Cultural Diplomacy in Africa: A Forum for Young Leaders

Berlin, Germany from 11th - 18th June 2010

“The Development Game: Challenges and Opportunities Facing Africa and the Importance of Bridging Sports, Culture and Politics”
Having faced a turbulent history, ranging from the colonial period and legally institutionalized racial segregation, better known as Apartheid, Africa’s revolutionary history has been marked by a growth in economies and democratization. As a result, Africa has not until today been able to define itself politically from within. Africa, being the world’s most divided continent can also take pride in demonstrating diversity in cultures, languages, and religious beliefs. In general, African national identity is multi-faceted and eludes any concrete definition. The artificial boundaries created by European colonial forces as well as the national boundaries of the modern African landscape certainly do not reflect the ethnic affiliations of most Africans. Moreover, there are many linguistic, religious and other cultural characteristics that unify Africans irrespectively of national borders. This „Unity in Diversity“ is exactly why the African continent is so fascinating to study.

Challenges facing Africa

The African people have overcome its complicated history and can look back with pride as to what they have overcome in the past years. Yet, despite their achievements, there are still a vast number of challenges to surmount. Having defeated its colonialist history and eradicated an apartheid political system, the African governments now face new challenges. Africa has the highest proportion of its population dealing with extreme poverty and in South Africa, being relatively affluent compared to the rest of the continent, still has over 40% of its citizens suffering under poverty. This in turn has also led to poor health and spread of disease, in particular HIV/AIDS. Consequently, with a shortage of well qualified doctors and infrastructures, together with poverty, many Africans are driven to migrate to other parts of the world in search of sustenance. This urge is also intensified by natural disasters, war and ethnic clashes. With a huge migration rate, Africa suffers from a serious „brain drain“ where the well qualified professionals leave and deplete the African continent in serious need for these professionals. Africans also migrate into their neighboring countries, resulting in integration and Xenophobic problems.

Corruption is another challenge facing Africa, with many governments abusing their powers for illegitimate private profit, which has been one of the most destructive forces to good governance, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty for the last decades. Corruption encourages maladministration and severely weakens the state and undermines the juridical system in Africa.

Africa’s efforts to establish a sustainable economic and development strategy has been hindered by these obstacles. In order to achieve this sustainability, action needs to be taken on all levels, regional, sub-regional, national and local. These levels must ensure
to truly support African efforts to maintain peace, democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and basic freedom. It is also an imperative to develop a stable education system and research institutions to further increase the levels of qualified Africans to limit the destructive effects of the „Brain Drain.“

**Investing in Africa and its economy**

There are many factors to consider when venturing into the African market. One of the basic steps in evaluating a company’s prospect is through SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), which is one of the most important methods for business strategic planning. In the case of Africa, there are several opportunities for foreign direct investment, such as the use of media, the big population of the continent, cheap labor, and low taxes and duties. At the same time, the impediments refer to the linguistic barriers, the global marketing strategy, the unpredictability in interpreting data and response from new and unfamiliar terrain and also corruptible hindrances. The economic role of South Africa in the Southern Africa Development Community is particularly interesting. Its stock exchange ranks among the top twenty in the world and it can serve as a strong example to other African nations. Although there are major economic centers (Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban, and Pretoria/Johannesburg) beyond these centers, poverty persists and development is marginal. However, South Africa is the largest energy producer and consumer on the continent and also a popular tourist destination, which results in a substantial amount of revenue. Furthermore, South Africa has many international trading partners, such as Germany, the United States, China, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Spain, exporting mainly, diamonds, corn, fruit, gold, metals and minerals, sugar and wool.

