



**AFRICAN YOUTH FOUNDATION**  
*Afrikanische Jugendhilfe e.V.*  
*Fondation de la Jeunesse Africaine*

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English

**Final Report  
of the  
African Business Entrepreneurship Network (ABEN)  
West African (ECOWAS<sup>1</sup>) – German Business Roadshow  
on  
„Trade and Investments in West Africa”  
3 – 7 June 2008**

**I. Introduction**

1. **“TRADE AND INVESTMENTS IN WEST AFRICA”**, was the topic of the prestigious African Business and Investments networking event organized under the flagship of the **African Business and Entrepreneurship Network (ABEN)** from **3 – 7 June 2008**, in Germany. The Business-2-Business roadshow event started from Berlin through Frankfurt and ended in Bonn. The event was organized by the African Youth Foundation (AYF) together with the JANERO Consultancy GmbH in Germany.
2. The number of African descendants living in Europe is growing and so are the demands. What unfortunately is still not recognized is that, some of the African Diasporas today are the richest in the world when we refer to knowledge, talents and skills. We have top financial executive, scientists, social scientists, medical doctors, teachers and hard unskilled workers. Most of these Diasporas have had the opportunities of working in top institutions, both in the public and private sectors, as well as experience

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<sup>1</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

from the motherlands; yet at places where it matters most, that is in making the rules and regulations of the said countries, these very same diasporas, are those who are left out. It is in this context that the management of the AYP, decided to hold a business network event under the theme:

**“African Business and Entrepreneurship Network (ABEN) “**

with a focus on an **ECOWAS-German business roadshow** on:

**“Trade and Investments”**

from **3 - 7 June 2008**, in Germany.

3. The need was identified by the AYP due to the numerous enquiries from the Diaspora youth, entrepreneurs, civil societies, Institutions and organizations. The second ABEN event in this series was organised in a form of a Business-2-Business roadshow, which started from Berlin, through Frankfurt and ended in Bonn, Germany.

**II. Aim**

4. The aim of the **African Business and Entrepreneurship Network** was to serve to connect the African Diaspora business community with other Professionals, investors, businesses, Entrepreneurs and students, to secure exposure and gain insight in business and investment opportunities in Europe and Africa.
5. A platform for African Diasporas in Europe as well as Africans on the continent, to look at alternative partnerships, rather than the sole role of development aid which hasn't unfortunately, aided or developed Africa as expected.
6. The focus was on:
  - Trade and Investments,
  - Banking, Investments,
  - Health and Education,
  - Information Technologies,
  - Entrepreneurship (Youth und Women) and Mineral Resources from Africa.
7. A second-time event of its kind, the theme was necessarily broad in its focus and in participation in terms of participant's interests and areas of involvement. The organisers however, managed to structure the event to benefit from the cross-fertilisation possibilities of broad thematically streamed presentations that enabled interaction and action pointers.

**III. Berlin: 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2008**

***Economic growth, policies, trade rules and regulations***

8. The African Youth Foundation (AYF) ECOWAS-German Business Roadshow on **„Trade and Investments”** started in Berlin on 3rd June, 2008. The event was opened by the Moderator, **Prof. Dr. Edward Kwakwa**; *Legal Counsel, World Intellectual property Organisation, Switzerland, and an Executive Board Member of the AYP.*
9. **Her Excellency Madam Fatoumata Sire Diakite**, *Mali Ambassador to Germany* in her opening speech, gave her remarks about the EPA and why it could be a disaster for

Africa, which in her opinion, countries like Ghana and Ivory Coast has signed up to, to the disadvantage of the African continent.

