

Statement on the

Federal Government of Germany's cross-ministerial Concept for Africa

Introduction

VENRO welcomes the creation of a cross-ministerial Concept for Africa by Germany's Federal Government. The VENRO members have long been calling for Africa to attain greater significance in German foreign and development co-operation policy. What especially ought to be welcomed is that the move seeks to promote a more differentiated notion of Africa in the public, countering the image of the crisis continent. In order to implement the Concept, it is necessary to view the African states individually regarding their strengths and weaknesses. In many cases, the encouraging developments in democracy and economic policy are not acknowledged.

However, it is regrettable that the Federal Government's Concept for Africa has only been made available to the VENRO members as a rough structure, ruling out a conclusive assessment. Moreover, until shortly before the consultations with the VENRO members on the 30th March, it was not obvious in what way the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) had been involved in compiling the Concept. Against this background, we note that the rough structure of the Concept for Africa pursues a Europe-centred approach that is rejected by the VENRO member organisations. This approach leads co-operation with Africa back to a paternalism that is generally thought to have long been overcome. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy adopted in Lisbon in 2007 aims at a partnership involving governments, parliaments and civil society. The VENRO members support such a relationship based on partnership. Here, the principles of solidarity and justice come first and foremost.

This is accompanied by concern about a general change in policy pushing the notion of solidarity into the background in favour of economic development. This really would represent an unacceptable paradigm shift in German development co-operation policy.

VENRO regards the people of Africa and combating poverty as the focal point of engagement.

Even if it is to be explicitly formulated “beyond pure development co-operation”, a Concept for Africa of the Federal Government has to be a partnership model contributing to improvements in the conditions people are living in at local level. Problematic areas are missing that still continue to determine the everyday lives of the vast majority of people in wide stretches of Africa. They above all include combating poverty as an overarching challenge as well as the thematic contexts of food security, health, education, gender justice and strengthening civil society as traditional fields of development co-operation.

Universal values and German interests

The Federal Government stresses that German Africa policy “is committed to safeguarding and asserting German interests” while simultaneously being based on “universal values” such as “human rights, the rule of law and democracy as the foundations of peace and justice” (Status Report Foreign Office Department 320 of the 17.03.2010). Again and again, past experience has shown that the two guiding concepts tend to clash with one another. This can above all be reckoned with where interest in safeguarding prosperity in Germany and safeguarding Germany’s energy and natural resource supplies contradicts the right of the African people to food and access to land, water and other resources. Achieving these values and goals is inconceivable without fundamental economic and social improvements for the people, without a fairer distribution of opportunities and goods. This implies that combating poverty and distributive justice in Africa have to assume a leading role in the Federal Government’s Concept for Africa. The VENRO members call on the Federal Government not to assert German interests at the expense of a sustainable, development-oriented development of Africa and the economic, social and cultural human rights of the African people.

Strengthening civil society and political ownership

The Federal Government’s self-obligation to observe universal values such as human rights, the rule of law and democracy as the foundations of peace and justice presupposes a strong civil society. This makes an extended concept of political ownership necessary that reaches beyond formal democratic processes and an etatist understanding of democracy. Development aimed at being sustainable cannot be prescribed or ensured by mere formal participation in

planning. It has to encompass political ownership. Political ownership means *empowerment*, questioning the existing relational and power structures and ultimately changing them in favour of the poor and of weak groups in society with the active involvement of their organisations. This requires appropriate legal and political framework conditions as well as the political engagement of governments in favour of such reforms. We call on the Federal Government to adopt this basic approach and stand up for it in dialogue with the governments of Africa.

Rural development as a focus

The majority of the African population and the majority of the poor live in rural areas. Therefore, combating poverty is inseparably linked to rural development and food security. The production of food must not be restricted at the expense of other economic uses (production of energy plants). Subsidised EU agricultural exports must not result in local production no longer being competitive and therefore having to be given up.

International law obliges the European Union (EU) and its Member States to also observe the human right to food in its agricultural and trade policy and to promote it. The impacts of German agricultural and trade policies in particular on smallholders in Africa ought to be regularly checked in future. VENRO therefore demands that the Federal Government oppose the export of agricultural goods to developing countries at prices below the European cost of production if these products can also be produced by the respective importing country itself. The Federal Government has to actively stand up for an immediate and once-and-for-all ban on all agricultural subsidies, also independently of any conclusion of the Doha Round, which is not likely to come about in the foreseeable future.