**Renewable energy and climate change**

It has long been said that Africa will be hit the hardest by the present climate change and its impact on Africa will be devastating. The international community must work together with the African governments in order to prevent further impact on a continent that
reaps the consequences of the more developed countries and to help Africa overcome these. Climate change is a major threat to Africa’s sustainable development and, in particular, it’s path to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is most vulnerable, especially in the areas of a decrease in agricultural production, the increase of flooding and drought and conflict over land and water resources. South Africa must be employed to tackle this problem too. Although South Africa is not a leader in Carbon Emissions, it is said that it is the world’s 13th largest emitter. It is in South Africa’s interest to take part in global negotiations, in particular the Copenhagen negotiations, to address this phenomenon. The need for renewable energy is paramount, as Africa is heavily reliant on burning wood and charcoal to meet basic energy needs, suffering in due course the impact of deforestation. Renewable energy resources will also help alleviate many problems Africans face day-to-day as it is essential for Africa’s sustainable development and will help protect their environment and eco-systems themselves.

Art, Music and Sport as Cultural Diplomacy
Artistic and athletic activities offer great potential in strengthening the cultural exchange between two or several different countries. The unspoken language of sports and arts transcends national, cultural and religious barriers in a way that traditional diplomacy cannot achieve. Arts and Sports reach emotions and create common grounds which enable individuals to communicate freely and equally. The era of Globalization we live in today requires tolerance and open exchange amongst all people. Particularly in Africa which is the one of the most multicultural continents in the world, it is of utmost importance that differences are looked upon as chances instead of obstacles.

International Soccer Meetings such as the World Cup are great examples of Cultural Diplomacy. In its fascination lies the fact that people from all over the world unite around something as simple as soccer without having to feel the pressure and prejudice their backgrounds label them with.
Arts and Sports as tools of Cultural Diplomacy also draw an interesting link to Nation Branding, which is a country’s strategic objective to stimulate an attractive brand image. In order to obtain a favorable position within the international community, a country hosting an artistic or athletic event for example, will do anything in its power to project an attractive image abroad. Thus, in its unspoken power, Art, Music and Sports as Cultural Diplomacy can greatly influence the criteria of a country’s NBI (National Brand Index).

The future of Africa: What is the way forward?

Even though Africa faces multiple problems, there is hope for the future of the continent in today’s era of Globalization. The continent is struggling to move forward and create a new path towards development and democratic transformation, but with further cooperation and investment, Africa is moving in the right direction. Many governments derive their legitimacy from democratic elections and the sustainable democratic process. At the same time, the new Treaty Constituting the African Union also provides African intervention to support democratic governance. Civil society is increasingly forcing democratic change and putting pressure on governments to ensure that development policies are implemented. The initiation of the Millennium Africa Program proves the commitment by African leaders to take ownership and responsibility for the sustainable economic development of the continent.

Principles of the Forum

We believe in using cultural diplomacy as a tool which can help to lay a solid foundation for Africa to overcome its challenges and embrace its opportunities. The CDA forum intends to bring together young ambitious and active people, with a strong interest in Africa, in order to help them understand the spirit of cultural diplomacy and its significance in relation to Africa. The forum enables them to exchange experiences, ideas and to receive incentives to improve current affairs.
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CDA Forum, 11th-18th June, 2010

The forthcoming forum will primarily focus on the current and future challenges and opportunities facing Africa. Our main concept is to address these challenges and opportunities and examine how these will directly impact on its future. The need for inter-cultural dialogue and the improvement in communication and cooperation is vital in achieving a prosperous, peaceful and politically and economically stable Africa.

In particular, it will focus on the following areas:

- Challenges and opportunities facing Africa, with a detailed focus on its progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the effects of climate change on the continent, political and economic stability.
- How South Africa can be seen as an outstanding example of development and its role in stabilizing the African continent
- Foreign direct investment in Africa and the involvement of international organizations and corporations in establishing sustainable development
- The importance of Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power in strengthening relations between African nations and solving ethnic and tribal conflicts
- The future of Africa and the African Union on the international stage
- Sport as a fundamental tool of Cultural Diplomacy, and its role in facilitating the growth in Africa’s economies

Speakers
The speakers during the forum will include leading figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, academia, civil society and representatives from the private sector.

Participants
The participants will include students and professionals with an active interest in African issues from around the globe.

Certificate of Attendance and Sustainable Network
Upon completion of the Weeklong Seminar, all participants will be awarded with an official certificate detailing the activity of the week and welcoming them to the ICD’s Forum, which assists them in furthering their academic and professional prospects by engaging in a network of like-minded individuals around the world.