



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at a reception for fellows of "Afrika kommt!"  
at Schloss Bellevue  
on 17 July 2017**

"Afrika kommt!" means that "Africa's time is now!" This apt sentiment is not something that I came up with, of course, but comes from one of your colleagues, Steve Ngatia Maina from Kenya, who came to Germany with "Afrika kommt!" in 2011. It is the shortest and perhaps even the best summary of what has brought us together here today. Just as my predecessor Joachim Gauck welcomed Steve Ngatia Maina, I would like to offer you a warm welcome to the residence of the Federal President, to the beautiful Schloss Bellevue!

Africa's time is now – this is what we who are gathered here today believe. And the question is: why are we doing this actually? Why do we believe in Africa's future whereas so many Africans are looking for a future outside the African continent?

We believe in its future because we know that Africa has almost all of the important preconditions that promise lasting, successful and sustainable growth and that it is in all of our interests to actually take advantage of these opportunities.

Each and every one of you stands for these great opportunities for development in almost all of the countries of Africa. Each and every one of you stands for entrepreneurship, excellent qualifications and – what appears to me to be particularly important – the experience of two worlds without which both cultural exchange and successful economic cooperation would be inconceivable.

We are still not hearing about or seeing enough of this aspiring entrepreneurship in Germany, which is why I am especially delighted to have this chance to meet you here, to listen to your stories and, above all, to hear what it was that brought you to Germany.

In the past 12 months, you have become acquainted with our country, gained additional qualifications and worked at a range of companies. Now you are returning to your home countries – to

Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Cameroon, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda. Some of you will go back home to take up new positions in your previous companies while others among you are perhaps considering thinking of moving to pastures new or of starting up businesses.

Steve Ngatia Maina, whom I quoted just now, spent nine months at Merck in Darmstadt and is now developing business strategies for the company in the Middle East, the Gulf region and the Maghreb. Lucy Wanjiku Mutinda from Kenya has set up her own company and is now working to improve sewage systems in her home country with the help of German technology. Patience Chingombe from Zimbabwe is developing new concepts for sales of pharmaceutical products in southern Africa. They have become important partners for German business and are indispensable for their home countries' economies.

Above all, you are part of a network that has come into being thanks to the "Afrika kommt!" initiative. You have become a bridge between our two continents. This is primarily thanks to your personal dedication, of course. However, allow me also to offer my express thanks to the German companies, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the ZEIT-Stiftung, which have supported "Afrika kommt!" together for almost a decade now. It is thanks to their cooperation that this initiative is now able to provide up to 30 placements each year without – and this is something that I would like to commend and emphasise in particular – receiving any state funding.

If some of those eternal know-it-alls claim that these companies do this of their own accord, then they have simply not understood what this initiative is all about. It is this business relationship that drives all of us forward and brings us closer to one another at the end of day.

Africa always had special connotations for Europeans and was always bound up with special emotions. For some, it was the dark continent, foreign and threatening. For others, the continent promised, above all, exoticism, freedom, adventure and riches when we think of the colonial age.

However, ladies and gentlemen, personal security, growing prosperity, a better future for generations of children – these promises were, for far too long, only the purview of us Europeans. "Afrika kommt!" is, by contrast, a promise in which all of us can share. This is something that we can and should celebrate together.

Welcome to Schloss Bellevue!