The scope available to developing countries to protect smallholders from imported food must not be restricted in the context of bi- and multinational trade agreements, especially if such protective measures appear to be necessary to secure the right to food. Here, it is particularly important to strengthen and support the women in rural regions, who provide 80 percent of people's food in many African countries.

World economy, social justice and structural poverty alleviation

The Federal Government stresses Africa's importance as a strategic partner in the world economy, in combating global warming and in environmental protection. In order to make

such a strategic partnership effective in Africa in the sense of social justice and sustainable development, it has to be coherent with goals and strategies in structural poverty alleviation. The western model of growth is not sustainable. Only an economy that safeguards the conservation of the natural environment and eliminates structures causing poverty will be able to survive globally. It is expressed in forms of community based on solidarity and distributive justice, local resources and cultures, appropriate types of economy and production meeting the needs of the people and enabling them to lead a decent life. This simultaneously creates important prerequisites for peace, conflict resolution and the avoidance of poverty-conditioned migration.

The cross-ministerial Concept for Africa has to be scrutinised regarding its coherence with the development goals of peace, social justice and structural poverty alleviation. Here, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) must assume an important steering role. The non-governmental development organisations are offering their expertise of this given the background they can boast of years and years of co-operation with African civil society.

Promoting adapting to climate change

Adapting to climate change as well as preventive measures are preconditions of sustainable development. In North and West Africa in particular, climate change is having a considerable impact on migration movements within Africa but also between Africa and Europe. The Sahel countries above all are affected by the effects of climate change. Desertification and an increasing number of droughts are leading to water shortage, while agricultural land is being lost, resulting in a decline in food production. Transferring reductions of greenhouse gas emissions from the industrialised countries to the developing countries via the trading of emissions is only possible to a limited degree. Rather, developing countries require emission scope to combat poverty and hunger. For this reason, the VENRO members are demanding a fair climate policy and the observance of the principles of international climate financing: additionality – reliability – predictability – sustainability – appropriateness. Public funding ought to attribute a higher status to a climate-friendly and risk-adapted design of projects. Combating global warming, adaptation and disaster prevention have to be better integrated in the funding of development co-operation.

Clear separation of civil and military missions

There should be a clear distinction between the development co-operation, humanitarian aid and security policy contexts of the Federal Government's Concept for Africa. While statistics do reveal a link between poverty and vulnerability to conflicts (World Bank 2001), simply associating poverty with terrorism and war is a factually wrong and dangerous simplification of matters. Neither is expecting that development co-operation can deprive terrorism of its basis tenable, and it ignores important steps in the analysis of violence phenomena.¹ Therefore, development co-operation and humanitarian aid must not become an instrument of security policy. Rather, they have an objective in its own right that is derived from human dignity.

The limits of military means in resolving conflicts have also been pointed out by officers holding operative responsibility and are becoming more and more apparent in concrete situations. Stocktaking of military interventions so far remains dubious. Given the most severe violations of human rights, of wars, genocide and expulsions, the international community of nations will also have to seek the option of applying military means to protect people and safeguard negotiating processes. Here, it is absolutely essential to legally secure military interventions in the context of the United Nations, place the mission of protecting victims of violence at the centre of the mandate and simultaneously introduce measures for the political, social and economic safeguarding of protective interventions.

Strengthening civil crisis prevention

Civil crisis prevention and conflict management ought to be strengthened in the context of the Federal Government's Concept for Africa. In particular, the area of prevention ought to be developed to prevent violence from breaking out in the first place through appropriate, early civil measures.

The lynchpin of preventive activities has to be to recognise and boost existing abilities and capacities of civil crisis prevention and conflict management at an early stage. VENRO members can contribute important experience from their work, such as experience gained in civil peace service activities. Wars reflect far-reaching antagonisms and changes in society. Supporting and developing such processes requires a lot of staying power as well as coherent action involving the application of various approaches and instruments. This includes a foreign policy oriented on human rights, economic co-operation contributing to mitigating

¹ Cf. "Peter Waldmann: Terrorismus und Bürgerkrieg. Der Staat in Bedrängnis". Munich, 2003.

poverty and development activities strengthening social processes towards the ownership of disadvantaged people and making those in government accountable to their own population. This also incorporates the active support of UN Resolution 1325 by the Federal Government.

