success, and **local schools have lost their role as a means to climb the social ladder**, vital for the evolution of societies where inequalities are increasing.

Bringing about fears that even when the famous demographic dividend appears, it will never really be able to fulfil its role...

**Television**, which is a mass media with an underestimated cultural and educational role, is very open to foreign media due to the **comparative weakness of local content**, facilitating an outward-looking attitude and the dream of "elsewhere". This contributes nothing to the development of local roots and the recognition of the value of one's own history, which would contribute to reinforce self-esteem.

**The internet** takes up an increasingly large proportion of family time and **accentuates this outward-looking stance**, making communication and proficiency in mother tongues more difficult, and changing the way in which Africa experiences the fundamental values **of sharing, family, faith and love...**

### 4) Worrying signs for the future

The increasing mismatch between the energy and creativity of young people and the lack of opportunities available to them creates a **deep sense of uneasiness**, which is the source of many related anxieties.

What is more humiliating than not being able to make ends meet? Is there a more effective way of illustrating the uselessness and non-existence of a human being, when in traditional societies young

people were given responsibility in different jobs very early on?

The lack of confidence and consideration for others, both of which are vital human needs, plunges the silent majority of young people into a **real masked depression**.

**Violent reactions** to their symbolic exclusion, fuelled by a culture of violence shown on television, tend to become structural, particularly in universities.

Their creativity pushes them to come up with innovative new ways to rebel and to construct an identity based on music, clothing, behaviour... breaking with **religious frameworks and social rules, which are diminishing in importance. Young people either check out or become radicalised.**

Confronted with extreme poverty, many live in a world that is out of step, and those who have made their fortune from crime become role models. Young people are tempted by the **short cuts offered by the grey economy** to affirm their existence and survive: they become members of the militia, "microbes" (young delinquents aged 10 to 17 years), "grazers" (cyber criminals), drug dealers, jihadists...

**Emigration, at the risk of dying**, is also an almost suicidal manifestation of this increasing uneasiness due to the lack of local perspectives.

Another tendency of youths feeling betrayed by politicians, is to organise themselves into political protest groups, sometimes ending in militarisation which could lead them to leave their country to sign up.

Young people then become part of **sub-regional destabilisation factors**, such as Boko Haram (in Arabic: "Western education is a sin") or Al-Shabaab ("the youth"). This *mercenarization* under false religious pretences stems from their difficult environment and more than a means of subsistence, it becomes a way to value these marginalised young people, who gain a sort of "global identity".

### **In conclusion,**

the situation of young people today is extremely **alarming** and despite numerous conferences and political declarations on the subject, **the gap is widening between the world of youths and that of adults**, creating a climate of distrust between them and with institutions in general.

This situation threatens the fragile stability of societies, as **increasingly well-informed, connected young people are becoming aware of their power** while aspiring more and more to take their place in society, whatever the consequences may be, even if they are destructive...It is therefore the **hypothesis of the time bomb** which seems the most likely from this perspective, unless **current trends get completely turned around**, which would clearly highlight two new tropisms:

- **The first tropism would consist in putting youth at the heart of overall policies**
- **The second tropism would be to make employment the primary goal of economic policy.**

## Chapter 2 - Genuinely placing youth at the heart of politics

It is time to **change people's perceptions** of youth and to consider it for its enormous potential for creativity, innovation, energy and generosity. It is this potential that should, in proportion to its mass, **represent Africa's main asset**. We must reconnect with young people and really understand that it is also time for the **entire adult community** to take responsibility for the transformation of this opportunity into a bounty.

Five principal actions must be taken:

- 1) **Truly communicating with youth**
- 2) **Addressing the systems by which values and cultures are transmitted**
- 3) **Re-establishing through culture confidence in one's self and in others**
- 4) **Building a reliable State and a responsible citizenry**
- 5) **The need for a "vision" to mobilize youths**

### 1) Truly communicating with youth

It is impossible to manage a country **without having a deep knowledge of it**. During this complex transitional period, multidisciplinary, sociological, psychological and anthropological studies, which could provide sufficiently detailed knowledge to improve communication with young people, are not a luxury but a necessity.

