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TOP PRIORITIES FOR AFRICA IN 2019

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. COULIBALY: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, everyone. All right. It's my usual way of checking that our coffee is good enough for you. I'm Brahim Coulibaly, the senior fellow here in Global Economy and Development and the director of the Africa program. Happy New Year and thank you for joining us on this rather chilly Thursday morning. And my greetings also to those who are following us on line, and our apologies that many have tried to register but the event was full. But we're glad that you're still able to follow us on line. And for those here, as well as online, you can follow the event on Twitter by using #ForesightAfrica, which you can also use to send in your comments or your questions and then during the Q&A part some of them will be passed on to the moderator.

So on behalf of the Brookings Institution and the Global Economy and Development program and the Africa Growth Initiative, welcome to this edition of Foresight Africa, top priorities for the continent in 2019. So this is the time when we really reflect on what has happened and then also on what should be the priorities going forward. And as this New Year begins I am quite optimistic that Africa will continue to capitalize on the momentum it has built over the past years, to make further strides towards its (inaudible) economic agenda.

The terms of trade shock that has hit the continent in 2014 has largely dissipated and the region is projected to have its highest growth rate in five years this year, and about half of the world's ten fastest growing economies are also in Africa. Our business environment is improving, thanks to widespread economic reforms. And Africa's leadership and institutions are more assertive in advancing the continent's agenda. And this is relevant because it's happening at a time when we're seeing a tendency toward isolationism, toward protectionism. Africa is actually bucking the regional trends, the global trends, and casting its votes in favor of more integration in the context of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, as well as other regional initiatives, for a more integrated Africa.

So unprecedented dynamism across the continent is creating opportunities

for trade and investment and is drawing in an increasingly diverse group of external partners. Democracy is consolidating, although the prevalence for tensions, and in some countries, violence, suggests that there are areas for improvement. And the demographic tidal wave looms closer, but job creation has not been able to keep up. And despite continued progress on governance, more efforts are needed to eradicate corruption and, very importantly, to elevate the voice and representation of young people and women in decision making.

So I'm hopeful that Africa will rise to these challenges in 2019 through renewed determination and a sense of urgency. This addition of Foresight Africa illuminates the priorities of the continent with recommendations for tackling the challenges that lie ahead. And we place this year's edition under the theme of good and inclusive governance and it covers six chapters, which I'm going to review briefly.

The first chapter is about bolstering good governance and the imperative of inclusion and efficiency. The lead essay was provided by Mo Ibrahim, whom we know to be really a champion of good governance on the continent. And we are pleased to have the executive director of the Foundation among our panelists. And it includes contributions from Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on how to tackle corruption, drawing on her vast experience, including as two-time Finance Minister of Nigeria. And speaking of inclusion, we also have contribution from a young person on the continent on how inclusion of youth is very beneficial.

The second chapter addresses an issue that we're monitoring closely, which is basically the debt level across the continent. And in some corners many fear that maybe we are heading toward continent-wide debt crisis. So we assess this situation in this chapter and provide our recommendation for how the countries can reconcile both the need to finance economic development while at the same time making sure that the debt level remains reasonable and contained.

And it includes also a couple of contributions from President Cyril

Ramaphosa of South Africa and the Vice President Osinbajo from Nigeria on what are the plans to really boost economic growth in those two countries, which as you know are Africa's two largest economies.

The third chapter is on the youth and how to harness the youth dividend and a new approach for large scale job creation. So it is leveraging some of the work we've done here internally and we think the job creation aspect of the youth employment challenge have not been sufficiently addressed. So this research have aimed to kind of fill in a void. And it includes also a new research project we're starting beginning this year on youth unemployment on the continent. And it includes a contribution from MasterCard Foundation, an institution that has made youth employment really the focus of its Africa strategy. And it covers also the viewpoint from other experts on the best way Africa can harness its demographic dividends.

And the fourth chapter is looking at the issue of no state left behind and revisiting the situation around fragility, how to fix it. And an emerging recommendation from it is an important role for the private sector, as well as local institutions. It also highlights the interplay between fragility, climate change, and conflict. And it has in it a very interesting good read from a young girl from South Sudan. Each year the Africa Program here hosts a YALI fellow, and last year we were fortunate to have this remarkable young girl from South Sudan. And in there she shares her experience on what life is like for a young girl growing up in fragile states and how she was able to overcome the challenges to become a YALI fellow. And she didn't stop there, she went on to create an initiative that is going to further support other young girls that used to be in her position. So that's a good read too.

The fifth chapter looks at Africa's untapped business potential and countries, sectors, and strategies. This chapter outlines why Africa is the world's next business growth market and shares the experience of successful business people on the continent, including Mr. Aliko Dangote, as well as some young entrepreneurs who are really doing remarkable things.

So this is also intended to kind of shift a little bit the debate to begin thinking of Africa as a viable commercial partner in its external relations with nations, which is not usually or in some cases sufficiently highlighted in the narrative about the continent.

And the final chapter is on boosting trade and investment, a new agenda regional and international engagement. So its lead chapter is by Vera Songwe of UN ECA, and it is assessing the potential of the Continental Free Trade Area, not just to boost intra Africa trade, but also how it's going to contribute to diversification of the economies into inclusion. And it has a viewpoint from the African Union Commissioner on the progress so far and the challenges in the implementation of the CFTA. And now experts also provide the state of play on the U.S.-Africa relations, as well as on the China-Africa relations.

So that is the content of the chapters and we are really excited about the edition. So let me say that it would not have been possible without the hard work of our scholars, our staff, and the support of our partners, and the commitment of the Brookings leadership to the Africa agenda. So we really look forward to your engagement and commentaries, not just today but throughout the year, because those comments are really helpful to us in helping to shape our agenda.

And we have a really excellent panel here today to dive into these issues. The moderator for the event is Isha Sesay. She obviously needs no introduction. You will remember her as the face of CNN for many years, but what some of you may not know is that she selflessly stepped down from that glamorous position to devote her time now to an initiative to empower young girls, training them on leadership through an initiative she called Women Everywhere Can Lead. And these are the kind of initiatives I think should be encouraged. I think they're going to go a long way toward the goal of having a higher representation of women in governance and leadership.

So, with that, I'll turn it over to Isha. (Applause)

MS. SESAY: I think you can all hear me before I even get mic'd. So I shall say to you as Brahma said, good morning, everyone. Thank you for that kind introduction. I

want to acknowledge the fact that we have several ambassadors with us here this morning, so, you know, according to protocol, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen, honorable ambassadors, thank you all of you for being here with us this morning.

I have to say that it's a huge pleasure to be here in DC, though when I accepted the invitation I wasn't banking on the snow or the (inaudible). (Laughter) But, you know, just two more reasons why we all should be looking to engaging with Africa, quite frankly.

It is wonderful to be here with such a distinguished panel. We really do have some great minds with us here today with a tremendous amount of knowledge and insight into Africa. Let me introduce them. And I'm going to start with closest to me, Abebe Aemro Selassi, Director of the Africa Department at the IMF, Brahim Coulibaly has already introduced himself, and as you know he leads Brookings' Africa Group Initiative. To his left is former ambassador, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, now senior counselor with the Albright Stonebridge Group was obviously a linchpin in the State Department and many, many years spent on the continent. And, last but not least, on the panel Natalie Delapalme, Executive Director of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

So let me explain how this is going to play out over the next hour. We will have a 30 minute conversation here on stage, each one of the panelists will speak for about 5 minutes and will give their take on the report. Once they have spoken there will be a Q&A here on stage for about 30 minutes before I open it up to the floor. So we do want you to participate, we do want your questions, your comments, on what you've heard here on stage and what you have picked up from the report in the time you looked at it.

There are microphones going around. Please put your hand up, wait for the microphone to arrive. Please state your name and your affiliation before you launch into your question. That would be very much appreciated. I thank you in advance for that. With 30 minutes on the floor as well. So 30 minutes up here, 30 minutes open to the floor.

So, with the housekeeping elements over and one with, I actually saw in the

new year in Ghana. So I was one of the 97 people that went to Ghana couple of weeks ago. A bunch of people from the States went as part of the Ghanaian president's effort to engage the Diaspora for what will be the year of return in 2019, the 400th anniversary of 400 years since the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade. And what President Nana Addo of Ghana is doing is asking diasporas to come back to Ghana, to re-engage, to reclaim their roots to help build Ghana. So I was in Ghana for about eight days. From Ghana I went to Senegal, and I went to Senegal to host the African Football Awards. So I've been to Ghana and Senegal back to back in the last two weeks. And I can say firsthand that I felt the dynamism, the energy that this report is talking about, the opportunity that exists on the continent I got to see and feel firsthand. It is also worth pointing out that Ghana and Senegal made the list of the top 10 economic growth performers in 2018 and will do so again.

