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**Building Blocks for a Contemporary Philosophy of Cooperation with Africa**  
**Speech by former Federal President Professor Horst Köhler**  
**at the symposium in memory of Professor Franz Ansprenger**  
**African Science Meets Practice**  
**6 September 2021, 6 p.m. at the Bonhoeffer Hotel, Ziegelstraße 30, Berlin**

- *Official Translation* -

Many thanks, Dr Eid,

And many thanks to the German Africa Foundation for organising this symposium.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Looking at all of you, Franz Ansprenger's many former students here in this hall, we can see the decisive role he played in African studies in Germany and in our understanding of the African continent! I am delighted to be among so many friends of Africa today.

The facts show how important it is to continue his life's work. When Franz Ansprenger founded the *Arbeitsstelle Politik Afrikas* ("Politics of Africa Unit") in 1968, Africa had about 400 million inhabitants. Today it has around 1.3 billion, and by 2050 it could be two and a half billion, representing a quarter of the world's population. Africa's global weight is growing rapidly not only demographically but also geopolitically and economically, as well as in terms of security policy, climate policy and culture. Whether the continent becomes a new, climate-neutral growth pole of the global economy – and it has the potential to do so! – or a source of crisis of unprecedented dimensions will have repercussions, especially for Europe. The alliances African governments form are also likely to play a role in the new systemic conflict between liberal democracies and autocratic regimes. Either way, African studies is needed more than ever.

The issues addressed at this symposium are well chosen: from German-African economic relations to the transformation of African agriculture and developments in the Sahel to the role of the African diaspora in the development of their home countries. And the symposium title is also heading in the right direction: African Science Meets Practice. Franz Ansprenger always considered it one of his most important tasks to bring his findings to the people. A "venture" – that is what he called the attempt to summarise 5000 years on 128 pages in his "History of Africa". And I would also use the term "venture" for his reference in the foreword to the third edition in 2007 of the then current Federal President and his initiative Partnership with Africa.

Indeed, I am pleased that interest in and attention to Africa have increased worldwide, also in Germany. In our country, however, Africa policy is – whether directly or indirectly - mainly about “combating the causes of flight”. There is still far too little acknowledgement that Africa, based on its demography, geography and, let me also emphasise, history, is a natural partner for Europe and thus also for Germany when it comes to solving the major challenges we all face. Climate change, the different demographics, now the pandemic: I certainly consider Africa and Europe as having a shared destiny to a degree, one that demands a new philosophy of cooperation between the neighbouring continents. Let me briefly outline three central ideas:

First and foremost, what we need is a fundamentally new political approach - one that disposes of all paternalism towards the neighbouring continent. An approach that recognises the African Union and its 55 member states as independent political subjects with their own responsibility, their own will to act and their own options for action. And, despite all the difficulties that exist in practical cooperation with African partners, we should not overlook the fact that the institutional foundations of the African Union, its member states, Agenda 2063 and the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) are characterised by democracy, the rule of law and market economy. The will of African politics to work its way out of economic poverty is documented by the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The AU’s fledgling Africa Centre for Disease Control has also demonstrated a willingness and ability to act during the pandemic. A new generation of African entrepreneurs, researchers, public intellectuals and think-tanks has long stopped waiting for solutions from the West but is striding forth. If we want to foster true partnerships, we would do well to stop over-estimating ourselves. Applied to science, this approach means giving up sovereignty of interpretation, questioning one’s own concepts - as Franz Ansprenger did when he wrote about democracy in Africa, for example. It is fitting that the next conference of the Association for African Studies in Germany in 2022 will be entitled Africa-Europe: Reciprocal Perspectives. Without reciprocity, honest partnership cannot flourish.

Secondly, a new philosophy of cooperation requires much more curiosity and knowledge about the dynamics of change in Africa (both positive and negative). This requires investment in human and political resources, in structures for exchange with African institutions, in more Africa expertise in politics and society. I am pleased that, for example, the partnerships between Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda or North Rhine-Westphalia and Ghana continue to strive. But here, too, I would like to see the exchange between parliamentarians from the countries

concerned intensified and scientifically accompanied (indeed I would also like to see the same for Members of the German Bundestag). This can in itself generate more mutual political understanding - and, if necessary, more well-founded political patience. In any case, I would like to hear more African voices in our debates on Africa policy. We now have an African think-tank based in Berlin, the Africa Policy Research Institute (APRI) - I welcome this and am curious to hear what it has to say. I regret that the Institute for Applied African Research initiated by the Federal Government has yet to begin its work. The state, the economy, civil society and academia need to think about topics such as the transformation of agriculture or the industrialisation of Africa in connection with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and develop joint strategies. And it is also clear that the residence and work of African researchers in Germany must not be hindered by lengthy visa procedures.

Thirdly, for a new philosophy of cooperation, we do not need to cover up the obvious asymmetries between our continents invoking "eye level", but to identify these asymmetries and find productive solutions for both sides. Let me mention three strategic issues: 1.) Sections of the German economy are already suffering from a lack of trained workers - African young people need prospects and jobs! 2.) In Germany, an ageing society has high savings - in Africa, a young society needs real economic investment. It is time for the German financial sector and the German Government to develop ideas for Africa infrastructure bonds, for example within the framework of the Compact with Africa. 3.) In Germany, huge demand for climate-neutral hydrogen is emerging - in Africa, the conditions seem to be ideal. Turning such asymmetries into win-win solutions is certainly not easy and requires political courage. But strengthening this courage is also something that science can do by laying the groundwork.

In the long term, then, what we need is a new strategic German - and that must always mean inherently European - Africa policy. A policy that takes our neighbouring continent seriously as a political partner with its own priorities and potential.

In the short term, however, active solidarity is the order of the day. Not even two percent of the population in Africa is fully vaccinated against coronavirus. The continent urgently needs vaccine doses and, in addition, support in setting up its own vaccine production. The German Government has so far rejected a suspension of patents during the COVID-19 pandemic, known as the TRIPS waiver. Instead, it is relying on support for voluntary know-how transfer. BionTech has meanwhile concluded agreements with South Africa and most recently with

Senegal and Rwanda. This we welcome. However, this strategy will have to be measured by how quickly it actually makes the necessary vaccine doses available in Africa.

Africa now needs not only vaccines but also access to additional funding to overcome the economic collapse caused by COVID-19. A fortnight ago today, the largest allocation of Special Drawing Rights in the history of the IMF became effective, around 650 billion US dollars. The German Government supported this decision. It should now also make it possible for Germany to participate in the “on-lending” of its extended Special Drawing Rights to African states.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Franz Ansprenger opened many people’s eyes to our neighbouring continent. You all prove how successful he was not in performing missionary work in Africa but in igniting people’s interest in the continent. For many people, the simultaneity of need and awakening, of stagnation and innovation in Africa is confusing. But that is precisely why it is so important that all of you in academia and practice help to make the complex African realities more visible and understandable, that you shed light on the inner-African debates, of which we in this country hear far too little.

Thank you very much and have a good symposium!