It is also necessary to be aware of youth's diversity, in particular the differences between young people in cities and in rural areas. And not to minimize the problems due to their unequal treatment, in particular with regards to healthcare.

**Encouraging youth to express itself** through structures which need to be supported and encouraged, such as **general youth assemblies, youth support groups and listening platforms, university assistance offices, teenage counselling centres, etc.** will allow truly instructive communication where ideas are shared and listened to - the basis of all genuine communication.

Attention must be paid to young people, and steps taken to reach them, to bring them out of their 'ghetto', and know how to communicate with them by focusing on their interests and learning to use their communication tools.

For the future equilibrium of society, it is absolutely essential to make these efforts to establish and maintain better intergenerational communication in order to restore a fundamental climate of trust for the future equilibrium of society.

### 2) Addressing the systems by which values and cultures are transmitted

**Education programmes** must be developed to help disoriented families to better cope with the world's evolution. Programmes, which help families, like the "School for Parents" in Senegal, and build bridges between generations, such as "Neighbourhood Mentors", should be continued and encouraged.

**Key areas** where we can take action is **schools and education**, which contribute to the capacity building of the entire nation: continuing to increase access (in particular for girls) while overhauling the quality of the teaching. We should talk about **"quality education for all"**, rather than simply "education for all".

This implies the recognition that **more needs to be spent on education**, so that teachers can be motivated and well-trained (with continuing training throughout their careers), have the appropriate

pedagogical tools and necessary teaching facilities, and improved coordination across the education sector.

**Curricula must be reviewed and renewed** to take into account the positive aspects and values of our civilisations. It is necessary to revise history/geography programmes in particular, from an African perspective, which would include a history of values and democracy, and an economic history of Africa.

We can also create **stronger links between young people and their countries** through education, travel, certain forms of military and civil service etc.

While recognising the **very positive effect religion and faiths have on society in a continent where spirituality is particularly present**, the **fight against derivatives and the temptations of religious extremism** has become an urgent issue. It is important to ensure that **religious instruction** is carried out by experts, trained theologians and/or through scientifically proven religious education.

We must ensure that certain **denominational training programmes**, such as Koranic schools, include the **teaching of basic career-focused knowledge**.

**The improvement of the quality of television and the media** in general is a **crucial issue**. Television, omnipresent and widely watched, is a powerful vector for transmission - a necessity in these times when traditional means of transmission have broken down. Particular attention should be paid to the structure and content of national television. There must be more **debates** to increase understanding and **"enriching" cultural productions**. History and its major personalities - the talents of the continent - must be better represented on television and through social media.

For this, more resources must be channelled into **supporting audiovisual productions** and a **complete audiovisual sector structure must be created today** in order to build a production system, which meets the specific needs of the continent. Nollywood, for example, could be "encouraged" to also produce documentaries on dance, sculpture, the arts, etc.

### **3) Re-establishing confidence in one's self and in others through culture**

Self-confidence and confidence in the future are created through **culture, building self-esteem and respect for the community**.

**The paradigm of youth should not only be considered at an economic level, but also, as advocated by Senghor, at a cultural level**. Ancient Greeks considered culture to be one of the three fundamental pillars of society (the **temple**, for the link with the beyond, the **Agora** to decide on common rules and the **theatre**, where society's common humanity could be experienced through the emotion and intelligence of a shared world).

**Education cannot simply be formatted instructions**, given to the masses entering the market. **It must give individuals the critical capacities they need to invent their own place in the world**. Competence, and recognition of competence, is sources of identity. It is impossible to make progress without a clear sense of identity or the capacity to imagine a future and define our own values.

Culture is therefore not a luxury, but **works as a compass** to give us direction. Certain historic African defeats and the difficulties of transitional periods have caused a great deal of destruction, which is why culture today is an urgent issue - a necessity.

Through spiritual life, artistic activity and discovery, each person can experience greatness. These notions give shape to the often-directionless energy of youth and reinforce its capacity for mental resilience and

adaptation. They allow a common vision to be produced - one, which can be inhabited, shared and used to define shared outlooks.