So I was there, I saw it, I felt it, I also recognized the challenges that this report also talks about that we're going to delve into. There is a lot of progress happening on the continent. Many of you have been, many of you are engaged, so you know that there's progress, there's innovation, you know that there's investment, there's opportunity. But the challenges are real. We're going to talk about some of those challenges. And I also want to talk to you about what Brookings found when they put out an online poll to ask their own community what the top priority for Africa should be in 2019. And I thought it was really interesting and I'll read it out to you. They gave the online community the choices to pick from, 39 percent said governance and leadership, 19 percent said economic development and trade, 26 percent said health, education, and poverty, 9 percent said peace and security, 2 percent said financing for development, 2 percent said gender, youth, and inclusion, 3 percent said other. I will say for me personally I'm struck that only 2 percent said gender, youth, and inclusion should be a priority, but we'll get into that. But 39 percent saying governance and leadership should be the priority for Africa in 2019, which is a great point and a great place to bring in the panel.

Let me ask you, Abebe, if you could start off this conversation by sharing

with (a) your reaction to that poll and (b) your take away from the report, as someone who is engaged with the continent and you are head of Africa Department for IMF.

MR. SELASSI: Thank you, Isha. Let me start by thanking Brahim, the Brookings Institution for inviting me to be a panelist, particularly for the launch of the report. I have to say, you know, reading it I find it difficult to find issues to pick with. I think it covers the waterfront very, very nicely and in a very innovative way, lots of voices being picked up. And the optimism, the dynamism. It picks on what we all feel when we are in the region in a very nice and visceral way. So congratulations and kudos to you and your team for the report. That's the first point I wanted to make.

I shall on the poll and on governance, my forte really -- our forte is of course more on the economic side, but, you know, the political environment, the extent of governance, of social contracts, how strong it is, of course, underpins anything and everything that happens on the economic front also. So it's a very important dimension. So I'm a little surprised that people pick on that.

One aspect of governance -- governance is a very broad topic of course, it has the politic side, the human rights side, et cetera -- but on aspect in particular which we are focusing on increasingly at the IMF is on the corruption side. And there really I think the chapter by --

MS. SESAY: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

MR. SELASSI: -- Ngozi is just fantastic. I think it picks up like the two, three things that really, really create the environment for excessive corruption. You know, the lack of transparency often in how transactions take place, the weakness of institutions. Importantly also the impunity, as she calls it, or lack of accountability when corrupt incidents are found. So particularly the transparency side is something which we work on a great deal. And I think that's one of the ways in which we can help.

So my point on governance is it's a very important aspect of the challenge that many countries face. But I would zero in even more on the corruption side. Of course it

varies from country to country. We don't want to give the impression that corruption is endemic in every single country, but where it --

MS. SESAY: Or it's endemic to Africa.

MR. SELASSI: Or endemic to Africa, indeed. Far from it. But bringing about transparency on public accounts, you know, on publishing information, on contracts, on procurements that governments are undertaking. As much transparency as possible I think is one of the important ways that we can tackle corruption. We can go into that later.

But I wanted to focus much the balance of my time I have on the economic side of the issues that the report picks out. Like, you know, our reading of the situation, in particular -- so two imbalances that the report is pointing to. The first imbalance I would say is growth in recent years, vibrant as it is in many of the countries in the region has been drive to perhaps an uncomfortable degree by public investment, by the public sector.

You know, one of the things that came to me is how important it's going to be going forward to create the millions of jobs that we need in the region. It's important that we have a hand over from government led growth more to private sector led growth. And this comes out particularly in the last chapter, the last section, where you have business people speaking about the challenges that they face, but also in the earlier section of the report, which highlights debt levels going up of course, fiscal space narrowing. So this is I think one important imbalance that the report brings out. And I think we see this as an important challenge going forward. If we are to sustain growth at the vibrant level that we need to absorb employment, we need much more private sector led growth and there are a lot of reforms that are going to be needed. And I see one big challenge there.

Second one is on, you know, the debt issue and the fiscal space in particular. You know, and of course it's very understandable that over the last seven-eight years governments have been investing quite a lot on infrastructure. Without infrastructure, without investment in electricity, as everybody points out, you're not going to have the economic diversification, the movement up the technology ladder that our countries need.

So this focus on investment and infrastructure in roads, in ports, et cetera, has been very important, very worthwhile.

But what countries have not been as good at is capturing the rate of return on this investment through the tax system in particular. So this is pointing to -- you know, this shows in debt indicators weakening, so the ratio of interest payments to debt service is deteriorating in a number of countries across the region. So a very important challenge for the next few years is going to be to try and improve domestic revenue mobilization. This is not just a technical problem and harks back to the governance issue you guys spoke earlier. You know, it requires of course policy measures, administrative improvements by governments, but also accountability showing that the money governments are collecting is being used effectively and wisely. So trying to strengthen the social contract is going to be important. These we see as the two kind of macroeconomic challenges that the region needs to come if we are going to have even higher growth that the region needs going forward. I can say a bit more later because I don't want to dominate (inaudible). (Laughter)

MS. SESAY: Thank you for that. Thank you. We very much appreciate it. Abebe, thank you for those comments and those take-aways. I want to go straight to Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield. You have already heard from Brahima, so I'm going to go to the Ambassador. What are your take-aways from this report?

MS. THOMAS-GREENFIELD: It's interesting. Well, let me also start with thanking Brookings, and particularly all of you who are a part of this report. I think Brahima's efforts ought to be applauded here today.

You first asked if we had any comments on the chart and I was struck also by the fact that gender and youth inclusion received such a low percentage. I agree that leadership is important. I think leadership is probably key. But I would have put second -- and I know this was a survey and I don't know how many people participated, but I think the issue of gender and youth has to be at the top of our agenda as we look forward to where Africa will be going in the next decade.

I see 2019 as a critical moment for Africa, as the report indicates. And as I page through the report one thread that ran through all six chapters was the gravity of the current moment in Africa. There's a sense in the report that the decisions made in Africa in the short to medium-term could have long lasting effects on the continent's developmental trajectory. And the report I think successfully juxtaposes Africa's promise against the perils that threaten to undermine the potential on the continent.

Some of the questions that came to mind for me, will upcoming elections in Nigeria, just a few weeks away in South Africa this year, advance and strengthen Africa's democratic institutions or will we see the emergence of 1990s brand of backroom politics dealing that led to not elections but selections of the next leaders on the continent. Will Africa's youth bulge and, again, in many speeches that I've given in the past I talk about this as being the biggest challenge for African in the future -- will the bulge be successfully translated into a demographic dividend or will it become a disaster. Because it's a double edged sword, as labor saving technologies continue to proliferate and medium ages continue to drop. I was at a meeting yesterday where we talked about the fact the medium age in Nigeria is 15. That means a lot of jobs need to be created.

But at that same meeting we talked about the advancement of AI and the fact that technology will be doing many of the jobs that we had hoped these young people would be able to do. Will the potential growth of some of Africa's most impressive economic developers, like Ghana or Mozambique, be crippled by unsustainable debt burdens? That's a huge for us today. Will Africa's governments and budding private sector provide off ramps that deescalate some of the state fragility or will challenges like climate change extend the geographical reach of these risks. Again, huge questions. Will the private sector led growth that harnesses Africa's untapped business potential lead to increased prosperity and a seat at the global economic table, or will poor macroeconomic management and unorthodox policy choices de-incentivize the indigenous and foreign investment necessary to deliver a future for Africa's youth?

And will Africa successfully surmount the barriers that have hindered intercontinental trade and investment, will the Continental Free Trade Agreement help to deal with some of the deeply entrenched interests and continue to hinder broad based growth or will it contribute to that. And I would argue that it will contribute. I'm a firm believer that outcomes, good and bad, will be a direct function of Africa's leadership over the short to medium-term, as this chart said. And that's why I'm glad that the report leads off with a chapter from Mo Ibrahim. We all consider him the guru of governance and leadership on the continent of Africa. And I can't stress enough the transformative effects of good leadership that is focused on delivering for the common man and doing what is right, irrespective of the political cost. And we're seeing some changes take place on the continent of Africa, we're seeing new leaders begin to step up to the forefront that we hadn't even thought of before. And Ethiopia comes to mind for me, and even what I see happening in Angola now.