10. She also made mention of the south-South trade relations which could be beneficial to African countries, just like the South-North trade relations. According to her, Nigeria for example sells its oil to the US, and Mali buys this oil back from the US. Whereby, a direct trade between Mali and Nigeria could have benefitted the African countries just like the US as well. IN her opinion, this was a man made problem which has become possible as a result of the unattractive legal framework in some African countries.
11. The Discussion Forum on: “**Economic growth, policies, trade rules and regulations**”, was opened with the panelists who gave their input. As Panellists were:
  - **Mr. Eckhard Volkmann**, *Globalisation, Trade and Investment Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)* ;
  - **Mr. Stefan Schmitz**, *Director of the Africa Section, Bundesverband für Wirtschaftsförderung und Außenwirtschaft (Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade)*;
  - **Prof. Dr. Charles A. Yankah**, *President of the Deutsch-Ghanaische Wirtschaftsvereinigung*;
  - **Ms. Ama Pokua von Perreira** *Trade Lawyer from the von Perreira Chambers in Germany*;  
and
  - **Dr. Brando Okolo** of the *Institute for Materials Science and Engineering I in Karlsruhe, Germany*.
12. **Mr. Volkman** commented that there was no reason for any ACP country to break any of the trade rules as a means of survival. In his view, countries had to learn to liberalise their own trade rules which could be to their benefit. He also informed participants that African countries have been protected by the European Union for the past 15years, and one of the methodologies for successful trade terms could be an Aid for trade contraption. Aid to trade shouldn't only be on the international market level, but on the local market level too. Markets opportunities could be created if markets were liberalised. He concluded that from the current state of trade affairs between Africa and Europe, trade policy designs had to be renewed to suit the current market change.
13. According to **Mr. Schmitz**, a focus on services and not only on goods from Africa would be a beneficial aspect for both continents, which needed to be addressed. In his view, stakeholders should concentrate on competitive business areas especially when the issue is about Africa. These areas seemed to be neglected because there is often a lack of concrete business opportunity information available. In such cases, what are mostly available are only public tenders as business opportunities for Africa and not other business areas from Africa. In his observation, the classical delegation visits were not always efficient for identifying business opportunities in the African countries.
14. **Ms. Von Pereira** expressed her scepticism on some trade regulations which in her opinion, were based on divide and rule tactics in Africa, which only weakens the regional African regulatory processes. According to her, the solution to some of these trade issues could be the ECOWAS countries for instance, bringing in their own regulations to have better market access to other African countries.
15. **Prof. Yankah** reminded participants that, without the engagement of the Diaspora in the African economic development situation, the cycle couldn't be completed. According to him, legalities of establishing businesses in the ECOWAS region, cite Ghana for. E.g.: was an educative process of educating investors, for instance, working with the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) in Ghana for partnerships, as most investors were

ignorant about legal framework in Ghana for example, and the same could apply to other ECOWAS countries too.

16. **Dr. Okolo** finalised the panellist list by informing participants about the lack of trade negotiators in Africa which in his opinion, was a major predicament. Diasporas had to form trade negotiating unions to monitor such negotiations. According to him, the environment of economic landscape was not well monitored e.g. labour costs being far too low as compared to most countries in the world making it impossible for high production capacities which doesn't help the countries in global competitiveness.

#### IV. Frankfurt: 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2008

##### *Banking, Investments, Information Technology, Health and Education*

17. The roadshow continued at Frankfurt on **6<sup>th</sup> June 2008** where the theme was on: **"Banking, Investments, Information Technology, Health and Education."** As moderator for the forum was **Mr. Kofi Kakraba Pratt**, who is the *President of the World African Rights Nexus organisation (WARNX)*, with secretariats in both Ghana and the United Kingdom.
18. Opening the forum was Minister Ayodeji Ayodele, who represented **His Excellency Alhaji Abdul Rimdap**, *Nigeria Ambassador to Germany in Berlin*. In his opening speech, the honourable minister indicated that, we are just beginning to witness the growth, consolidation and expansion of banking institutions in West Africa. To have a healthy nation or group of countries, we will require healthy work forces that have the required skills to manage and move the economy forward. Our nations must continue to provide the required medical and educational services to our peoples, to prepare them for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Education must, of necessity, be tailored to the needs of society. He also went on to say that; we have had philosophers from the times of Aristotle and Plato. What West Africa requires today are skills in science and technology, within the sub-region which could be borne out of the conviction that the private sectors of our nations are the engines of growth of our economies. His hypothetical question however was:  
***"How developed are the instruments in West Africa necessary for efficient Trade and Investment relations with our partners". In other words, how effective is the enabling environment for Trade and Investment relations?"***
19. As Panellists were:
  - **Mr. Francis Arthur**, *Country Manager, Unique Trust Holding GmbH Ghana/Germany*
  - **Prof. Dr. Bengt Heno**, *CEO, Diasporalink AB, West Africa/Sweden*
  - **Mr. Bernhard Kuhn**, *Director, TOP Business AG, Germany*
  - **Dr. Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck** *Research Fellow, European Union Project: Searching For Neighbours; and*
  - **Dr. Med. Osei Gyapong**, *West Afrika Zahnarzt e.V, Germany*
20. Passionately discussed in this forum was the concept of commerce by African banks in both Africa and Europe. It was identified that Africa contributed to an international arena that Africa didn't help in creating and thus mostly remained at the disadvantaged edge. Cite the number of European banks that are active in Africa as compared to the number of African banks that can break through in the European arena.