This change is being brought about. Youth is inventing and renewing the cultural universe of Africa. Young Ivoirians, for example, have invented Zouglou, a response to the cultural transition, which can be globalised. Rap has often been accepted as culture, becoming a space recognised by all, including adults, dedicated to freedom of expression and social critique...

Art - theatre, cinema, music, dance, plastic arts - gives shape to energy, anger, hope... It produces meaning - words which allow democratic collective action and distance us from nihilistic violence.

**Offering young people the spaces and opportunities they need for art and culture, rather than abandoning them to idleness, is a decisive, but all too often neglected, political task.** Nigeria, for example, has 150 universities but not a single modern dance school... The ASCs (Sporting and Cultural Associations) that have existed for a time in Senegal are now a thing of the past. There are fewer cultural centres, theatres, media libraries, and in their absence we are seeing a growing numbers of bars, with the problems of alcoholism and downfall they foster.

#### **4) Building a reliable State and a responsible citizenry**

There is currently a huge problem with respect to the State and more generally the institutions officially responsible for defending public interests: **young people have no faith in them.**

This is in part due to the historical background of the states, which stem from the colonial administrations; to the discredit of the adult world, often perceived as selfish and corrupt; and to the disappointing errors made by politicians. This is at the root of young people's discouragement and apparent indifference, or built-up explosive waves of frustration. .

**But young people are starting to understand that there can be no social justice or fair distribution of wealth without true democracy.** This is where the **notion of citizenship**, understood as real economic and social integration into society, takes on its full meaning. **Citizenship is, in principle, the most important cog in the wheel of political institutions, because leadership is at its service...** It should be developed as a value to create a "**leadership with a mission**".

To accomplish this, we must move from a form of gerontocracy to a convention based on justice, and have the courage to make the necessary disruptions.

This cannot be done **without identifying the scourges of the current adult society** (why does African society develop in terms of community but remains unable to manage community/common affairs?), nor without effective action to **reinforce the efficacy of the State, fight corruption** (see recommendations from the 2011 and 2012 conferences) and to **reduce the increasing inequalities** - especially where these are based on the notorious misuse of public assets...

The leadership must have explicit, reliable values that young people see as exemplary. One possible tool for this is the **implementing of measures to showcase good practices and great citizens.**

**This question of setting an example also touches on respect for constitutional rules, which must not be tampered with.**

In the end, this exemplary behaviour, together with the restoration of the necessary dialogue and attention towards young people, will **allow them to be truly motivated** and when **spoken to truthfully** will understand how complex the situation is.

## 5) The need for a "vision" to mobilize youths

Even united, these conditions are not enough to combat the current culture of easiness and provide the expectations that give meaning to life.

**Politics** must also be capable of producing a **vision that makes sense to young people**. Youth has a huge need for ideals which can galvanise its energy and creativity which only it can provide. But today, we are confronted with an incontestable deficit of ideals and mobilising projects for young people. Pan-Africanism in particular, which remains a shared ideal, has been relegated to a vague, distant future, and is no longer embodied by truly charismatic leaders...

Politics and in a more general sense the community, must understand and use this need to dream, this desire for the future, to recreate not an unrealistic, crazy vision of the future but a **'healthy utopia' of reaching above and beyond, one which expands our horizons...**

What could this be?

Of course, what is most needed by youth, and most cruelly contrasts with its potential, is **economic responsibility** and the means to ensure subsistence and start a family - in other words, **employment**. This **must** be pushed to the forefront of economic policy.

## Chapter 3- Putting employment at the centre of economic policy

When it comes to the need to generate strong growth to absorb jobs, we've **heard it all before**: develop business, improve education, strengthen professional training, stimulate agriculture and reinforce local production...

However, there is a **growing distance between what is being said and what is actually being done** with regards to youth employment, which remains dramatically below the promises of all politicians. Even more ironically, in theory, all of the elements needed for take-off are in place, the "Olympic rings" exist, but they have not yet been connected...

The conference sought to **better understand the reason for blockages** and to develop a **new vision and an action plan** to rise to the major challenge of employment.