When I served as the Assistant Secretary for Africa during the Obama Administration I met a lot of African leaders. I probably had one on one with probably two-thirds of the leaders across the continent. And one thing that always struck me was how aware all of them were of what needed to be done to move the continent forward. But what also struck me, and was interesting, is how this knowledge that they shared didn't always translate into action. You hear the great speeches that they get, but we see the results on the ground. And I think if Africa is to achieve its potential, key stakeholders, such as those of us in the room, but also African leaders, we're going to have to move from diagnosing the problem, from prognosis to action. And for those looking for ideas, I think the Brookings Africa Foresight 2019 report is a great place to start.

MS. SESAY: Thank you. Thank you, Ambassador. Very much appreciate it.

Nathalie Delapalme, if I could come to you now please for your thoughts. First of all, I want to give you the opportunity to weigh in on the poll, if you would like to, what

strikes you about the numbers in the breakdown. And, of course, the founder of your Foundation, Mo Ibrahim, does open up the report and, you know, I was struck by the line he wrote that Africa is at a tipping point and essentially there is tremendous promise, but there is also peril.

So, with that as the framework, I'd love for you to share your perspectives on the report.

MS. DELAPALME: Thank you very much and thank you to Brookings for having us today for this very, very complete report.

So if you'll first let me react on the poll, of course I'm very excited to see that governance and leadership comes as a top priority, because this is precisely the focus of the Foundation that has been created 10 years ago. But it means that we need to define what governance and what leadership is. And we probably can't presume governance to the lack of corruption. I think in our mind it's the ability of governments to deliver public goods and services to citizens that are expecting it.

My second point would be that I'm disappointed, indeed as you are, by the very low level of importance given to youth. Because, as you just said, I mean Africa is indeed at a tipping point, it is a gravity moment, and I would say that the major challenge of Africa today is indeed the youth bulge. Sixty percent of Africa's population is under 25, which means 750 million people, which is twice the population, more than twice actually, the population of the U.S. Most of these young people are devoid of economic prospects, feeling robbed of political ownership, feeling ill equipped in front of the fourth industrial revolution, feeling flattened by widening liquidities and unmanaged climate change. I mean it's really time now to take this into account and to deal with these challenges. Indeed, governance and leadership are tools to deal with them.

Why is it that Africa's growth has been very good over the last 10 years? I think that Africa's GDP over the last 10 years has grown by 40 percent, but it has been almost a jobless growth, a very inequitable growth. And this is certainly something that

needs to be tackled.

I think that in this Brookings report, which is extremely complete, you indeed capture all the challenges and many potential solutions. I would maybe focus on some of them. Creating jobs, yes, but probably creating the skills and making sure that the jobs are - I mean that the skills that the young people are given are attuned with what the future job market is going to be. Education, I mean there have been huge commitments made into education, but probably with two caveats. The first one, it's running behind demographic bulge, and the second one is it's probably not attuned to needs. Actually we have less than 4 percent African graduates that graduate in engineering, more than 20 percent that graduate in humanities. That's great, but it's probably not giving them the good prospects.

The second thing is private sector priority. This is certainly absolutely key. I mean private sector is a key stakeholder provided that they include in their strategy the job creation, training, sustainability, commitment to transparency in contracts and in taxation system.

But if you allow me I think there is an elephant in the room that we shouldn't forget when we come back to governance and leadership. It's the public sector. Creating jobs in the public sector I think is key. Strengthening African institutions, allowing governments to be able to implement the priorities the leaders haven't been identifying. I think it's really something that's very important. Regional integration, as well as (inaudible) is underlining in the report is of course very important, but it also means taking care of marginal countries, or countries that are going to be more marginalized by this ongoing trend of more trade, more investment. I think that the solidarity between countries and within countries is also something that needs to be taken into account.

And when I think this is my -- what's in my (inaudible) take over from this report, once again the youth challenge is really the priority. Really. I think otherwise, indeed, we are at a tipping point. I mean it's no wonder that these young people in the best of case are driven to migration, and in the worst are driven to violence and terrorism. I think

it's something that's very easy to understand.

MS. SESAY: Nathalie, thank you. At this point we can answer a few questions here and then get more into a conversational setting.

Abebe, what do you make of what Nathalie just said, specifically about the perils, the elephant in the room, and the role of public sector in righting the ship?

MR. SELASSIE: Maybe I'm betraying my age, but I -- MS.

SESAY: Because I saw you grimacing.

MR. SELASSIE: Well, you know, I'm more optimistic. I don't think their picture is so black and white, you know, either or doom and gloom or -- I mean let me step back. I think I started my work, my career in the official sector in 1992 and I moved back for a couple of years to work for the government in Addis. And the circumstances in my country, in Ethiopia -- but also I got to some work travel. Places like Uganda and Ghana in 1992 versus now are night and day. Circumstances back then were incredibly weak. I mean economically, institutionally, politically, you know, really, really awful. By no means are they perfect now, but the improvement that our countries have made over the last 25 years, both these three countries that I mentioned, but also many, many other countries, has been tremendous. From really, really, awful initial conditions in the late '80s, early '90s.

You know, we have a huge number of challenges now, but also quite a lot of strength across the region. Just one indicator, when I look at governance, political accountability, in West Africa, really it's like one or two countries that are where you can say elections have not led to leadership changes. I mean this contrasts tremendously with what we used to have in the region through the mid 1990s. I know there are pockets where that's not true, but I think, you know, we should first of all kind of appreciate the significant progress that has been made in terms of political environment. Certainly on the economic side also, there are acute challenges, many of which we work on directly.

MS. SESAY: That keep you up at night.

MR. SELASSI: But I think there is also a lot of progress and I think subject

to reforms and attention, I think we can make progress.

One thing I wanted to react to a little bit, what Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said, was on this future of work in Africa and the youth bulge, because I think that's also a theme that came up. You know, we've done some work, a little bit of a plug also for our Regional Economic Outlook that my department produces which we brought out in October and launched in December with the help of the Managing Director.

MS. SESAY: You didn't ask me to do that. Don't steal their spotlight.

(Laughter)

MR. SELASSI: But we did quite a lot of work thinking about this issue of the future of work in Africa, how that will impact us. And what we concluded from that work, but also kind of building on work that had been done by colleagues at the Fund, was that historically labor and capital have been complement throughout history when all the innovations that we have, that have got us to where we are now, labor and capital basically - - for all the innovation that has taken place, labor hasn't been displaced completely. We've created new jobs. The advent of AI raises a question of whether that will continue or capital and labor will be substitutes instead of complements. It's a big question. We don't know what the answer is. But, you know, it would require kind of a huge amount of substitutability rather than complementarity for the future to be a jobless one and, you know, to be unsupportive of Africa's growth prospects.

You know, in any event, we don't know what the future holds, and so it's not kind of -- our message really is the things that we need to invest on. More attention is needed in education, education, education. I think that is an important, important priority, particularly education of girls I think. Prioritizing that in the next couple of years to have a labor force that's ready for the jobs of the future will be an important intervention, you know.

MS. SESAY: I just to push back on something, or at least scrutinize something you said in terms of the markers of achievement and progress. And it is, one, the fact that we are seeing more elections on the continent and we're seeing change in

leadership, but this report also says -- and I want to put this to you, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield -- that even though we're seeing more elections, what we're not seeing is an opening of the participatory space. I want your take on that and why that's the case, that more elections aren't translating into better participatory environment for citizenry. I'm going to ask the Ambassador to speak to that and then obviously open it up.

MS. THOMAS-GREENFIELD: I think there are two answers to that. So we're seeing participation across the board in the electoral process, with women and youth voting. But where we're not seeing the participation is women and youth in the political process. I was in Nigeria in December and one of the things I noticed as I -- although there's one woman running for president and two parties with women vice presidential candidates -- but the two leading parties when I met with them did not have a single woman in the room. And I made that point to them when I spoke to them.

MS. SESAY: And the response was? (Laughter)

MS. THOMAS-GREENFIELD: There were different responses. I'll leave it to them to respond. For me there was not an answer that could explain that. But women participating in the political process, when I look at Nigeria for example, our largest democracy or budding democracy or evolving democracy -- I can use a lot of words to describe it -- you rarely see in the political process large numbers of women. I was very pleased in Nigeria that they passed this law not too young to run, but in order to participate in the political process -- and I would argue that in the United States as well -- unfortunately you require a lot of money.

MS. SESAY: Yeah, basically.

