

Africa & Post-Covid19

Africa's challenges in the present, the consequences of yesterday's Africa, and the prospects for post-covid 19 Africa.

Alain Le Roy, France's special COVID-19 envoy for Africa, recalled the rostrum of the 18 Heads of State and Government (1). Africa is relatively spared in comparison with other continents (10,000 deaths out of 400,000) but the number of victims is growing (in particular South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Nigeria): according to the WHO, the peak could be reached in August-September. The plan has four components :

- support for health systems
- humanitarian work
- promote an African science coordination mechanism
- economic support and debt moratorium

The G20 (including China) agreed on 15 April to a moratorium on debt servicing. 23 African countries (out of 41 eligible) have asked to benefit from it. Discussions are under way with China to put all its claims on the table.

The African Union has appointed five special envoys.

Professor Jean-Emmanuel Pondi stressed the importance of digitalization and higher education to address the crisis. The latter will lead to a welcome restructuring of university education and the generalization of distance education.

Professor Francis Akindes noted that the pandemic has hit the strongest countries first. Why does it seem to have spared Africa relatively well so far ? Several factors may have played a role, including the Ebola experience. For Africa, accustomed to shocks, be they health, economic (structural adjustment programmes) or political, the pandemic is not a new structural cataclysm: it calls us to question the need to accelerate the movement.

(1) <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/927754/politique/exclusif-coronavirus-15-chefs-detat-et-de-gouvernement-appellent-a-une-reponse-multilaterale-pour-lafrique/>

Mr **Wilfrid Lauriano do Rego** (KPMG) stressed the scale of the economic crisis: the average growth rate should fall from +6% to -4% or even -6%, even though States and organisations such as WAEMU had set up support plans. There are questions about the financing of these plans and the support of private companies, which receive little support from banks. The solution cannot come exclusively from the States. The crisis has highlighted the resilience and inventiveness of civil societies. Digitalisation will play an essential role, particularly in the field of cadastre.

Ms Marie Dias Borges (BBC, from London) showed that we must change paradigm and stop acting in a simple logic of survival. Young people had created promising applications, particularly in the field of health. Debt cancellation was useful but was not enough ; some African countries would be getting into debt again, particularly with China. It is not normal for Africa to continue to import 20% of its food. Oil-producing countries such as Angola are experiencing petrol shortages. Africa must transform and consume locally. Only Morocco and South Africa are self-sufficient in medicines. Business incubators must be created in universities.

Noël Magloire Ndoba, after recalling the economic consequences of the crisis, also wants to see an opportunity: Africa can seize the opportunity of the 4th industrial revolution, especially artificial intelligence. The allocation of resources should focus in particular on digitalisation.

Jean-Claude Félix-Tchicaya (IPSE) highlighted the concept of the geopolitics of peoples. Public health policies are inadequate: too many African scientists and doctors are moving abroad. We must not only imagine tomorrow's world but focus on today's partnerships.

Karim Sy, since Dakar, notes that it is difficult to raise awareness of the seriousness of the epidemic. Civil society (not to be confused with the private sector) needs to be included in discussions, especially on debt cancellation, and made more transparent. There is also the question of digital sovereignty. Faced with the crisis, those in charge, often left to their own devices, have had to call on local resources and ingenuity, especially from companies, while at the same time exchanging with the whole world (e.g. on testing). It is fortunate that the hydro-alcoholic gel has been placed in the public domain. New solidarities have been created in Senegal between the State and private companies to develop common goods.

Emmanuel Dupuy, director of the IPSE, insists on the rise of youth in Africa, an opportunity and a challenge. The pandemic should not make us forget the other scourges and deficiencies that affect the continent. But it is also a source of opportunities: it has notably revealed China's weaknesses and shown the need to relocate certain industries. It also reminded us that we cannot expect everything from the state. It has given rise to a "diplomacy of philanthropy" (Dangote, Gates, Jack Ma). In the future, we will have to rely on this new generation of entrepreneurs.

During the final discussion, Alain Le Roy recalled, with regard to "common goods", the fight led at the WHO for the general distribution of vaccines and, on the subject of debt, the need to strengthen the banking system, broaden the tax base and strengthen savings so that they can be invested in countries. **Professor Pondi** echoes the concept of paradigm shift mentioned by Ms Borges. The example of Ethiopia after 1974 shows that a paradigm shift can overcome hunger. The cure rate of COVID in Africa is important : it can be attributed in particular to traditional medicines. **Mr. Felix-Tchicaya** recalled that the COVID crisis had highlighted inequalities but also the talents at work, including in the informal sector: State shortcomings were not African structural ills. **Mr Dupuy** recalled the need for African leadership : the initiative of President Macky Sall, President Ouattara and the King of Morocco was a good example. In the field of digital and standardization, we must join efforts to have a resilient policy towards both the United States and China. **Professor Akindes** recalls the crucial issue of the patrimonialization of states in weak countries.