Of all the issues, that of youth unemployment is in fact **the most strategy-related and the hardest to resolve**. The demographic perspective must not be forgotten: this is a truly historic challenge. Each year 20 million young people arrive on the labour market, three quarters of whom do not have a long-term or decent job!

However, the **number of jobs generated by African growth is low**: the sectors, which are growing, are not those that create jobs (mines, for example, are strongly capitalist) and productivity is weak, notably in the agricultural sector. **The current 4-5% of average yearly growth is insufficient to absorb these young people** and the gap is widening with the rest of the world, which is today demonstrated by a noticeable global war for jobs.

It is therefore clear that the real priority today is not growth, but employment. This is the criterion on which economic policies should now be judged - **employment should be placed at the centre of all economic reflection and policy definition and constantly evoked in all investment charters!**

On this basis, **8 levers for an action plan** to bring about a real **paradigm change** have been identified:

- **Better knowledge and recognition of the 'informal' sector**
- **Bringing together education and the needs of the African market**
- **Taking inspiration from innovative solutions at a sub-regional level**
- **Re-evaluating the silent power of the African diaspora**
- **"Expanding" the market, a necessity for 'Made in Africa'**
- **Lifting constraints on the expansion of markets**
- **Accelerating realistic implementation: example of ECOWAS**
- **Creating the new positive utopia**

### **1st lever: Better knowledge and recognition of the 'informal' sector**

In the complex economic fabric of Africa, a vast sector which, to some extent **escapes the administrative limits of activity** (often referred to as the informal sector) is characterised by small-scale subsistence activities. Not only does this sector **meet the basic needs of the economy**, but it also **represents the bulk of youth employment** (approx. 70%). Employment is therefore dominated by something "out of the ordinary" that corresponds to the situation of a continent which is the only one having to deal with the twenty-fold multiplication of young people in one century!

We must be careful to **distinguish the informal sector from illicit activity** (trafficking, smuggling, sometimes criminal, **which should be dealt with firmly**) and not to give it a negative connotation. This is particularly important given its **usefulness and the role it plays** in providing employment for young people, as well as its interaction with the rest of the African economic fabric, major public and private

companies (not very inclusive in terms of jobs) and SMEs, still very insufficient in number.

Given its characteristic fragility, and to **avoid young people falling into crime**, this sector, which falls outside administrative norms, must be considered positively, and even encouraged, through the **creation of a flexible framework** capable of freeing up energy and **multiplying interactions with other segments of the labour market**, for example through **contractual relations between agricultural industries and rural family-owned businesses**, intermediation territories between segments (**clusters, free zones, industrial platforms etc.**).

Also, taking into account the precarious nature of their situations and to show the value of young people and employment in its different forms, it is important to:

- **Facilitate access to the small amounts of starting capital needed:** microloans, *tontines*, cooperatives, **investment funds for young people...**
- Encourage young entrepreneurs and provide them with **more information and education, taking into consideration how youth represents itself so as to create appropriate and innovative training systems for them.**
- Take steps to **simplify regulations** and taxes and provide a **minimum of basic social protection**. Keep in mind the vulnerability of young people and therefore the importance of a stable environment and macro-economic climate. Move as close as possible to a recognition of rights: **property, help with citizenship, training...** giving tangible form to a **new sort of intergenerational contract of trust, which could lead to "rights for youth"**.

## **2nd lever: Bringing together education and the needs of the African market**

How can education systems become more in line with the needs of the market when universities are seen as factories churning out unemployable youths? We know that this situation, in addition to the purely economic aspect, is the basis for **serious frustration amongst over-qualified youths** condemned to accepting odd jobs in order to survive. This results in a lack of self-confidence and a feeling of being underestimated, over the long term developing into a feeling that leaders are ignoring them, which becomes a threat to the equilibrium of societies.

### **2-1 Emphasizing scientific and technical teaching - seriously under-represented in the education system**

It is essential to **give youths a taste for scientific and technical teaching** by encouraging all events, which could **increase awareness of science** (such as the Scientific Renaissance in Africa days, the Science and Technologies Biennial AFRISTECH) and links with scientists (Network of African Institutions of Science and Technology - RAIST).

