**KinG BAUDOUIN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIZE**

**THE BROAD LINES OF A STRATEGY TO CHANGE AFRICA**

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*In spite of its immense assets, Africa is sinking into crisis ….*

1. Almost half a century after they achieved independence and despite the assistance received from the international community the African nation states are sinking into a crisis, which is worsening as years go by. The overwhelming majority of African people is settling into a situation of extreme poverty and food insecurity. More than ¾ of African countries are more or less directly affected by war and its consequences. More than 10 million displaced people are surviving in refugee camps by the grace of international solidarity; 150 to 200 million people live in States where internal tensions might rapidly spark into civil war.

2. The African continent is more and more marginalised on the international scene with less than 3% of world trade to its name. Africa is suffering from great pandemics, from the degradation of its educational system, which increasingly compromises any option of reversing the grave tendencies of its degrading situation. The ambition of the leaders of the Independence Years (1960s) to emancipate the people of Africa has today been reduced to mere poverty. Developing the continent has become an objective that is out of reach of Africa and its people.

3. Yet the African continent has plenty of (physical and human) assets to build a future for itself. The population is overwhelmingly young and the continent abounds with mineral, vegetal and animal resources. In addition to this potential, which has not yet been judiciously exploited, today we find that there is an increasingly noticeable appetite for change, especially among young people. With colonisation definitely behind us, Africans feel more and more responsible for their future. We are dealing better with our past, which has long been vindicated. The continent is opening itself up to the world with exports of African cultural products (music and the arts).

4. I feel that the causes for this paradox lie in the crisis of public action, i.e. of governance, which clearly demonstrates the structural breakdown of post-colonial nation states, the weakness of African leadership as well as the absence of any projects or dreams for this continent. Today the discourse regarding independence and national sovereignty seems rhetoric for states that have come to depend on the international community, even for their own functioning. States that are both too far removed in order to be able to manage the populations’ preoccupations, and too small and too weak to be of any importance in a globalized world. As a result the separation between the real country and the legal country – which is incapable of assuring public service and to guarantee the stability of societies - is growing all the time.

5. The effects of this situation mean that Africa increasingly looks like a lost continent where poverty and illness have become fatalities and where States have revealed that they are incapable and are structurally limited when it comes to producing development and functioning as a framework for such development. This despairing situation exacerbates pretensions and competition surrounding the few available resources. “Every man for himself”, outside the continent, in search of a better future, is the dream of a generation of young people that simply has no other alternative at home. The conflicts regarding who controls the resources not only lead to a reconsideration of the feeble gains of past efforts but also of the integrity of these resources. The continent as a result finds itself in a vicious circle where every conflict generates more despair and poverty and vice versa.

6. Today more and more Africans feel that the future of the continent requires more than just another political and technical patch-up approach, consisting of just another unsuccessful rescue operation as these plans always attempt to reproduce an imported model. Faced with their responsibilities - while also maintaining an open attitude towards the world - Africans should speak up, think lucidly about their future and designate which challenges should be taken up. My project for Africa, and the project of many other Africans in all stations of life, is decentralisation, which will enable the continent to reconnect with its roots, and the establishment of Unions or State Federations on a regional foundation, so that the continent can once again be of importance in a globalising world. These two strategies are the levers to change governance practices, which, after all, continues to be the prime challenge, which Africa owes itself to take up.

7. Not only governance is bad in Africa. The government models, which were laboriously transplanted to the continent, are simply inadequate. The construction of a democratic society, combating corruption and the production of shareable wealth for everyone’s wellbeing, is not feasible without values, standards and references that are known, understood and admired by the Africans. Hence the necessity to redirect the current debate regarding governance. In Africa governance not only has to be improved, it has to be re-established. This re-establishment will depend on the capacity of African societies to help organisations and rules of the games that are suited to their context emerge, at all levels and in all disciplines, while answering the same questions that are asked in societies all over the world.

*…. Change in Africa will not be decreed. Change will be built in time and by persevering based on three strategic processes:*

*I) decentralisation of public management,*

*II) integration of the states at a regional level and*

*III) in-depth reform of the modalities of assistance by the international community for the development of the continent.*

**I. Promoting decentralisation of the management of public affairs in order to rebuild the State and promote legitimate local governance*.***

8. Creating an immediate correlation between the social need felt by local agents and the corresponding public decision : that is the pledge of a democratisation which enables a stronger implication of the citizen in a better public life following a better awareness of expectations, the opportunity of direct dialogue, more flexibility in the responses and the power of control of public managers by the populations. Local governance can only be efficient if the relations with the other levels of power are also taken into account and lead to an exchange, to negotiation and cooperation in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. Adequate local governance should also be capable of taking into account the diversity of interests, including the interests of the members of a local community and those of people at other levels, in order to build answers in accordance with shared values.