MS. THOMAS-GREENFIELD: And young people and women don't have that kind of backing so that they can be part of the political process. So more needs to be done in that area and I think it needs to recognize the fact that women and youth are voting. And I encourage them to vote, make their voices heard in their votes. If candidates are not speaking to their issues, they shouldn't vote for them. But votes tend to be very -- across

Africa votes tend to be very valuable. And unfortunately people don't realize how valuable their votes are and they sell their votes for much less than their votes are worth.

MS. SESAY: Nathalie, I know we were talking about jobs for the young people, but to just say very quickly on the issue of participation of young people in the process, I was struck by a stat in the report that despite the fact that 70 percent of the region's population is under 30, only 14 percent of the region's parliamentarians are under 40. So despite the fact 70 percent of the region's population is under 30, only 14 percent of the region's parliamentarians are under 40. How do we turn that around?

MS. DELAPALME: Probably by strengthening, indeed, as you just said, the Ambassador just said with presentation, I think also that maybe we have too much presumed democracy to executive election every five years at least. I think that democracy is much more than that and that we need to strengthen all participation tools, even if we need to invent new tools, especially on the young continent.

In our last index report participation is going quite well, thanks to more and more elections, but civil society space is shrinking. And this is directly linked to participation and needs to be addressed.

And my apologies, I wanted to answer back to your reaction. I didn't want to sound gloomy. I think that the challenge that the continent is facing is also its strength. It's because Africa is a young continent that there is a chance to win because youth is vitality. I mean there is an appetite for change and for prospects that's not seen anywhere in any other I would say more older or more seated countries. And I think that we must drive on this ability to leapfrog and to want things to happen. I think this is very important and that we really must be aware of this. And I'm sorry because I probably was a little bit negative. I'm just saying it's a huge challenge that must be addressed.

MS. SESAY: And even if that had been your position, it's quite all right. Please, there's no need to apologize. But I do want to ask about -- sorry, Brahima.

MR. COULIBALY: No, I think I wanted to underscore the really importance

of the youth situation on the continent. And I also myself took a second look at the poll results when I did see them and my best interpretation of it is that governance and leadership, people see that as the thing that can deliver all other aspects of economic development. And maybe they have chosen then to put their option in the leadership and government, because, indeed, when it comes to development, I think it begins with leadership, it ends with leadership. And even the best conceived plans cannot succeed unless you have that leadership.

On the issue of youth employment, I really believe it's the issue of our time. We would collectively succeed or fail, depending on how we're able to address this Africa youth unemployment challenge. And it's not just in my view an African issue, I think it is a global issue. If you look at longer-term projections they're going to have -- about 40 percent of the world population by the turn of the century will be in Africa. So at the current pace of job creation it is basically going to have a really massive unemployment situation that can spill over to the rest of the global economy.

So the future work is clearly a key point of concern. But the work we've been doing basically has been trying to identify some sectors in Africa that can create a large-scale number of jobs, because the reality is manufacturing these days, for some reason, is no longer able to deliver the kind of job that it used to in the past. Labor saving technologies is an important explanation to it, but there's also globalization and competition. So these sectors do hold some promise because they share the same development characteristics as manufacturing, and these include tourism, horticulture, agro processing, as we've pointed out in the report. So we think if the continent is able to push on those sectors alongside manufacturing, it stands the best change of both creating mass scale jobs as well as also boosting productivity and catching up with other countries.

MS. SESAY: Abebe, would you agree?

MR. SELASSI: Very strongly. So this is exactly the point I was making about -- you know, there are these very profound challenges, but they can be overcome

through --

MS. SESAY: Is there enough capacity in these sectors, horticultural and agro businesses, and tourism for the numbers we're talking about?

MR. SELASSI: It depends on what countries. So, first of all, I think, you know, policy solutions have to be extremely country specific, even sector specific. So my sense is that we are going to -- the dynamics where jobs occur, et cetera, will be part of -- you know, for the coastal countries I think there is some scope to do to join global manufacturing supply chains and be part of that process. So I think some jobs will be created from that. If you're more in the hinterland, probably jobs are going to be more in the agriculture sector, services sector are going to be the -- you know, things that are not as costly to export. Or the transit costs are not so high, are going to be the sources.

But I just want to also point out that we really don't know what countries are going to be successful, and the private sector knows a bit more. I just want to give one example. I mean, you know, I lived in Uganda between 2006-08. Uganda is the last country where I would have expected to have a dynamic building material sector, manufacturing sector emerging. But as South Sudan was pacifying, Rwanda's economy was growing, the eastern side of DRC was stabilizing somewhat, what was happening was that Ugandan companies which manufacture cement and roofing material, plastic pipes, et cetera, were exporting to these regions and doing really quite robust business. You know, I don't think a policy maker sitting and thinking about this as a potential sector would have necessarily picked on this.

MS. SESAY: Seen that.

MR. SELASSI: So taking the lead a little bit from the private sector, and when we see them being successful, trying to find ways in which we can allow them to grow, investing in their infrastructure that they need, lowering the transaction costs they face, is the way to try and facilitate more employment growth.

MS. SESAY: We talked about the public sector, we talked about the private

sector, and obviously some things that aren't discussed here on stage in this 30 minutes, so I hope you'll bring up in the questioning. So I'm going to jump around a bit because I want to touch on certain things and I want to make sure they're covered.

China is in this report and the point is made that the 2017 Beijing Forum on China and Africa cooperation saw Beijing pledge \$60 billion, the same amount they pledged back in 2015. The report suggests in that particular writing that we're seeing a shift in China's commitment to Africa.

Ambassador, how do you see it? Is that a bad thing?

MS. THOMAS-GREENFIELD: No. That's an excellent question. And I think what we hear a lot from the U.S. side is that it's a bad thing. I actually would argue that there are two sides to this story. So it's a bad thing if countries are being put into future debt that they can't sustain, but if you need raw roads and you need roads and you need ports and you need airports right now, today, and Chinese companies are there to do that, then African countries need to take advantage of that. And one of the things that when I think about what the United States can do in response, and not in competition with China, we bring software to the table. So we bring training. We should be supporting more training of engineers, more training of project managers, more training of negotiators, so that as these countries go into strike deals with the Chinese they have better capacity to do those deals. Because the Chinese can bring a good deal to the table if you negotiate a good deal with them. And that has been the problem. Corruption has become an issue in the context of those relationships. If countries want a good deal, they can spend \$25 billion or \$25 million on a road and get an extraordinarily good road. And they can spend \$25 million on a road and \$10 million of it goes under the table and they don't get what they paid for.

So I don't see China as all bad. I see the potential in the relationship with China, but I also see the potential for American companies to become much more aggressively and proactively engaged in Africa, working in the current approach that I'm in now at Albright Stonebridge Group, we deal with a lot of companies who are interested in

doing business in Africa, but nervous about doing business in Africa. They are somewhat risk averse, and part of our job is to encourage them how to help them manage those risks. Chinese companies are taking risk as well. And many of those risks are not paying off and we're seeing it backfire on them in their own country.

So I think it's a double edged question.

MS. SESAY: Brahima, I'm going to come to you to weigh on this, but I want to give Nathalie a chance to weigh in in terms of the China engagement with Africa and what it means for governance. Obviously that's the focus of your foundation.

MS. DELAPALME: I'm not really entitled to give good answers on this. I think certainly about China, I mean, there is a multiplicity of partners now on the continent that needs to be dealt with. I think that when we talk of corruption, of course it takes two to corrupt, so I think we have to see both sides every time.

I also see that when China is investing in Africa, when Chinese companies are not paying enough attention to the local employment content or maintenance content of their projects, they are more and more meeting difficulties in their ability to strike contents, so this could be a competitiveness factor that needs to be taken into account by American companies or any other companies. I think once again this local employment issue is really key.

But it's not only about doing business in Africa. I just saw that China has committed to another -- not to another, but at least to \$50 million in G5 Sahel force. They are currently the biggest contributor and peacekeepers on the ground.

MS. SESAY: China?

MS. DELAPALME: China, in men.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: I would say Africans are.

MS. DELAPALME: No, I'm talking -- you're right. I'm talking about the foreigners, okay?

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: Okay.

MS. DELAPALME: What I'm saying is the print, the Chinese print, on the continent is multiple. It's not business only. It's very strategic. It's a long-term strategy.

I remember when the Chinese ambassador once came to see the French companies who used to think that they were the best, at least in Francophone countries. And the Chinese ambassador said, look, we've been there for a much longer time before you were. We've been absent for some centuries, but now we are back and happy to see you there. If you want to join, please join, but we were there much before you were.