It is also necessary to provide educational institutions, starting with secondary schools, with **lab equipment** – practically non-existent today, despite modular, accessible solutions – and ensure the **training of competent teachers**.

### **2-2 Developing professional training in collaboration with the private sector**

Systems still bear the mark of a state-based vision of society devoted to public employment. Professional sectors, which provide training today, do not result in local employment and do not answer the local needs of employers must be redirected.

This means **bringing together training systems and businesses**. For example, pooling skills thanks to

**public-private partnerships** (with the idea “I’m investing to train the people I need!”) or through the **participation of companies in the administrative councils of professional training establishments**, in order to bring about the sole criterion that matters: the **rate of employability** at the end of the training.

It also makes sense to adapt **training for certain professional fields to be almost informal**, for example in agriculture or craftsmanship (a particularly creative field where a large step must be taken in terms of quality).

Traditional **apprenticeships**, the principal means of access to such jobs, must therefore be **reviewed and revised**: the stakes are essential given the number of young people who currently have no training. It should be noted that the **training market is significant** (9% of global GDP) and should also be seen as an investment, with interesting partnerships to be formed with the state (grants).

### **2-3 Benefiting from new technologies to make major improvements**

The transmission of knowledge is currently **undergoing great changes due to new technologies**, which could allow new answers to old questions, including **massive access and the personalisation of demands for training, with an incomparable cost-efficacy ratio**.

It is now possible to use MOOCs to access the knowledge of the world’s largest universities (which will also compete with local universities in the eyes of the youth) and combat the smallness of lecture halls (Morocco), to generalise teaching quality in schools using tablets (Kenya), and to create virtual universities (Senegal), taking into account the necessity of combining virtual methods and physical attendance etc.

All of this allows us to imagine an **education policy that is innovative and above all financially sustainable**. These new technologies will also permit **life-long learning** – increasingly necessary given the technical evolutions currently taking place.

### **2-4 Instilling a new vision of employment.**

Here, we arrive at the heart of the paradox: the majority of young people are underemployed or overcome by mass idleness when there is a whole continent to be transformed! **How can we better involve youth in the creation of wealth**, whether financial, cultural or social?

**The notion of effort cannot be avoided**: today, there is a certain atmosphere of general lethargy with a great temptation for young people to turn towards a culture based on mediocrity, easiness and appearances. The use of foreign labour is often justified by the lack of locally available talent, in connection with issues relating to the real desire to work at the demanding level required. **A discourse of truth and discipline must be maintained with respect to youth**: we can achieve things here, but only if we work for them! All in the knowledge that it is difficult to work in a climate of general idleness, surrounded by many friends who are not studying...

Simply creating jobs is not enough. **We must create jobs that are sustainable and that motivate young people**. From now on, we must **ask ourselves how they are represented**, how they perceive themselves, and what they think of employment. So for example, when we talk about agriculture, where in many countries this is taken to mean modest growers, if we want to motivate young people of a certain level, we must enlarge and show the value of the whole sector this represents, encompassing the entire ecosystem of the rural world and different segments from packing to logistics, sales and marketing etc. **We must know how to communicate** within the system of representation young people use, and in particular how to ‘visualise’ to pique their interest.

**The concept of employment is changing**. Degrees are less and less a guarantee of a job, and it is

essential that training provides young people with all of the knowledge and confidence they need to find their place in the world.

Young people should not hesitate to create their own jobs, and the notion of **entrepreneurship in the largest sense should be promoted**, as youths sometimes lack realism (not everyone can work in an office) and imagination in this regard (young people often don't know that they can make their projects reality, that it is possible!).

To combat this and motivate young people to show interest in this area, **awareness campaigns should be used to highlight models of success** in various fields.

It is also in this domain that an **intergenerational dialogue can prove very fruitful** – through encouraging a **mentoring system** to bring together younger and older people, contributing to the passing of the flame of success from one generation to the next.

Finally, the **existence of new types of employment** generated all over the world should be communicated to young people, as these also represent **opportunities for Africa**, through ongoing innovations (**digital economy**), environmental priorities (**green economy**), interlocking components (**circular economy**), new modes of organisation (**social economy and fair trade**) and new modes of insertion in local, regional and international value chains. **The diaspora can be a precious asset in this respect...**

### **3rd lever: Taking inspiration from innovative solutions at a sub-regional level**

In this search for more inclusive employment policies, inspiration should be drawn from the unique, innovative ideas being tried in various places, of which **several examples** are given below as only a sample of the **good practices which could be rolled out at a regional level**.