21. It was also mentioned that the private sectors were those who were calling the shots in most countries as most private sectors were richer than some governments. An opportunity which most African Diasporas could make use of. Although in most African countries, the government is the largest employer for several areas, a few businessmen are those who are dictating the rules in Africa.
22. A success story is the Unique Trust Financial Services in Ghana, which now has a branch in Hamburg, Germany. An institution spearheading the possibilities of private initiatives and the encouragement of Diaspora projects through financial services which conventional banks don't offer to those in need of such services.
23. It would therefore be beneficial for the contributions of Diasporas to be channeled into such business efforts rather than governments spending money on lobbying activities which in most cases, doesn't even disseminate information from Africa to most of the Western Countries.
24. Some project proposals were identified and action from the various groups will be followed up the execution of such projects.

#### V. Bonn: 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2008

#### *Business Dinner: Entrepreneurship (Youth and Women) and Mineral Resources from Africa*

25. The ECOWAS-German Business Roadshow which started from Berlin, through Frankfurt, finally ended in Bonn on **7th June, 2008**. The Bonn Event offered a Business dinner under the theme: “*Entrepreneurship (Youth and Women) and Mineral Resources from Africa*”.
26. The ABEN Business Dinner began with a brief workshop on: “**Women and Youth Entrepreneurship,**” which was organised by the Universal Leaders Group. The main event then started with a networking reception for participants after the workshop.
27. Opened by the moderator of the Event, **Mr. Kofi Kakraba Pratt**, the event took place at the Königshof Hotel in Bonn. Guests were provided with printed information about the African Youth Foundation (AYF) and partners, as well as the ABEN event before being guided to their respective seats in the conference hall.
28. In her opening and welcome speech to attendees, **Dr. Paulyn Jansen**, *the Executive Director of the African Youth Foundation*, laid emphasis on the awakening bell, that Africans can't always leave the platform for others to decide their fate for them, especially when the issue was about business and investments from and for African diasporas.
29. She also pointed out that, the days of parenting Africa was gradually getting exhausted, likewise were the days of hairdressing, cookery, drumming and dancing events as the sole progressive activities for Africa, which are now taking their own special places along the way. In the year 2008, it was evident that Africa didn't only need to export its human resources as an economic source, but rather, with better management of its natural resources in the form of responsible bilateral trade terms, this blessed and lovely continent will be able to solve most of its problems.

30. She went on further to explain that when the issue was about trade, Africa was unfortunately always reminded about its bad governance, but how could African countries have good governance when the rules outlined for this very governance were bad? Who made those rules and to the advantage of whom? Were the very people who were supposed to abide by these rules involved in the process of the making of these rules? To prove that bad governance was nothing more than bad rules, we just had to take a look at one country, which didn't peg its trade and investment projects on good governance rules and is still very successful: **China**. It was doable if we are willing to make it happen, she commented.
31. The event followed with a speech from the keynote speaker of the year. The 2008 keynote speaker was **Mr. Richie Okorie** of *CEO, Sorol Logistics and Management GmbH, Germany (www.sorol.com)*, Germany, and the **AYF ADLER Entrepreneurship Award** winner for the Best Diaspora Professional Entrepreneur in 2007, who motivated and inspired participants with his success story as an entrepreneur and business professional.
32. Other speakers who presented success business stories were:
- **Mr. Christophe Kabambe**, *Lawyer from the Kabambe Chambers, Germany* on **Trade and Investments: Mineral resources in Africa**
  - **Ms. Afra Gyekye**, *President of the Universal Leaders Group on African Diasporas and Investments*; and
  - **Ms. Fatoumata Traore**, *Diaspora Women's Group, West Africa*.
33. After the presentations, Dr. Jansen came on stage to announce the need for Diaspora initiatives organised and executed by Diasporas themselves other than always looking for western institutions to approve and support their projects.
34. **ABEN**, as aimed by the organizers, and with the agreement of some participants, has become a new development paradigm, based on broad participation of the masses in market driven economic activities. This paradigm is expected to contribute to how continental and Diaspora Africans can offer a road map to the creation of entrepreneurs and business asset owners through education and investments.
35. Become a partner in promoting success and entrepreneurial spirit in Europe and Africa!
36. The next event in this series is planned for June 2009.
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The Bonn event is sponsored by InWEnt, Capacity Building International on behalf of the Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family , Women and Integration NRW