9. Establishing decentralised collectivities, within the context of reforms which are ongoing in African countries, is but a first step in this process. But our experience of re-decentralisation of public management should be inspired by a political vision, which is founded on a real desire for change. Strategies that will lead to change in this domain are:

* building a consensus as a foundation of democratic management and a modality of negotiated management of the issues at stake and the aspirations;
* the organisation of competences and power and the affectation of public resources should be founded on the primacy of the legitimacy of the local level. The African State should be re-established by rebuilding its legitimacy starting from the bottom up;
* the search for an adequate link between the various legitimacies that co-exist at local level continues to be the fundamental issue for the stability of contemporary African societies;
* the anchoring of institutional constructions (constitutions and institutions) in the experiences and real life of Africans.

**II. Commit to the construction of large Unions or Federations of States capable of demarginalising the continent.**

10. Social and cultural fusion and the integration of the populations of the various African regions is a natural population phenomenon and is based on a long and eventful but shared history. This tradition should function as a starting point for current attempts at political and economic integration. Competition, which comes with liberalisation and the globalisation of trade, in economies in need, only serves to underline the inequalities and brings about extroversion of national economies. The regional space should provide the fragile African states with a controlled framework for the exchange of goods and services, to harmonise policy, to settle conflict and to generate strategic alliances, when dealing with other regions of the world.

11. But in order to bring about such a dynamic, which requires renouncing and losing sovereignty, a sufficiently explicit project is required, beyond the technical and institutional mechanisms. Such a political project must be discussed and validated by actors at all levels. That is why all policies of regional integration, which can no longer restrict themselves to the financial and economic dimensions, must be seen in a context of a more global issue of establishing federations of unions of states.

12. Africa should rise above the obstacles for forming real unions of states, such as the myth of national sovereignty and the construction of national identities within narrow boundaries. The construction of the Federal States of Africa requires voluntary concessions of « sovereignty », as is the case all over the world.

13. How the regional territory is laid out is one of the fundamental aspects of the integration of States. The continent as a whole is marked by a double migration movement: the hypertrophy of the cities with their belts of bidonvilles and the displacement of populations towards the coastal areas. These intra- and inter-regional migrations, which have been badly managed by States, lead to increased pressure on resources, the degradation of the environment and conflicts of cohabitation.

14. The « border countries » approach, which is based on territories where two or more countries come together and where the relations between the communities are polarized on both sides of the current divide, functions as a lever for a new approach of integration, based on factors of proximity. This new approach of managing current borders might lead to consultation between national, local (decentralised) and community authorities as well as private parties. Consultation, which should result in a sharing of regional resources and shared management of certain socio-economic infrastructure and even of security and administrative services.

15. The creation of regional university centres and scientific research centres is the only way to enable the continent to provide itself with the human resources capable of raising it to the performance level required by tough worldwide competition.

***III. Finally, placing international cooperation in the service of development.***

16. These days it’s almost commonplace to state that development cooperation via the support of the international community (bilateral and multilateral) did not have the expected effect and impact. In spite of many decades of financial aid and technical assistance, the continent finds itself in a situation that is despairing for Africa and its friends. More and more people inside and outside Africa are questioning whether it’s relevant to continue this aid. These days the international community is no longer providing development aid to Africa, it’s trying to reduce poverty, prevent conflicts and finally providing humanitarian aid to reduce suffering. A debate should urgently be started on the renewal of the partnership framework between Africa and the “international community”, so that it acquires a purpose once again and becomes more effective and pertinent. The generalisation of cooperation through budgetary aid is a first step towards increased responsibility of Africans regarding their own choices, but this needs to be taken a step further.

17. The renewal of the partnership framework which must be established between all protagonists assisting in development on the continent can be articulated around the following principles :

         Progressive acceptance, by States, of regional organisations for integration and local collectivities as the new major targets for development aid.

         A strategic partnership to support long-term processes (10-20 years) should be the major axis of assistance provided by the international community towards the development of Africa.

         Development assistance must be ruled by modalities, which raise responsibility with the targets and endorse their choices, thereby also placing them in a situation where they can assume their success and their failure.

         The reconstruction of a space for better coordination of development aid initiatives, in order to overcome competing reasoning between aid agencies and donating countries.

The forms of government that have been bequeathed by the colonizer and whose construction continued after independence

In search of salvation outside the country and even of the continent.

This double phenomenon has been demonstrated for more than a decade already by all the prospective studies concerning the African