So I think we need to be aware of this, too.

MS. SESAY: Brahim, would you like to weigh in on that?

MR. COULIBALY: Yes, certainly. I think the -- so the first is that to get it right in terms of the nature of China's engagement on the continent, I think it's being sometimes portrayed just as a natural resource focus only engagement. I think it's a bit misplaced. The engagement is much more sophisticated than it's sometimes made out to be. And they are in -- Chinese companies are in all types of sectors across Africa, including manufacturing, construction, et cetera. And the Chinese government is following up with a strategy to further reinforce the engagement on the continent over even the long haul. I think the statistics are like maybe 10,000 or so Chinese firms operating on the continent and most of them are making investments for the long term.

And what you're seeing on the Chinese government part, too, is rolling out fellowships. I think they just announced like 50,000 printing programs for Africans, so civil servants, government officials to come to China. And just earlier in the week, Kenya announced that it would begin teaching Mandarin in school.

So these are basically foundations for what looks to be a much longer term engagement. And one signal of that is you look at the FOCAC, the Chinese summit. Fifty-three of the 54 African leaders were there. That's way more than those who actually made it to the United Nations, so that begins to show the kind of shift we're seeing in terms of relations in Africa. And also, we're waking up to really where the interest can lie.

Now, in terms of some aspects of the engagement, some could indeed be questionable, but I think the onus is really on African leadership. Again, we're back to the issue of leadership. How do you engage with China? You need to engage in a way also that is beneficial to you and as in the in same China will engage in a way that's beneficial to China. To me that's a no-brainer. We need to take African leadership more responsibility in their engagement and in the negotiations they undertake with China.

And on the U.S.'s front, it is good to begin to see them also rolling out a program or a strategy for Africa, but we need not view it in terms of either U.S. or China, or Africans having to choose between U.S. and China. Africa wants as diverse a partnership as they can and we all say diversity is good. This case is no exception.

If you --

MS. SESAY: Coherent? I don't mean to jump in there, but the U.S. engagement under this administration, such as it is, is your view that there is a coherent in place for engagement with Africa?

MR. COULIBALY: I would say there is a strategy being put in place. (Laughter) If you'd ask me this, say, about six months ago my answer would have been more clear, but since then obviously, you know, they rolled out an African strategy in a document. But the question then is, what are in terms of the next steps and how are they going to operationalize it? But I would say at this stage, it is a bit earlier than other administrations have rolled out an Africa strategy. So I would say let's wait to see the details and then we can then provide the comments on those.

But again to the point of China and U.S. not necessarily being adversaries on the continent, they are really collaborating, as we are alluding to, in infrastructure. There alone Africa has a gap of about \$100 billion a year. No country, single country, or kind of partner can fill that void, so there's plenty of opportunity for collaboration. And some of the companies, U.S. and Chinese companies, are already collaborating in the area of infrastructure with the U.S. bringing its technical expertise and then the Chinese also

bringing some financing and they're collaborating. And that's the kind of collaboration that we think works best for Africa.

MS. SESAY: My last question before I open it up to the floor, obviously it was a headline, well, at least one of the headlines of last year, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement signing in Kigali in March. How many was it? It was 49 signatures. So far there are 12 ratifications. They need a minimum of 22 for the agreement to go into force.

I'm going to take an optimistic view and say they'll get all the signatures. My question more is how far will that go towards the transformation of the continent that we're all hoping for, waiting for, planning for, talking about? Abebe?

MR. SELASSIE: You know, I think I completely agree with you, it's one of the most exciting initiatives that has come out, a continent-wide initiative. I think it will be a boon subject to how it's implemented.

I think ratification we can take for granted. Hopefully, the next five, six weeks, you know, another seven, eight countries I think are still missing, they will step up, maybe even by the time of the EU Summit. So that's for granted.

So the question now goes to how it's going to be implemented. I think there, frankly, implementation has two dimensions. One is the softer dimensions, so making sure border checkpoints, et cetera, really do come down and we don't have formal tariffs being replaced by non-tariff values. That will limit the flow of trade. So that, I think, is an important thing that we have to follow up, to check on as Africans.

I think the second and more important aspect, though, I think is to facilitate trade. We still are going to need quite a lot of investment in infrastructure. So as we know, we still have a model where a lot of trading, a lot of roads are towards the outside, from the hinterlands to ports, and less connecting countries with each other.

You know, again, drawing back on my Uganda experience, I was struck by traffic, all this trade I talked about and building materials, et cetera. And I went into the DRC, had to go on really awful dirt roads through -- you know, and when it's in the rainy season it

gets badly disrupted. You know, with -- and despite the high transaction costs of getting goods from Uganda, from Kampala to Bunagana and to Goma, this trait still takes place. Imagine if we had really decent roads how much more trade would take place. And I think that asking governments to focus as much on in-traffic and trade corridors will be as important.

MS. SESAY: Absolutely.

MR. SELASSIE: But I think really I'm excited about this prospect, you know, this coming into effect.

MS. SESAY: I give Linda a chance to weigh in on the African Free Trade Agreement.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: You know, I think it's a positive move on the continent of Africa. The crux of it will be implementation, as you said. And this is one of those areas where we know what the problem is, we know what the solution is, African leaders know what the solution is, but whether all of them commit to that solution, commit to the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement I think remains to be seen. If they all commit to implementation, I think we're going to see a sea change on the continent in terms of economic development and growth and trade between countries in Africa. There's more trade to be had within Africa, between African countries than any trade they can do with the United States, but it's getting to that point.

So I do think they're going to get to signatures. They're moving fast toward that. But the next stage will be how committed their leaders are to implementation and whether they will be enticed into other deals that might disadvantage the Continental Free Trade arrangements.

MS. SESAY: And Nathalie or Brahim, whoever wants to pick up, I mean, right now I think it's about 17 percent, right? The trade into Africa is about 17 percent.

MR. COULIBALY: Yeah, that's right. And then just by comparison, for Europe it's close to 70 percent.

MS. SESAY: Right.

MR. COULIBALY: And in Asia, you're looking at about 60 percent or so. So clearly, there's call for it to be boosted.

And I think this skill or challenges that were highlighted here will really require Africans to think big and to think bold. And I think that's precisely what this Continental Free Trade Agreement is. The expectation, in my view, is not that it's going to deliver necessarily quick wins tomorrow. But it is certainly laying out the foundation for what will be necessary really for Africa to overcome its challenges.

Progress is being made. I think momentum is being sustained from about six signatures last July, they now have -- they're six signatures short. And that's within already -- four signatures, there you go, short. So that's within a span of six months. So I'm really hopeful that even this year, 2019, we'll get the 22 signatures and then zooming in on the details because these kind of big, bold initiatives are never easy, especially where 54 countries are involved. But I'm optimistic that they will indeed make the progress to make it a reality.

But one thing I want to point out on the CFTA that may not be apparent is that it is a bit different from other Continental Free Trade Agreements that we've seen elsewhere. It goes beyond just trading goods, which has usually been the focus of others, to include trading services. It also includes a collaboration on investment, as well as even e-commerce, intellectual property, et cetera.

And that is supplementing other initiatives, like the Single Air Market Transport across the continent. They have just I think last week revealed the design of the one African passport, which they're going to discuss at the 32nd summit. So really this is a push to get really a single market in Africa that has the kind of skill needed to compete on a global scale.

MS. SESAY: Thank you. Nathalie?

MS. DELAPALME: Yes. Well, definitely a very important step. And I will

say a very good demonstration of leadership, of political commitment, and of the strong leadership of the president of the African Union who was instrumental in getting this forward. As you said, the devil in the implementation and it's, of course, a little bit annoying to see that I think Nigeria and South Africa are still hesitating to ratify, which is, of course, a little bit of an obstacle.

Two points maybe on that. I think it's very important, it's definitely interesting, but this interest needs to be demonstrated to the people on the ground. If the countries want to be able to go forward and implement, they must be able to demonstrate that to their citizens the interest of it. And the free movement of people is also probably one way to -- one answer to this need for jobs and mobility that we have been stressing in our formal discussion.

The last point is about taxation. I understand that one of the reasons that some countries are sort of stepping behind is because they're afraid of losing their tax resources, which are basically based on customs, which, by the way, is a very easy way to corruption. So strengthening a taxation system, by enlarging the basis, is certainly something very important to, I would say, accompany this movement.

MS. SESAY: My thanks to all of you here on the panel. I'd like to give the room the opportunity to part of the conversation now. I see hands going up.