#### **3-1 Culture as a business project: BlonBa**

This Malian theatre company has undergone significant national and international development, **demonstrating that the theatre and cultural activities create lasting employment and produce 'meaning' that can be used to export the rich African culture** (they own a theatre in France). For this to work, the economic model must be well structured: good salaries, professionalism, independence from large distribution networks, broadcasting of Malian culture.

This operating model could be expanded to a national level according to an **original and sustainable financing model** proposed by BlonBa (**Koteso**), which resembles the major success of the **Cultural Centres in Brazil (SECS) and could constitute a model to follow**: the state provides the infrastructure in each area, the management is private, and financing is through chambers of commerce via a percentage (1.5%) for culture taken directly from wages – the principle is inscribed in the constitution.

In terms of the **economic opportunities at play**, it should not be forgotten that the audio-visual exportation of the creative and cultural industries occupies the second position on the American trade balance...

#### **3- 2 Local Safety Assistance Agency (ASP)**

This is a Senegalese initiative designed to ensure security and promote the creation of jobs for young people as part of a project entitled "Local Security Governance": **6,000 young people**, male and female, both educated and illiterate, take action as per a principle of proximity in their social and residential environment, playing a **preventative role for social peace**: fighting cattle rustling, providing security for

markets, beaches and traffic, and improving hygiene and cleanliness. They wear a uniform in order to be visible, but are not armed. They receive a small minimum wage, a bankcard and health insurance.

This original initiative for **creating jobs was inspired by sociology and the local culture, based on community practices.**

### **3-3 The army working for employment: the example of Senegal**

Professional training not only has an effect on growth, but also impacts the security and stability of society. This is why the Senegalese army recruits 2,000 young people every year for a 2-year period of national service, at the end of which 500 are given a permanent position. Over these two years, they are taught 15 technical specialities, thereby training to become **bakers, builders, electricians, headwaiters and more.**

Through this programme, **8,530 technicians have been trained over 8 years**, and generally they represent the first levels of the ‘middle class’, at the **foundation of all developed societies** (the USA, for example, has the largest middle class!).

### **3-4 A centre for insertion for street children: La Voix du Coeur**

An association in the Central African Republic, "La Voix du Coeur" (the voice of the heart), looks after **street children** considered to be ‘lost’, providing them with a dormitory and healthcare and bringing them back to education, with a **45% success rate.**

### **3-5 A reinsertion programme for former soldiers: the DDR**

The Disarmament/Demobilisation/Reinsertion operation for former soldiers in the Côte d’Ivoire, which falls under the framework of the UNOCI (United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire), has obtained impressive reinsertion results through a rigorous framework method, demonstrating that **with the necessary political desire, these reinsertions are possible on a large scale:** of 74,000 fighters, 50% of whom are illiterate, 48,000 have been provided with a job and reintegrated into society.

## **4th lever: Re-evaluating the silent power of the African diaspora**

We still cannot see the full potential force of the African diaspora, despite it being considered as a whole as the ‘sixth region’ by the African Union.

**It remains a silent power.** The movement is underway, but we cannot see it. We simply have to take a closer look at the results of prestigious universities in the USA, UK and even France to understand the importance of Africa in producing the highest level graduates. **It will not be long** before this will appear on a massive scale and the **leadership will be forced to undergo major change.** The African elite controls a large percentage of jobs in African countries, and their children, often well educated abroad, will return to be confronted with the crisis and glass ceilings. This ‘cream’ of the African crop will therefore emerge, and where talent meets resources the African continent will become strong!

**These changes are not far away.** Youths see themselves as citizens of the world, and so it is important to be open to the world and **facilitate the welcoming and emergence of the best talent produced by this diaspora!**

**There are also significant reservoirs of solidarity within the second generation of youths of immigrant origin** that can be mobilised, notably through new information technologies: cross funding, community financing, “home comings” every two years, commitments to find grants and places in US universities etc. There are real stocks of generosity, available financial means and experience.

