

Interview with Federal President Steinmeier in the Ghanaian daily newspaper Daily Graphic, to mark his state visit to Ghana from 11 to 13 December 2017

1. The Federal Chancellor has just attended the African Union - European Union Summit in Abidjan. Could you please share with the Daily Graphic some insights into the Summit and some of the key decisions taken there?

Europe is Africa's neighbour and Africa's most important partner with regard to trade, investment and development cooperation. We are connected by a difficult history. But today – and the Summit in Abidjan was proof of that – we are so closely interconnected that we must think about and shape our future together. This applies to cooperation on trade and investment, as well as to peace and security. Above all, it applies to creating opportunities for the young people of Africa. A key message sent by the Summit was that we must consult with one another more, and on all levels, because in future our destinies will be even more interlinked than they are today. Encounters between Europe and Africa now occur under a new heading, namely that development cooperation in Africa cannot provide sustainable growth, but it can also effectively support Africa's own efforts. That is why the German G20 Presidency promoted the so-called Compact with Africa. It addresses both sides: Africa's own motivation to spur development across the continent as well as changes in Europe, so that more European investment reaches Africa.

2. There have been international concerns about the issue of illegal immigrants, drug trafficking, terrorism and its financing. How would Germany and Ghana work together to stop and improve this development?

The issue of migration was at the top of the agenda during the African Union - European Union Summit. It is also an important issue in Germany. Germany has taken in hundreds of thousands of refugees during the last few years. Yet we must clearly distinguish between fleeing war and political persecution, on the one hand, and migration in search of a better and more dignified life, on the other hand. Europe can provide an opportunity for the latter to only a small number of Ghanaians and other Africans. The focus must be on what President Akufo-Addo declared loud and clear on behalf of his Government a few days ago during the visit of Emmanuel Macron: "We want young Africans to stay in Africa!" We want to help Ghana succeed in offering better opportunities to its young citizens than embarking on the extremely dangerous option of illegal migration.

People smuggling is a business model with which smugglers earn billions. The people of Ghana must be told what great dangers await them if they set out on the long and treacherous journey across the Sahara to reach Europe. It can end with imprisonment, mistreatment or even death. Together, we

must make people aware of this and warn them about these dangers. And we must jointly combat the criminal smuggling networks.

One of the ways that Germany is supporting this effort is with the new Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration in Accra, which I will inaugurate during my visit. Its mission is to provide counselling to young Ghanaians to help them get basic and further training and start businesses. After all, it is a paradox and very unfortunate for the country, that even though Ghana's economy is thriving young people are seeking to leave their country.

3. The inhuman way Libya is treating humans, particularly Black Africans, caught media attention, just before the Summit started. Emergency evacuation measures were taken. Could you please talk about it and share some of the measures taken to put an end to that practice?

I, too, saw the images and video footage of the inhumane and brutal conditions that refugees are forced to endure in Libya. I condemn this in the strongest possible terms. The images are truly shocking. They bring to mind the worst days of slavery. It is with concern that I am following the growing number of reports about severe mistreatment and torture. Everyone at the Summit in Abidjan was deeply affected by this horrible news. It was a wake-up call for us all.

The German Government is supporting organisations that are providing help on the ground, above all the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. These organisations have already helped 13,000 people in the camps get back home. It's positive that the African Union is now taking a lead role and addressing the open issues – for example, identifying the affected individuals, arranging for flights from Libya back to the countries of origin, and confiscating the bank accounts of people smugglers – including those in Europe, the United States and the Middle East. However, what's most urgent is that a solution must be found to the political crisis in Libya. Germany, and the entire European Union, will do everything they can to help in this effort.

4. How is your perspective on the relationship between Germany and Ghana?

It is no coincidence that my first trip to Africa as Federal President is taking me here, to Ghana. Our countries share a long-standing bond of friendship. I have visited previously, as Foreign Minister. I want to pick up there, by cultivating our good political, social and economic relations with Ghana as one of Germany's close partners in West Africa. Ghana is a shining example in the region, and it is one of Germany's most important trading partners in West Africa. Above all, Ghana can send a signal of encouragement and motivation to set out for new shores that will be heard far beyond the borders of your country. I look forward to holding intensive discussions with your President, whom I have known for many years and sincerely respect. Our last meeting was this summer in Berlin.

Germany takes Ghana's image of itself very seriously. We want our cooperation to support a strong and independent Ghana – a “Ghana beyond aid”. It is clear that, if German corporations are to increase their investment in Ghana – and that is precisely what Germany is supporting with a number of initiatives – then Ghana itself must provide a stable framework for investment: reliable infrastructure, legal certainty, a well-functioning public administration, as well as no corruption.

5. Which are the next steps Germany and Ghana are taking to deepen bilateral ties?

The German side is currently taking significant steps to deepen our relations. Ghana is one of the countries that participated in the Compact with Africa during the G20 Africa Partnership Conference in Berlin in June 2017. Germany is supporting the voluntary commitment made by Ghana with a very concrete reform partnership. It contains incentives for investment by German companies in the spheres of renewables and energy efficiency, in connection with vocational training measures.

We will also cooperate more closely in science and research. Professor Mehler from Freiburg is a member of my delegation here, and on Tuesday at the University of Ghana will help us officially get efforts under way to establish the Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in Africa (MICAS). This collaborative research project will focus primarily on issues related to the environment, democracy and conflict management. Through these efforts, we hope to more strongly integrate African perspectives in the spheres of science and policy-making. I will also reaffirm our good military cooperation by visiting the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. At the Centre, Germany is one of the most important supporters of the effort to teach mediation skills, and to train police officers and military personnel in preparation for peace operations.

6. Could you please tell me about your visit to Ghana, and what it means to Germany?

With this trip, I want to send a signal to our partners in Ghana and to my fellow Germans. My state visit marks with the 60th anniversary of our bilateral relations. I am here to pay tribute to Ghana as an important economic player and a stable democracy in West Africa. I also truly want us in Germany to take a closer look at your continent and your country. The image we have of Africa is often one-sided; all we see is crises, conflicts and need. But Africa is a multi-faceted continent. Particularly in Ghana, impressive progress has been achieved, progress that can also inspire others. We want to support your country as it proceeds down this very path, as you pursue further reforms to develop your economy, as you play an active foreign and security policy role, and as we intensify our cooperation on migration issues. Germany, too, has a vested interest in a strong and successful Ghana.

We Germans are becoming ever more aware of the fact that the only way to find convincing answers to pressing global issues – peace and security, terrorism, organised crime, migration, climate change and the fight against poverty – is by acting in concert with Africa. To find these answers, we must not only be

familiar with one another, but we must also trust one another. We must meet and get to know each other better – in a political and economic sense, and in a social and cultural sense. That is why I thought it was very important to bring with me to Ghana not only a large economic delegation, but also representatives from the spheres of art, academia and civil society.