SPEAKER: Whoa. (Laughter)

MS. SESAY: So people with microphones, I see you. They are very specific individuals. If we can start to the left, we're going to kind of work backwards, the second row here. There we go. And we're going to alternate between sides. We're going to try and be fair.

MS. STOUT: Hi. My name is Carrie Stout. I'm here with Spirit of America.

You all spoke at length about youth and education on the continent. I'm wondering if there are any shining star examples of countries that are doing it right as far as preparing their youth, the current youth and the future generation, for the hopeful job market

that is approaching.

MS. SESAY: Who would like to take that on the panel? Which countries are getting it right with preparing their youth population for the jobs of the future?

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: That's a hard question.

MS. DELAPALME: I would say Rwanda is a good example. I think Rwanda is probably one country who is looking forward the most to reducing the mismatch between education and job opportunities. I mean, and you can see that indeed they have been putting in place the public policy on education and training that's very good.

Kenya, too, I would say probably. Yeah, Kenya. I mean, I'm sure there are a lot of other countries, but just to give examples.

MS. SESAY: Anyone want to shout out in the room any other places that are bright lights in terms of getting education right for the jobs of tomorrow? We said Kenya, Rwanda.

SPEAKER: Ghana.

MS. DELAPALME: Ghana, yeah, yeah.

MS. SESAY: Ghana.

MS. DELAPALME: I'm sad to see that it's mainly Anglophone countries, but. (Laughter)

MS. SESAY: And many reasons we could go into that. Right here at the front, please. We're going to alternate between sides.

MR. ZEUFACK: Hi. My name is Albert Zeufack. I'm the chief economist for Africa at the World Bank.

I want to start by congratulating Brahim and the Brookings team for a great report. And I three questions, one for Ambassador Linda.

My question is on the gap between the median age of the African population and the average age of African leaders. You did mention that in your comments and it's also mentioned in the report, yet we do have a number of countries where we still have these too

young to run laws. My question to you is since our wise men in their wisdom haven't been able to do that much, should we be evolving for too wise to run laws in some of our countries? (Laughter)

MS. SESAY: You mean too old to stay in power.

MR. ZEUFACK: No, no, I wouldn't say old, too wise to run.

MS. SESAY: So this is the problem, we don't call it what it is: too old to stay in power. (Laughter)

MR. ZEUFACK: So that's a question for you, Ambassador.

Second question to Nathalie on governance. The chart was actually quite interesting and to me it's surprising, but it's not surprising at all either because of all the reasons Brahim mentioned. But also because living in Africa you quickly realize that the cost of poor leadership is huge when you have weak institutions. Countries like the U.S. and all this can afford to have poor leaders, but not ours. African countries really suffer from poor leadership. And when you live in Africa you realize, you know, it's the beginning and the end of every other action.

But where it is surprising to me is that we've been talking about this for more than 20 years, yet it doesn't seem like we have been making a dent. What needs to be done from all of us, international institutions, African countries, and, you know, think tanks, to actually make a change in the quality of leadership and to really tackle corruption in Africa?

Last question --

MS. SESAY: No, no, I'm sorry. We have too many people to get everybody in.

MR. ZEUFACK: Okay, good. Thank you.

MS. SESAY: Plus I would also argue that the tens of thousands of people who don't get a paycheck right now here in the U.S. would argue that poor leadership matters just as much in the U.S. as it does in Africa. (Laughter)

I would like you to pick up, please.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: Okay, on the age issue. You know, as you were talking I was thinking about Uganda. So right now the bill that changed the age limit has gone to the Supreme Court because there was a law passed that allowed -- that took away the age limit in Uganda, allowing a president to run for life regardless of age. In Uganda, the median age of cabinet members in the government is 64. But their country's median age is 15. So there is a huge, huge, huge gap.

What we're seeing happening in Uganda, young people are beginning to stand up. You know, this is the Bobi Wine phenomena that has happened in this country. They're looking for a new group of leaders that are their age groups. And these old guys, and I won't name any of them, but there are a whole bunch of them, they're going to die. They are going to serve for life because at some point, and hopefully, you know, they don't live till they're 100 years old, but at some point they will have a life sentence in their jobs, and they need to start preparing for transition.

And that's the message that we absolutely have to get out, that they have to start preparing for transition. And then Africans have to get over this thing, you guys all know you bow down to your knees to these old guys. And it's all old guys. I'm not talking about old women. (Laughter) You bow down. They walk in the room and you just bow down, *oga, oga, oga*. (Laughter) And that has, you know --

MS. SESAY: Some in Nigeria.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: It just has to come to an end, and *ogas* ought to be young people.

And then the final point on this, I was in Liberia and I would meet with these youth groups and there would be all these old guys. (Laughter) And I'm like, how old are you? And he's like, I'm 40 years old. I'm like, you're a youth? He's like, well, we missed out on our youth, so we have upped the age of -- I'm like, no, no, no, no.

MS. SESAY: There is too much to tackle in that. (Laughter) We're just going to take that and thank you for that.

The lady in the plaid jacket and then the gentleman.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: Yes, hi, Valentina Okaru-Bisant. I'm a professor at Catholic University. Views expressed are personal views, not that of Catholic University.

My question is to the IMF actually. I had a question for you on the question of youth. Abebe, right, is your name? Youth unemployment. Given the exigencies of the IMF's role in terms of we do macro, not micro, economics, right? That's what you handle, at the macro level in countries. What is IMF doing right now to address the youth unemployment given the exigencies of that situation? Because the solutions are at the micro policy level.

MR. SELASSIE: Micro?

MS. OKARU-BISANT: Micro, not really macro. That's why we're still having problems regardless of all the interventions you've made in those countries in Africa. So that's one.

And then the other question --

MS. SESAY: Can I ask you to keep it --

MS. OKARU-BISANT: -- is to Nathalie, please.

MS. SESAY: Can I ask you to keep it to one? Only because there's so many people.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: Oh, okay. Okay, that's fine. I'll ask another time.

MS. SESAY: But if that's your top question, then I'll take that one.

And if you could answer the --

MR. SELASSIE: Yes. So, you know, I think a very important driver of employment outcomes in every country is growth, huh? So we focus a lot on the policies that are needed to engender higher growth. But, of course, you know, as you may have seen from our work in recent years, it's not just about growth, but also increasingly we focus, also, on the quality of growth. So things like whether the growth is engendering jobs and youth unemployment is continuing to rise despite high growth. And then we have policies

that we have focus on labor market issues that may be hindering the greater absorption of people into the labor market.

But I just want to underscore that. In Sub-Saharan Africa, I mean, you know, we have both -- we have the demographic -- the dynamics that are unfolding are a huge issue. I mean, we have both kind of the number of youth being very, very -- coming into the job market being very high, but also you have migration from rural areas into urban areas. And we have not enough data to be able to understand what is going on, but suffice it to say that I think an important, you know, by no means sufficient condition, but a necessary condition to create job growth is higher economic growth, huh? Higher wealth being created, higher economic activity, and that is -- you know, we do everything that we do by way of policy is focused on engendering higher growth.

MS. SESAY: Thank you. To this side of the room. Lady here, because we're working our way back, with the green in the scarf, and then I'll go to you.

MS. SHERBILL: Thank you. My name's Julie Sherbill and I work with CorpsAfrica. My question is specifically directed at Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and also Ms. Sesay.

I just got back from serving in the Peace Corps in Morocco. I worked with an organization called Project Soar, which you also worked with in the *We Will Rise* documentary. So as examples such as Project Soar or CorpsAfrica, what is the U.S. role in youth and gender inclusivity initiatives in the context of shifting to grass-roots and community-led development, specifically in terms of both funding and implementation of such initiatives? Thank you.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: One of -- and I don't speak for the U.S. Government anymore, but I think one of the initiatives that I think is an important initiative that came out of the Obama administration and has, fortunately, continued in the Trump administration is the Young African Leaders Initiative, where we have brought thousands, up to 3,000 at this point and maybe more, young Africans to the U.S. And they

come from across the board.

They're not -- one of the, I think, key parts of the program is it is not to focus on just youth in urban areas. We have gone into rural communities and found young leaders in rural communities. And they have come back -- come to the States for six weeks of intensive leadership training and they've gone back home. And one of the complaints I heard is it's only 3,000. There are tens of thousands of Africans.

But there are 400,000 young Africans on the YALI Network now. They're all communicating with each other. They're communicating across borders. And this initiative, I think, will continue even without the United States' involvement because these young people have been galvanized to move forward.