The positions of power are changing

### **5th lever: “Expanding” the market, a necessity for ‘Made in Africa’**

All of the measures and recommendations given above are necessary, but will they be sufficient to absorb the 630 million additional people who will arrive on the labour market by 2050? Will they have enough impact to benefit from the demographic dividend which, otherwise, risks turning into a demographic ‘deadweight’?

**It is very important to answer this question with realism**, as afro-optimism, just as much as afro-pessimism can be based on false images, clichés and outlooks.

In any case, “Lampedusa” shows that the youth, for its part, no longer believes in a positive future in this respect.

But with regard to a fundamental point, we cannot say they are wrong: it is evident that the **foundation of the employment problem** of a continent, endowed with substantial natural resources and the largest young population in the world, **lies in the necessity of local agricultural and industrial production, on a grand scale.**

This is not the case today, when the **effective economic insertion of Africa in the global production chain remains primary**, largely insufficient and does not create enough jobs. It is in the **transformation** of raw materials that jobs are created and value added to products.

However, improving Africa’s insertion in global production chains **faces major obstacles**, which explain the current foot shuffling in this field:

We can identify **weak productivity** in both the **agricultural** sector (variations from 1 to 400 for cotton between certain northern countries and Africa, for example) and in industry, where the **heterogeneity of geographic and socio-cultural areas and the lack of sufficient infrastructures result in enormous production and transaction costs**, incompatible with the productivity conditions needed for internal production of any magnitude.

This situation is fundamentally linked to the insufficiency of Africa’s economic integration where, despite the existence of legal, fiscal and monetary zones, **regional trade is stagnant at approximately 6% of national production!**

Furthermore, **current international regulations do nothing to simplify this economic emergence**, making this zone, in the aftermath of the tariff dismantling in these regions, one of the most open in the world. What is needed, and what was done sometime in the history of every country, is to protect intelligently these emerging industries.

In fact, there is a **real problem of coherence in public policy** in these zones.

At the sub-regional level, heads of state who follow these dossiers show **more of a ‘performance’ of solidarity than actual solidarity**, and there are no credible sanctions for not applying joint decisions – which contributes to the weakening of regional courts who remain mere ‘observatories’.

#### **Some examples:**

In the **UEMOA** (Monetary and Economic Union of West Africa), the target for **local industrial cotton transformation by 2010** was 10%. However, this figure remains at 3% - the same as it was 20 years ago when the Heads of State of the four countries involved decided on a voluntary policy together! They were meant to meet every year to monitor their objectives – not a single meeting has taken place...

Numerous **obstacles to the circulation of traffic** are found on the existing roads in the zone, and we currently still do not have sufficient, sustainable means of coercion to deal with this crucial problem.

In the **Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS)**, the largest country, Nigeria, has **no worthy transport network** capable of connecting it with the rest of the region.

**The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) zone is even weaker** in terms of transporting people and goods. The financing of integration through the community integration tax (TCI) is highly insufficient here and the **lack of coordination** in terms of exchange policies is blatant. For example, Cameroon is the only state in the region to have signed the Economic Partnerships Agreements...

### **6<sup>th</sup> lever: Lifting constraints on the expansion of markets**

**Current economies are both too fractured and too outward-looking**, with an on-going discourse on development strongly inspired by neo-liberalism, and where international aid is to a certain extent conditional to its acceptance.

**As a result, globalisation is currently more suffered than regulated.** In particular, it seems inconceivable to do that which all countries have done in the first stages of their development – protect their own industry in its early stages!

**It is difficult to reflect on the transition in an endogenous manner**, particularly in the Francophone zone where a vision that channels the African economy through short-term currency stability takes precedence over a **vision structuring the endogenous development which would generate truly productive added value, and above all jobs**, exploiting the complementarity of production zones and employment pools to their fullest.

This is why it is necessary today to escape from this situation where Africa suffers and to provide a structural response where **effective regional integration** can offer new horizons to **construct competitive advantages**. The timeframe offered by **Economic Partnership Agreements** is perfect for this, and is an **opportunity**, but only the **dimension of a larger common market can allow it**.

