



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at a dinner with Heads of State and Government from Sub-
Saharan Africa on the eve of the G20 Investment Summit
Schloss Bellevue, 29 October**

I am delighted to welcome you back to Berlin and to Schloss Bellevue today, after just over a year. Not all, but many of you, were our guests here last year. This invitation is intended to show how important a regular exchange with you is to me, to us.

Europe and Africa are united by a shared, but by no means easy, history. However, as I myself firmly believe and seek to promote in our country, we are primarily united by a shared future. Africa and Europe, and Europe and Africa, urgently need each other!

I am glad that the Federal Government launched the Compact with Africa, which stands for a new start in our relations – our relations with African countries. Most importantly, however, I respect and admire the path travelled by your countries and the transformation that is now tangible in many African states. I had a chance to experience for myself during a visit to Ghana and the Gambia just a few months ago just how much transformation is taking place, how much consolidation – also in economic terms – there is, and I look forward to my next trip, which will take me to southern Africa soon.

We want to establish new strategic partnerships with you, with the countries you represent. We want a type of partnership that mobilises Africa's and Europe's strengths and opportunities so that we can build a common future. It is encouraging that the German business sector is increasingly active in Africa, particularly of course in the Compact countries. There is great potential here for further economic development. I am interested in learning about your experiences and hearing your suggestions.

Africa, an enormous continent with 54 countries, a fascinating history and great cultural wealth, is so diverse that we do not do justice to it when we in Europe perceive it as a monolith. There is no such thing as *one* Africa. Africa is diverse. You yourselves come from

eight very different countries. However, it is in our mutual interest that the continent be strong as a whole, as it plays such an important role in the future of our planet.

I am curious to hear your views on your own continent, for example on the endeavours to create an African free trade zone. And, of course, I am also curious to hear your comments about difficult issues such as armed conflicts, hunger and population growth.

We now also understand more clearly in Europe that we cannot react to the global challenges on our own – not individual European countries and not Europe as a whole. Rather, we can really only master these challenges if we find answers side by side with African countries. I am thinking here of global warming, species extinction and marine pollution. I am also thinking about migration, which shapes and very much dominates many – sometimes too many – debates about Africa in Europe.

It is understandable that people leave their country in search of a better life. However, we should also speak openly, also this evening, about the impact that has on both sides. Europe cannot seal itself off as a fortress. I do not want that. But at the same time, it cannot be a solution for Africa when large numbers of people leave the continent and set off on a perilous journey in search of work and a better life in Europe. They are thus lost to Africa, to your countries.

It is therefore all the more important that we succeed in improving opportunities for people, especially young people, in your countries. We want to talk about the key to that this evening: sustainable economic growth. I know, we spoke about this last year, that this requires good infrastructure. And good infrastructure, good investment, need the right conditions, especially investment in the training of young people.

I do not believe that we Europeans have the answers to the challenges facing African countries. Only African solutions can ultimately bring about progress in Africa. However, I do believe in a common future for Africa and Europe. We share responsibility for paving the path to this future, so I am grateful that so many of you have again made your way here this evening to this dinner, to our dinner. Allow me to welcome you once again! I look forward to our exchange.