

Speech of Ambassador Christoph Retzlaff at the University of Ghana, Center for European Studies - 25th April 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

it's a pleasure to be here today at this second lecture of the recently founded Centre for European Studies. The German Embassy is proud to support the Center in its important work. It's a nice coincidence that this year we celebrate 60 years of Ghanaian independence, 60 years of partnership between Germany and Ghana and 60 years of the EU-founded by the Rome treaties on 25 March 1957.

Today's topic is the AU and the EU. There is a strong partnership between the AU and the EU and this partnership is founded on shared values and common interests. Our cooperation is aiming at sustainable economic development, democracy and human rights, good governance and peace and stability. Africa and Europe are neighbours and partners. And our partnership is not only between governments – it's also between civil society, business communities and churches.

Africa is gaining ever more importance in the world of the 21st century. In 2050 Africa will be home to 2 billion people. Africa is a global player and it needs unity and a common voice to promote its interests on the global stage. That's why the AU is so important.

And there are other reasons why the AU as well as the EU are so important: in a globalized world more and more countries are facing challenges that don't stop at national borders and require common action: you just have to think of the financial and economic crisis,

pandemics such as Ebola, the growing threat of terrorism and last not least the plight of millions of refugees worldwide. I'm convinced that these global challenges require global actions that can be delivered much more effectively together.

It's not always easy to speak with one voice. We in the EU know this very well. And we are only 28 members- at least for the time being- and not 54 as in the AU. In the end it is most important to be able to achieve compromise. Compromise that reflects each state's interests but also enables the continents to speak with a unified, common voice. And this unified voice will have more impact in a globalized world than the voice of single states. If you want to take this as my judgement on Brexit you can do so. Of course the EU will need to adapt to this new challenge. We have to learn again to be big on big things and small on small things. But we will succeed.

The AU and the EU share common values. Human rights, democracy and the dignity of each human being are our core values. They must always be the guidelines for our political decisions. We all have the duty to raise our voices where these values are compromised. We must work to overcome these challenges. That's why the AU and the EU were founded: to promote peace, security and prosperity.

The AU has made considerable progress in establishing a security architecture for Africa. At the AU Summit in Kigali the AU also took important decisions to strengthen its sustainable financing. We appreciate the stabilizing role of the AU in Somalia, Mali and the Great lakes region to name just some examples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The AU is the main driver also for economic integration in Africa. Africa has enormous potential for economic development. Africa has many natural resources. There are more and more African entrepreneur's

success stories. And Africa has a rapidly growing young population. The average age in Germany is 45 years. In African countries it is between 15 and 19 years. This is a huge chance but also a challenge if the expectations of young people would be deceived.

I therefore see three priorities:

First, we have to strengthen private investment in Africa to create sustainable growth and to create jobs.

Second, we have to invest in infrastructure: transport systems, communication and energy.

Third, we need better vocational training to bring more young people into jobs.

That's exactly what Germany together with our G 20 partners wants to promote during Germany's G20 presidency this year. The German Chancellor will host a conference in Berlin in June and we are happy that the President of the Republic of Ghana will be there. We see Ghana as a success story in Africa and we would like to strengthen our cooperation with Ghana.

The AU and the EU will hold their next summit in Abidjan in November. The focus will be on "Youth in Africa". Make sure, your voices will be heard.

In concluding, let me underline that the AU is an indispensable and strong partner for the EU. Africa's success is in the interest of the EU. We are your neighbor and we are your partner. Together we are stronger than alone!

Thank you.