For this, we must overcome a certain number of prejudices and paralysing myths and escape the outward-looking approach to implement a new economic model that creates a greater number of jobs – in one word **to 'dare', not only to aim big, but to take big action**.

**The time has come to truly bring about change in this geographical space.**

What is needed is a confirmed political desire to instil a more coherent strategy within the States. Not merely as an 'intention', nor as aspired by NEPAD with a political vision but no true popular support, but genuinely and concretely, via accelerated integration into **major regional groups** and with the **informed support of all sectors of society and in particular young people, those most concerned!**

This is the only way that a solution that rises to the challenge posed by the problem of local agricultural and industrial production, and therefore of **employment, can be found**.

### **7<sup>th</sup> lever: Accelerating realistic implementation: example of ECOWAS**

We must move from words to actions and **accelerate effective implementation to move towards integration at sufficient levels, within realistic limits, with the financial means and zeal needed to move past the obstacles that any change of scope brings about**.

A **concrete case** of economic integration is presented here as an example, as it appears to **make real sense** and apply to an existing framework: **ECOWAS**.

This region possesses **all the necessary factors to be transformed into a real opportunity**: the people, the raw materials, the potential, and the complementarities between zones. However, its need for infrastructure, in particular for roads, railways and dams, is flagrant.

But **financial means exist** – without having to wait for lenders who bring their own problems. In reality, this money is **available everywhere in western Africa**, but it is ‘dormant’, dispersed and hidden away safely in banks. In addition, major banks exist in Nigeria, which have no equivalent in Francophone countries that are capable of providing the financing needed to cover these infrastructures.

A concept of this scale is also certain to mobilise the interest of the diaspora, which should be involved.

Currency, furthermore, cannot be a taboo subject. It **must be discussed openly**, in the same way the devaluation of the CFA franc was carried out – in other words, **jointly and in the interest of a fair vision**.

**Mistrust certainly exists** between the English-speaking and French-speaking components of this zone, but this division, the last neo-colonial border, is **artificial**. **Barriers must be brought down and both languages spoken**. In this regard, **young people can be a real asset** – they are today citizens of the world, why not of Africa too?

Young people can only be in favour of this horizon, which will offer them free movement to find employment. **For this, youth must be relied upon**.

### **8th lever: Creating the new positive utopia**

We must be firm in our conviction that linking the "famous rings" of development via **this new paradigm of domestic production, based on an effectively reinforced regional economic integration** is truly the only possible way of avoiding the ‘time bomb’ of African youth, given the extent of the challenge we have just analysed.

Furthermore, this choice represents a **major opportunity for instilling a desire for the future in young people**, stemming from their need for ideals and for an objective, which corresponds, to their real need – employment.

Here, **we do not mean a ‘crazy’ utopia**, a pure utopia. Integration and pan-Africanism have always been present and are even inscribed in constitutions. What we are talking about is launching a proactive approach **based on existing** (if slightly reworked) **frameworks**, and **accelerating a realistic economic and social project**, with employment at its centre and for which **each individual is an actor with their own place**.

This simply needs **to be well taught** in order to **have a definite effect on youth**. Today, young people are already sensitive to these ideas and according to a recent study, they already overwhelmingly approve of integration and the removal of barriers. In addition to facilitating their free movement to find jobs in the employment areas of the region, this feeds on one of their greatest passions – travel (via an African Erasmus?).

With the participation and support of the youth, this alternative will allow the **creation of an explicit citizen demand**, able to catch the attention of politicians if necessary and capable of bringing down the walls of mistrust that have been built. This movement must include **all of civil society** and we can rely on the **African private sector, with the support of foreign partners, to be a driving force behind**

**multiple projects brought about by this expansion of the market**, with all the investments in infrastructure to be made and the decrease in production and transaction costs which would result.

**Finally, politicians**, whose sleep must be surely troubled at the moment by the numbers of unemployed people in the streets, **could see in this a possibility, as well as their historic responsibility**, to leave youngsters, who have never been valued in the history of the world, a **truly promising future**.

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