

African Governance: Pressing for Transparency, Reaching for Change

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- As international transparency initiatives shine spotlights on corruption, African civil society must demand accountability of national leaders
- Economic diversification helps lessen corruption by enrichment in ways other than political power
- For more information about the World Economic Forum on Africa, please visit: <http://wef.ch/africa13>

Cape Town, South Africa, 9 May 2013 – In a lively discussion at the World Economic Forum on Africa about the role of business and civil society in governance, leaders challenged African state and non-state actors to use newfound transparency initiatives to change, rather than accept, bad behaviour. “ Our people are more and more educated, more demanding, ” said Joaquim Chissano, President of Mozambique (1986-2005). “ This requires a change in the attitude of leadership. ”

Chissano hailed the greater degree of interest on the part of citizens in government, and pressed for this to lead to greater participation in democracy. “ I ’ m happy to notice that, in Africa, there is more and more awareness about the value of governance, democracy and leadership, ” he said. “ The world is changing, and Africa is changing. ”

“ People are better connected now, so there ’ s more transparency, ” said Ibrahim, Chairman, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, United Kingdom; Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum on Africa. “ The leakage of information means you ’ re going to be able to read everybody ’ s e-mail. ” Ibrahim hailed the United States for their active enforcement of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, along with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act as a means “ to force transparency ” . The Chinese and others need to enact similar legislation to match European and US initiatives, he suggested. “ We need to keep pressure on our own governments to force more and more transparency. ”

Robert Greenhill, Managing Director and Chief Business Officer, World Economic Forum, added: “ Communities are also being challenged because of the role of young people – enabled by technology – demanding transparency. ” Ian Shapiro, Sterling Professor of Political Science and Director, MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University, USA, added that changing the rules will not be enough, as “ many of the necessary changes are rooted in the economy. ”

“ The level of awareness has increased, and when you get towards that level of awareness, do you go towards acceptance? Or do you go towards change? ” asked Akere T. Muna, Vice-Chair, Transparency International, Germany. “ I worry that, in Africa, we are headed towards acceptance. ” Muna also called for greater accountability for banks and others who shelter ill-gotten gains. “ The guy who holds the money is equally as guilty as the guy who put the money there, ” he said.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, Oxfam International, United Kingdom, spoke of her organization ’ s ranking of chocolate companies based on labour conditions in their supply chains as a means of harnessing “ the power of the people ” . She called for greater protection of human rights, as well as “ frameworks that protect the environment, and frameworks that promote accountability. ” Raenette Taljaard, Senior Lecturer, Public Policy, University of Cape Town, South Africa, concluded: “ There is clearly a whole new nature of the discourse between government and the citizens. ”

With the support of the Government of South Africa, the World Economic Forum on Africa is being held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 8 to 10 May. Over 1,000 participants from more than 80 countries are taking part. Under the theme Delivering on Africa ' s Promise the meeting ' s agenda will integrate three pillars: Accelerating Economic Diversification; Boosting Strategic Infrastructure; and Unlocking Africa ' s Talent.

The Co-Chairs of the World Economic Forum on Africa are Frans van Houten, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of Management and the Executive Committee, Royal Philips Electronics, Netherland; Mo Ibrahim, Chairman, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, United Kingdom; Mustafa Vehbi Koç, Chairman of the Board, Koç Holding, Turkey; Frannie Léautier, Executive Secretary, The African Capacity Building Foundation, Zimbabwe; and Arif M. Naqvi, Founder and Group Chief Executive, Abraaj Group, United Arab Emirates.

Notes to Editors

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