And I heard you mention one YALI was involved -- the YALI who wrote one of the reports in the report. They are doing all kinds of things and I'm just waiting for the first one to become president under the age of 40. (Laughter)

MR. COULIBALY: And having interacted with them, I can tell you many of them are thinking of that, to run for office.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: But they all can't be president, though, I would say. So we want some of them to be leaders in every corner of their countries.

MS. SESAY: Amen.

MR. FOOTE: Yeah, Mel Foote, president of the Constituency for Africa. Nice seeing you.

SPEAKER: Hello, Mel

MR. FOOTE: It's been many years, my good friend. I don't think enough has been said about this new U.S. strategy. Are Africans liking the strategy? Are you hearing a groundswell of support? What about all of the increased military presence in Africa? I know the U.S. is based on Ghana and the Germans are in Niger and all across Africa. It seems to me somebody's preparing for war.

And then my other question is to you, Isha. What about this diaspora? You just came back from Ghana. What is the expectation that the diaspora will be engaged in Africa beyond tourism and buying trinkets? And what about the Africans who were not born in Africa, Africans like me, with an African-born and me. I'm born here. What do you think about this diaspora? There is serious opportunity for engagement. Thank you.

MS. SESAY: I'm going to put it to the panel first, the question about the U.S. strategy. Mel, as you and I have our email addresses, I'll message an email and tell you what I think. Please, open to everyone.

MR. COULIBALY: All right, on the U.S. strategy I think it's a good starting point. The main three themes that they've highlighted I don't think Africans will disagree with, the trade and investment, security, which is not surprising; and then having more effective aid that's now going to be disbursed now in a more indiscriminate way.

And I think, too, those messages resonate with Africans. The belief we have that the aid is what they're expecting I think is old thinking and is not -- is a bit misguided. The dynamics now is toward trade and investment and for engaging in mutually beneficial relations.

But what I will point out in the report is China appeared in it 14, 15 times. And then you won't find, say, South Africa or Nigeria mentioned in the report, which are the two largest countries on the continent. So what that does it leaves the impression as if it is viewing Africa perhaps as a place where China and the U.S. are going to fight it out. And I think that would unfortunate if that is indeed the motivation behind the strategy.

And one other element has to do with the -- what's going to happen after AGOA expires in 2025? From the discussions during the AGOA Summit, some of the African ambassadors came or ministers came to town and some of them stopped by here. We had discussions with them at Brookings. And they left here with the impression that the USTR was perhaps trying to continue on the engagement of bilateral deals with single individual countries, whereas the continent itself is saying we now have a Continental Free

Trade Agreement, we want to engage as a unified Africa. And they reconciled those two positions.

I think those are some of the key things I've been looking forward to seeing the administration take into consideration.

MS. SESAY: Anybody else want to weigh in on this before we --

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: Can I just comment on the diaspora question?

MS. SESAY: Sure.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: I think the diaspora is extraordinarily important to our relations with Africa, and we don't give it enough play. We don't talk about it enough. And Mel has been waving that flag proudly and leading our efforts there.

When we talk about China, tell me how many of you would be in a meeting like this in China and see this many people of African descent in the room. So this is our strength in the United States, that we do have a strong diaspora community that can guide and support and lead policy.

When I was the assistant secretary I initially would meet with diaspora groups who would say what can you do for me? And I just turned it around and said what I need is what you can do for me. What can you do in terms of pushing policies on the Hill? What can you do in terms of pushing the administration to pay more attention? What can you do in terms of stressing the importance of Africa to our policies?

So I want to thank Mel again for making sure that we not forget the importance of the diaspora community as we look at how we engage with Africa in the future.

MS. SESAY: And can I just answer that? On a smaller individual level, what can you do to visit these countries, spending your money in these countries, invest in these countries, I mean, if it's in real estate, in small businesses? What can you do

singlehandedly without having to lean on organizations and organized fora to go into these spaces? And that's what Ghana's president wants to see. He wants to see not necessarily waiting to be coordinated and led, but Africans --

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: Proactive.

MS. SESAY: -- people of African descent going. First of all, just go, let's just start with that. Let's have African-Americans, let's have people in diaspora go.

Gosh. Now I --

SPEAKER: You've got somebody back there.

SPEAKER: I've got the microphone.

MS. SESAY: Now it's just like spaghetti junction here.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: You've got somebody with a microphone.

MS. SESAY: Okay, the microphone, someone's got it back there. No, you have it, so please, speak. Thank you.

SPEAKER: Yeah. Okay, thank you.

MS. SESAY: I'll come to you, I promise.

MS. COOK: My name is Melissa Cook and I run African Sunrise Partners, and I also served for two years on President Obama's Advisory Council and doing business in Africa. And I come from finance and capital markets, and I see a complete disconnect between the realities of money and what governments think they need. And that's why I think governance and job creation are connected. Companies don't invest to create jobs. They invest to generate returns of which the time value of money is a key factor.

So what can we do to try to build capacity and educate politicians? And we have this not even unique to Africa problem, but how can we connect the realities of money, what people need to invest versus the political needs of these governments to actually attract money that will stay? Thank you.

MS. SESAY: Brahima?

MR. COULIBALY: That's a tough question. (Laughter) I think the most obvious thing I think, again, is trying to push hard on the governance front and continuing to make sure that the business environment is conducive to attracting and retaining private capital. And it's not (inaudible) that actually in the World Bank 2019 report on the countries that are reforming the most, African countries were among the top 10 performers. I think that's really the kind of momentum we want to see sustained.

And then increasingly, also, tell the right narrative about Africa. I mean, obviously the news cycle is such that events that are projects tends to gather more attention. Someone who worked out what we've done here at Brookings has actually shown that when it comes to Africa, that misperception is even wider than when it comes to other areas. And I think being able to tell the right narrative will draw more attention to the opportunities that are on the continent.

And that's what we're hoping, too, the chapter on the business potential will do. But then, also, on the governance side, to really do the kind of reforms that are needed to make business processes easier, eradicate corruption completely, I think is what we need.

MS. SESAY: Thank you. We're going to go to this side. We're alternating. So the lady here and then the lady right there with the turtleneck, the blue turtleneck. I'm alternating everyone, that's my system, such as it is.

MS. LAPIN: Thank you for a fascinating panel. I appreciate it. My name is Deirdre LaPin. I'm a consultant on African development and served on a number of larger multilateral, bilateral institutions, and the private sector in Africa over many years.

My question is for anyone of the panel and it's to consider that, indeed, the general operating consensus is that the private sector will drive development, sustainable development and growth in Africa. But the process is a very slow one, particularly to keep up with the momentum of the youth, as we have discussed this morning. And I wonder if we shouldn't return to consideration of another model, which is a public sector, perhaps stop-

gap model, but for which we'd have some very good examples here in the United States where we can create jobs perhaps on a short-term basis for very large numbers of youth who can be trained and learn to work and apply their skills, particularly in rural communities and, therefore, help to mitigate this inequity that we're seeing, that is growing on the African continent.

I just wonder if that's not an approach we should start thinking about once again.

MS. SESAY: So can I just ask, are you talking about public works jobs or are we talking about --

MS. LAPIN: Yes.

MS. SESAY: That's what you're saying.

MS. LAPIN: Public works jobs.

MS. SESAY: Yeah. Can someone respond to that. Bear in mind the question, so we're looking for good quality.

MS. DELAPALME: Yes. Can I jump -- because I absolutely think that's fine. I think we can't just focus on private sector. And even when you are talking about leadership and governance, there is no strong leadership without strong institutions. If we continue to focus only on private sector and rely on private sector, or even say we need to build an environment that's conducive to good -- who is going to build it? Who is going to implement it if it's not the public sector?

So we do need to focus a little bit more about public sector and making sure that young people are also attracted to public sector, not only to private sector, not only to being a young entrepreneur. It's quite important to be a high-level, committed, strong, uncorrupt, documented public servant.

So I think that probably it's another elephant in the room that many partners, donors have sort of forgotten to focus on, and that's public sector. And I think in all conversations about Africa most of the time we talk about private sector and we very, very

seldom talk about public sector. And this is something that's very important.

MS. SESAY: Does everyone agree on the panel?

MR. SELASSIE: Just if I could add some color to this. I think, you know, we work with the public sector and strengthening the public sector is -- helping to strengthen the public sector is, of course, a big part of the work that we do. But I think there's a difference between strengthening the public sector to be more effective at policymaking, to make sure that public servants are paid decently, well paid, well remunerated, that you have incentive rewards schemes that are appropriate; quite another to use the public sector balance sheet to create the millions of jobs that the region needs. The latter I'm not sure is sustainable, quite frankly.