Poverty cannot be combated without gender justice

It will not be possible to overcome poverty without the empowerment and participation of women. The German Concept for Africa has to focus on education, training and health care including the sexual and reproductive rights of women as well as on access to technical know-how, advice and credits. This above all applies to women in the rural regions and single parents. The commitments in the “Agreement on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women” are to be implemented in all policy areas in co-operation with the African states. Applying the supplementary protocol to the African Charter of Human Rights on the Rights of the Woman in Africa (Maputo Protocol) is to be supported.

Health is a key sector

Implementing the human right to health is one of the greatest challenges Africa is facing, especially for the Sub-Saharan countries. In the context of its Concept for Africa, Germany has to address this sector on the basis of long-term commitments and even extend them. We welcome the Federal Government’s committing itself to health as a key factor in development co-operation in the Coalition Agreement. Three of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) explicitly relate to health and impact on combating poverty. In particular, MDG5 (lowering maternal mortality) is farthest yet from being achieved. All the other MDGs relate closely to health. Most children and mothers in Africa are still dying from avoidable diseases. The economies of African states are severely suffering from the impact of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Establishing and boosting health systems, providing sexual and reproductive health services including family planning, promoting research and development for children neglected through poverty and training healthcare staff at last have to be given the priority they deserve.

Health is important to development because this is the only way that sustainable development can be achieved. Germany has committed itself to greater engagement in the health sector on many occasions. For example, the Federal Chancellor above all addressed this topic at the G8 Summits of the last few years. Moreover, Germany is involved in various health initiatives or organisations, such as the Global Fund to Combat AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis or the

International Health Partnership (IHP+). However, what strikes the eye is that so far, Germany has only made marginal contributions to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI). This is why VENRO is demanding that the Federal Government address the greater financial requirements that international health initiatives now have and considerably increase Germany's contributions.

Just like in trade and economic policy, coherence is also a necessary prerequisite for a successful Africa policy in the health sector. Coherence is above all lacking in the field of international patent law because the Federal Government is backing stronger patent rights resulting in higher drug prices and is thus putting a strain on precisely those projects that German policy is contributing much money in support of.

Orienting visa issue policy on the partnership

The Concept for Africa is going to address the issue of migration under the aspect of establishing partnership relations. VENRO criticises that the Federal Government's visa-issuing policy has been tightened to an unacceptable degree over the last few years. Long-standing partners of civil society, in particular from African countries, have to subject themselves to inconvenient, humiliating questioning and procedures. Such practice contradicts both the notion of partnership and the aim of promoting good governance, democracy, peace and development via a strong civil society.

Promoting coherence

Civil society is critically monitoring the activities of various ministries in the field of development. This is why integrating the individual activities in a common concept with clear co-ordinating responsibilities makes sense.² However, there is concern that the concept will suffer the same fate as the Federal Government's Action Plan 2015 of 2002, which was intended to serve as a guideline in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The lack of an implementation plan based on contents and schedules resulted in the failure to put this Action Plan into practice. The VENRO members expect the Concept for Africa to explicitly refer to the binding resolutions, such as the Millennium Declaration and the G8 Process (Gleneagles, Heiligendamm). Furthermore, close co-ordination of the German Concept for

² See e.g.: "8. GKKE-Bericht zur kohärenten Armutsbekämpfung in der deutschen Entwicklungspolitik: Eigenständig und gemeinsam: Die Beiträge der Ressorts der Bundesregierung zur Entwicklungspolitik". GKKE (Publishers). 2009.

Africa with the Joint Africa EU Strategy is needed. Moreover, there has to be clarity regarding co-ordinating responsibilities for all of the ODA measures. VENRO insists that the BMZ assume responsibility.

In order to fulfil the coherence requirement formulated in the EU Treaty, VENRO demands that the Federal Government submits an annual coherence report to the Federal Parliament as well as the setting up of an inter-ministerial committee.

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