

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thank you very much for your invitation. I will do my utmost to be present.

Regarding the substance, the scenarios outlined by Bouet, Labarde and Mevel, as well as Messerlin and Delpuech, particularly interested me. I am a sociologist and political scientist with insufficient competencies to judge the core methodological pertinence of the papers. I therefore admit the validity of the proposed scenarios. From this viewpoint, it clearly seems that the EPA scenario will not deliver the desired results. On the contrary, it would give rise to important negative effects, especially for the majority of sub-Saharan countries. I fear for my part an even greater marginalisation of African economies, a reinforced incapacity to develop their productive capacities, an increased dependence on aid, not to mention an even greater demoralisation of their populations.

The prospect of increased dependence on European imports, without a substantial rise in exports, productive capacity and jobs, would have dramatic consequences. During the missions I recently carried out in several sub-Saharan countries, I was struck by the sense of helplessness of the populations, the collective demoralisation coupled with the appeal of leaving (migration at all cost), and this in countries that, on the whole, benefit from access to European markets.

At a social level, we can fear that the EPA scenario will lead to the intensification of the Voice option (popular revolts, growing incivilities, anomie...) and of Exit (large scale migration). Senegal, where I recently spent some time, already appears to be manifesting a number of symptoms of this malaise. After nearly ten years of emphasis on participation, "empowerment", social capital, and private initiative, this transpires as a somewhat paradoxical outcome.

As you underline, there is little doubt that the EU's intransigence, and its refusal to take into consideration alternative options, will further reinforce the crisis of confidence between Europe and African societies, and also that between rulers and their populations. The underpinning of victimisation, the feeling according to which all is foregone to the advantage of the North, will be among the most damaging consequences. Also to be feared is a heightened crisis of confidence in leaders viewed as subject to the international order (events in South Africa with Mbeki and Zuma strike me as quite revealing...).

You are perfectly correct to underline that the consolidation of both vertical and horizontal social capital are essential requirements to pro-poor growth strategies. Yet far too often, dialogue and participation remain purely formal.

It is good to know how to adhere to "deadlines", but when necessary one must equally know how to step back, without fear of a plan B (or A+). Recent history demonstrates that the absence of alternatives does not lead to optimal solutions!

I hope this brainstorming session will help move the agenda forward.

Regards,

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