

The Significance of Germany's Reunification Day



By: Ambassador Andreas Zimmer

In October Germany is always celebrating the country's reunification. This year it is the 27th anniversary. Most people are unaware that a unique anniversary is approaching: On August 13, 1961, the GDR began erecting the wall and on November 9, 1989, - exactly 10,315 days later – the wall came down. And soon the Wall will have been down as long as it was up. Is it really possible? Yes, it is. A German paper did the calculations and I determined that on February 5th, 2018, Berlin will have lived free of the Wall for as many days as it was forced to bear it. After 27 years of German Unity the new Germany is still in the making. Eritrea has a similar experience: 26 years of independence is a short time period, many things have to be built up.

So it is in Germany, the experiences of the people in east and west are different and you see this in the election results when you compare the figures from the east and the west. But we cannot ignore the aspirations of the people and just go on and do not respect their wishes. Germany launched end of 2016 a “Marshall Plan with Africa”.

Why do we need a Marshall Plan, why is a Marshall Plan with Africa necessary? Every year, almost 20 million additional young people join Africa's

labour market. There are not enough jobs for them. The neighboring continent to Europe often serves only as provider of commodities, with the lion's share of processing and value addition elsewhere. We have to stop the exploitation of the natural resources of Africa. Developing the economy and creating new opportunities for employment and vocational training are thus the core challenges in the coming decades. We'll need an entirely new dimension of cooperation, and that is what the Marshall Plan with Africa is about. It is plainly unacceptable that Africa is losing more money (ca. EUR 50 billion) because of tax evasion and tax avoidance than it receives in ODA (official development assistance).

We need a paradigm shift – away from the outdated concept of donor and recipient countries and towards a new type of cooperation guided by common interests and commitment. So we are investing in reform partnerships. Many people associate the phrase “Marschall Plan” with lavish financial resources, but government funding is not the solution to all the challenges Africa faces. 2017 is Africa's year – the year when the G 20, under the German Presidency, makes Africa a priority for the first time and the EU and the African Union use their autumn summit as a opportunity to deepen their cooperation.

What does this mean for Eritrea?

President Isaias stressed in his recent interview the focus of his government on ensuring food security and on building the necessary infrastructure to harness water as a foundation in order to incrementally expand irrigation by marshaling the necessary capital and technical investment. On the international level the President called for more cooperation of the African countries amongst themselves and a restructuring of the African Union. Africa still faces challenges. Agricultural productivity is low and Africa spends over \$ 35 billion per year to import food, in spite of the fact that Africa has over 65% of the world's arable land. Africa accounts for only about two percent of global merchandise exports and this has been the case for decades. In addition, the manufacturing sector in Africa accounts for only 11% of GDP, intra-African trade is just about 15 %, as opposed to 69 % for Europe and 53 % for Asia.

Germany wants to contribute to a better economic cooperation in Africa and at the Horn of Africa. For this we need greater participation in international politics. This includes fairer global trade and better regulations on globalization. It also means a better representation of Africa in the United Nations, on the other side that these countries naturally also have a responsibility to help make our world sustainable and peaceful. Only through dialogue, reliable treaties and

strong international organizations will we be able to bring order to this chaotic world once again.

Germany would like to work together with the Eritrean government to achieve these goals. Germany want to invest in the Eritrean youth by improving the skills of the young people who do not have the opportunity to pursue an academic education (vocational training). Details have to be worked out between the two governments. The German Federal Government will further support the German medical associations (e.g. Archemed, Hammer Forum, Medcare, Pro Eritrea e.V.) who come to Eritrea and are doing a fantastic job in helping people and support the training of medical personnel.

Our cultural activities will also be pursued to bring German artists to Eritrea and bringing German and Eritrea people closer together. I want to mention the concert of the Leipzig Quintet on October 25, 2017 but also our cooperation with the Eritrean Commission of Culture and Sports, the Eritrean Musicians' Association (new instruments, new equipment for teaching), the support of the Eritro-German Center and the National Museum of Eritrea (Qohaito).

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