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BACKGROUND
PAPER

CLAIMING
AFRICA'S PLACE
IN A TURBULENT
WORLD

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**Emerging
Markets
Forum**

A nonprofit initiative of the Centennial Group

Claiming Africa's Place in a Turbulent World: Background for the Session

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The session will serve to launch a joint initiative between the Emerging Markets Forum (EMF) and the Moroccan Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) that aims to provide Africa with its own strong voice. Participants in the Forum are aware of the challenges facing the Continent that have been the subject of many sessions and specific editions of the EMF in the past. Rather than making yet another series of presentations on challenges and policy remedies, we would like to explore ways and means for the Continent to be more proactive in shaping its future. Too often, Africa is put in a position to react to initiatives coming from outside; well-meaning and justified as they are, these initiatives do not always reflect the priorities and the historical and cultural sensitivities of the countries that then need to show “ownership” of what comes from outside. We expect a rich and honest conversation along the following questions:

- Is such an initiative needed and welcome?
- How best to shape it to ensure its added value and focus it on results and learning?
- How to broaden the participation to ensure that all voices are meaningfully included?
- How to ensure continuity between meetings and accountability?

The Premise: Africa must claim its place in a changing world

A new world order is emerging that will define the 21st century. The economic order and the global institutions that had dominated the last 7 decades are under stress. In many rich countries people left behind by globalization are turning to populism leading to more inward-looking policies. The tensions between the US and China, the two leading world economies, are reshaping alignments and alliances. The European Union, the third largest economic

bloc, is undergoing an existential moment. These massive shifts whose final shape is still unclear will force difficult choices by other nations. In the midst of such profound changes, Africa must be proactive and exert agency to define its role and place in the emerging new order and safeguard its long-term strategic interests, while sharing its culture and wisdom with the world.

Africa must do so in a way that will help the continent meet daunting challenges. Over the next three decades, Africa's population will double, and the continent will be the youngest part of the world. Providing jobs to cohorts of young people will require rapid, broad-based, and sustainable growth based on good domestic policies and strategic alliances that reflect changing geopolitical realities .

The most concerned actors are obviously the Africans themselves: government, private actors, and civil society need to build trust (domestically and internationally), implement reforms, and mobilize large resources (nationally and globally) in ways that are commensurate with the challenge of sustainable and equitable growth.

But the world also has a stake in Africa's success. Failure on the continent will create a restless youth, aware of the rest of the world and acting either to find a better future elsewhere or in desperation. In addition, unless growth is green, it will exacerbate the climate challenge and accelerate the movement of people. For these reasons, the rest of the world ought to look to Africa as a global public “good”, which – without proper action – could turn into a global public “bad”.

The challenges are huge and will require bold, long-term actions where Africa has a strong voice in the concert of nations and controls its future and where partners make significant contributions in mutually responsible ways that are consistent with

Africa's own vision as spelled out in various documents, including the African Union's "Agenda 2063".

The Objective

Provide an independent platform where principal African stakeholders (governments, private sector, civil society) can define their role and place in the world in open conversations with their partners, formulate their vision of the future, and share their needs and dreams on critical common challenges. It is expected/hoped that this will in turn yield a different relationship with their partners, encourage taking greater risks and bolder actions, and increase private investment, in a climate of mutual accountabilities, and joint monitoring of progress.

A Possible Focus: The future of youth

As the youngest region in the world for decades to come, the promise of Africa matters for itself and for the rest of the world. Global stability is, in many ways, linked to a decent future for Africa's youth. The challenges are many:

- Providing decent work for young people coming of age (10 to 12 million jobs need to be created each year for the next 30 years) in a way that is sustainable:
 - Economically: macroeconomic stability
 - Financially: debt sustainability
 - Environmentally: adaptation to climate change and focus on green energy
 - Socially: inclusive growth and reduction of inequality
 - Security: no development without security, no security without development
- Addressing domestic structural issues and adapting to global trends
 - Demography
 - Human capital development
 - Massive investment needs to remove the bottlenecks to rapid and sustainable growth (infrastructure, energy, education, health)
 - Risk reduction measures and mitigation instruments to dramatically increase (domestic and foreign) private investment and knowhow
 - Governance and accountability
 - Technology's impact on the nature of work and trade patterns

A Possible Process

As Africa positions itself in a changing world, it is important that it be done in a way that remains anchored in country realities. Broad strategic principles and alliances at the continental level (how Africa positions itself in global fora) will translate into different policies and experiences in various countries. The process we envision must take account of both global and local dimensions in a dynamic way and provide African stakeholders and their partners with learning and knowledge sharing opportunities.

We believe that peer-learning is best suited to spreading good practice and accelerating progress. In particular, we see emerging differences in the results of various regions of the continent that could learn from each other; Eastern, Southern, and Western Africa face different internal and external environments and exhibit different patterns of growth and responses. They could usefully learn from each other's experiences in addressing these common challenges and translating global strategies into country specific actions.

Meetings where strategy, issues, and solutions are discussed openly and shared among all stakeholders can also build trust among participants, facilitating subsequent dialogue and risk-taking decisions. It is also likely to increase the confidence that bold, Africa-based solutions are possible.

We envisage a series of meetings (2 per year) where participating countries can present and share their experiences (successes and failures) on areas of common interest to them (with a focus on meeting the challenge of employment creation), learn from one another, monitor progress in a peer-learning mode, and adjust accordingly based on feedback. Private sector actors (local and international) and civil society will be active participants to ensure the broadest possible dialogue. External partners would also participate.

Each meeting will identify lessons to be learned and formalized as well as issues that need further work. Both lessons learned and issues identified will then be captured and formalized for sharing by a network of think-tanks (African and international) for presentation at the next meeting. Partnerships will be formed with organizations such as the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), the Africa Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and selected African universities. Knowledge and experience thus

gathered will be made available on the platforms of PCNS and EMF among others and be available publicly.

Analytic grounding and a rigorous evidence base will be essential to advance from problem to solution. This approach will also contribute to strengthen a network of action-oriented institutions with analytic capabilities that can work on issues identified by various stakeholders to improve evidence-based decision making.

Even with a renewed strategic thrust, the major challenges facing Africa cannot be solved rapidly, and call for sustained engagement of stakeholders and their partners, with the objective of setting up a dynamic process with continuous learning and feedback. This would ensure continuity between meetings as well as proper monitoring of the delivery of promised actions and lessons learned.

This process would also create a community of reformers who know one another and can serve as resources to share ideas and issues. Another benefit would hopefully be more trust among various stakeholders both within countries (between governments, private investors, and citizens) and internationally.

The meetings would take place in Africa: once a year at the PCNS and once in one of the three main regions (East, South, and West) on a rotating basis with proper logistics for interpretation. The meetings in Rabat would be organized by PCNS and those in sub-Saharan Africa by EMF.

The Emerging Markets Forum was created by the Centennial Group as a not-for-profit initiative to bring together high-level government and corporate leaders from around the world to engage in dialogue on the key economic, financial and social issues facing emerging market countries.

The Forum is focused on some 120 market economies in Asia, Eurasia, Latin America and Africa that share prospects of superior economic performance, already have or seek to create a conducive business environment and are of near-term interest to private investors, both domestic and international.

Further details on the Forum and its meetings may be seen on our website at

<http://www.emergingmarketsforum.org>

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