Now, it's quite different, also, about interventions that we would need to have by way of public works programs, social programs where you have shocks that hit particular rural parts, et cetera. That, of course, is very much part and parcel of what the public sector needs to do. But the public sector as a sole -- you know, as the main vehicle through which we create jobs to address the employment problem I don't see being sustainable.

MR. COULIBALY: Yes, two brief notes. So perhaps one way to reconcile, and I 100 percent agree with Abebe's point, but I can also see a lot of value in the solution that you've put on the line. Perhaps a middle ground is to have such programs, but that is sort of limited in time, to provide first skills. Because one of the key elements of youth having more difficulty than the average person getting job is that first job and that first job experience. So if it's a well-designed program within the broader context of macro stability, but that is able to provide that first part experience, I think it has the scope to be effective.

MR. SELASSIE: Just if I may --

MS. SESAY: And she did say that, just to --

MR. SELASSIE: So if I may add, I mean, you know, maybe it's because we work directly with the ministers of finance, who really, really are the most put-upon officials in

our countries in the region, and so they are the ones at the end of the day have to decide this extra \$1,000, what do I do with it? Do I build a school with it? Do I build a clinic with it? Do I pay for medicine? Or do I create a job with it? I mean, so that's often the decision that they have to make.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: Priority of the priorities.

MR. SELASSIE: And, of course, you know, they will lean always towards public interventions which are, you know -- which serve a lot more people than one or two people. So it's not as if there is room that they have and luxury that they have.

Now, this is not to say that there is scope to improve efficiency of spending in our country, et cetera. Absolutely. But even then I think the priorities often tend to be about building schools, building clinics, new wards for --

MS. SESAY: For mothers and babies.

MR. SELASSIE: -- mothers and babies, intervention in NICU units. The needs remain incredibly pressing.

MS. SESAY: Yeah. It's 11:36, I'm six minutes over, but I'm going to take a few more because I'm no longer on TV and I can do that. (Laughter)

There were so many hands up, so I'm going to apologize in advance. You've already asked a question.

SPEAKER: No, I didn't.

MS. SESAY: Okay, go ahead. Go ahead. Very quickly.

SPEAKER: I wanted to intervene on the youth debate. So I went back on a leave of absence to Africa for five years. I was leading AERC, African Economic Research Consortium. It's the largest economic research and training network in Africa. So I think, Abebe, you're right. I think a lot has changed over the last 15, 20 years. We have seen remarkable improvements on all fronts.

But then towards the end of my tenure in Africa, I just woke up and realized that although we have made so many remarkable changes, the development gaps are huge

and (inaudible). And you can't deal with that with business as usual.

So what was not discussed here is a whole area of innovation, empowering the youth not to get jobs, but also to create jobs; you know, huge investment in digital infrastructure, so digitalization, empowerment, entrepreneurship, transformation of agriculture, (inaudible) creation, these are things that we should be spending more time on.

MS. SESAY: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. SESAY: I know we all agree with that. (Laughter) Seriously.

Lady with the scarf who's looking at me plaintively.

MS. PATAL: Thank you very much. My name is Rita Patal and I'm a leadership coach. My question, however, is to do with the private sector.

So a couple of points. First of all, the point that Ms. Delapalme made which was around the income inequality piece, and so my question is this, that when we think about the private sector and the growth of the private sector, what are some of the things that can be done tomorrow? So as a facilitator, as a trainer, as well, one of the things that we say and do is what is it that we can implement immediately?

So what is it that we can implement immediately at a micro level in order to ensure that there is a lesser degree of income inequality compared to just continuing to look at the macro level and making sure that great businesses in Uganda or Kenya, which is where I'm from, continue to thrive? What can we do so that it is the entrepreneurs at the ground level who can thrive, too?

MS. SESAY: Thank you. Thank you. What can we do right now?

MR. COULIBALY: I would say provide them with capital. I mean, because once you looked at all the surveys that come out, the critical things that small and micro enterprises struggle with, access to finance is at the top of it. And then secondarily, sometimes technical assistance. And that's where interventions, such as programs to train on how build and run a business, could be really useful.

MS. SESAY: Gentleman there with the glasses. Right there. Right there. And congratulations, you are the last question. (Laughter)

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. My name is Ladi Williams. I'm with Emerging Public Leaders and we help young people secure public sector jobs where they can make an impact in the civil service.

We haven't spoken about poverty and I would like us to do so. Two-thirds of our world's extreme poor are in Africa; 87 million of them are in my country, Nigeria. So I would like to ask what kind of pro-poor policies should governments be thinking about? Because if we, you know, get the private sector-led growth right, we still need to answer the distribution question so that people aren't left behind. And I think it's important that when we're talking about Africa, we address this poverty question, as well. Thank you.

MS. SESAY: Ladi, thank you for bringing that up. Thank you.

MR. SELASSIE: Almost everything we talk about I think is ultimately about benefiting and making sure that our countries grow to be able to increase opportunities for the poor, of course. But one -- Nigeria, for example, you know, I cannot think of a more important thing for the government in Nigeria or the public sector or society to do than increasing the amount of revenues that the government collects which is not dependent on oil. Tax-to-GDP ratio is only 5, 6 percent, one of the lowest globally. There is no way that Nigeria can provide the education, health, infrastructure services that it needs to facilitate improve the lives of the poor without mobilizing more revenues.

So, you know, if there's one thing that Nigeria could do, I think it would be expanding the tax base, collecting more revenues to be able to invest in health, education, to address the huge diversity of outcomes that you have in infant mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, poverty rates between the North and the South.

MS. SESAY: And closing thoughts from the panel. Brahim?

MR. COULIBALY: No, I would say a bit more broadly what is really important and critical is just making sure that that growth itself is inclusive. And so the

macro headline can be disconnected really from the impact it's having on the ground. And I think in (inaudible) that's what you're seeing I think in the case of Nigeria and others, and we're very much concerned. Because if you look at some of the projections that have come from some of our colleagues about using the -- on the Poverty Clock, the World Poverty Clock that monitors poverty rates almost every minute or every second, Nigeria is really the place that's going to account still for 26 percent of the world's poor living in extreme poverty by 2030, a year when really everybody is supposed to have exited from poverty.

So that's why we have this nice contribution from the vice president. And his recommendation there is that they're going to step up the diversification of the economy. Again, diversification, inclusion, it is critical. Because any development agenda that is not inclusive is incomplete at best. It is incomplete at best and it is unsustainable, no matter how much of a distribution you might have.

MS. SESAY: Ambassador, if you'd like to respond to that in your closing.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD: Just one comment. I think that if we leave here with anything it is the importance of focusing more attention on the youth bulge. This is going to either be Africa's silver lining or it's going to be Africa's downfall. And every single one of you here in the room should be thinking about programs that will mentor and help young people move into prosperity.

The young woman from CorpsAfrica didn't really tell us what CorpsAfrica does. And I just want to make that point that this is an organization that reaches out to African youth and provides them a Peace Corps-like experience in their country or in other countries. And as we know from our own Peace Corps volunteers what being a volunteer does for Peace Corps -- the experience does for them in terms of their future endeavors.

So opportunities like CorpsAfrica, like the YALI, and other programs that focus on young people need to be at the top of all of our agendas, along with leadership, yes; governance, yes; but youth prosperity and inclusion, absolutely.

MS. SESAY: Nathalie.

MS. DELAPALME: Yeah, very quickly, I mean, I concur, of course, with everything. And I come back on this taxation reform because I think it's absolutely key. It's also a matter of ownership to be able to depend not only on external aid. And I think we need to deal indeed with poverty, but with inequality it's not the same. It's two different things. I think that strengthening and enlarging the tax systems is absolutely key. It's probably something that with public service (inaudible) is very important indeed.

MS. SESAY: And for my part, as the founder of a nonprofit working with girls I want to echo what the ambassador said, that we support the programs that are happening on the ground, those who are doing the work to increase and improve leadership, to increase inclusion. I think we all can do our part. And we also start with a very simple thing, go. Go to Africa so we can all say we've engaged and we know what we're talking about.

I want to say thank you Brahim Coulibaly and his team for the magnificent report and for inviting me and the panel for this event. Thank you for hosting.

Thank you to the panel, Abebe, Linda, Nathalie.

MR. SELASSIE: Thank you.

MS. SESAY: Thank you. We're so grateful. Thank you to all of you for sitting with us as it went over. I hope you found it beneficial, exciting, interesting. Have a good day, everyone. (Applause)

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