

THEREBE ON AFRICA

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E: THEY SAY THAT AFRICA IS RISING AND IT HAS BECOME A GREAT INVESTMENT DESTINATION. WHAT IS DRIVING THE CURRENT CHANGES ON THE CONTINENT?

We have begun to believe in ourselves and our abilities. We recognise the value of our resources and taking charge – oil, minerals, etc. – not as an underground industry but a fully fledged integrated business (as Botswana has by centralising the full diamond value chain in Gaborone) and using the proceeds to invest in infrastructure – the backbone of every economy. There's a cultural awakening – Africans now no longer run away from what makes them different but celebrate it as a source of creativity and reflecting it in the arts, products and identity. There is a reason why The Economist predicts that by 2015 the seven fastest growing economies will be in Africa: Europe has a past, but Africa has future. That is why China has invested in every African country (other than Swaziland) and is the continent's number one investor. They see the potential. Do we see it?

E: HOW CAN AFRICA ENSURE THAT IT SUSTAINS THIS TRAJECTORY OF GROWTH?

Creativity – it is important that we nurture the spirit that created MTN's 'pay as you go' and Safaricom's 'Mpesa' as a catalyst for creating solutions inspired and informed by the African context, needs and diversity.

Collaboration - intra Africa trade is still less than 15% while intra Europe trade is as much as 70%. Africans have to stop siphoning money out of Africa into the West and re-invest their money within. While Africa has 54 countries at various levels of development, our reputation and perceptions about Africa are collective. Thus we will fail together or succeed together. We need a unified approach to solve Africa's challenges. We need an African agenda, driven by Africans.

Active Citizenship – African citizens have to play an active role in ensuring we get the governments and leaders who serve us and not themselves.

Centralisation – we need to create centres of excellence in Africa – such as, Ghana for democracy, Kenya for IT/telecom, SA for financial services, etc. That way we will be able to invest

in excellence and creating products and services to serve Africa and the world.

Culture – our culture is our source of identity, creativity and distinctiveness. To compete in the world, we must not replicate what the world offers but create a new narrative, a new way of doing things, the African way.

E: WHICH COUNTRIES IN AFRICA EXCITE YOU MOST?

Kenya, for its entrepreneurial potential, and technological leadership; Ghana, for the continuing example of democracy in Africa; Rwanda for its spirit of resilience and renewal; Tanzania and Botswana in one respect – for the depth of their pride and unified culture rather than tribal differences. South Africa because it is home – and Africa's dynamic entrepreneurial economic giant. The West African nations of Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal collectively for the pride in their culture as expressed through their colourful global African couture.

E: WHICH LEADERS IN AFRICA IMPRESS YOU THE MOST?

Nelson Mandela – even in virtual silence – remains the standard by which this generation will be measured; Kofi Annan for what he has done for global African leadership; Thabo Mbeki for re-igniting the African Renaissance; Joyce Banda for re-instilling confidence in women and African leadership; Desmond Tutu as an unwavering moral compass; and the spirit of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta for their identity with and visionary belief in Africans.

E: WHAT PART WOULD THEREBE IKALAFENG LIKE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING AFRICA'S TRANSFORMATION?

The 'Brand Africa' (www.brandafrica.net) and 'Made-In-Africa' initiatives I drive are but simple ways that I am playing my part to get Africans together to drive the African agenda and to buy African made excellence. My upcoming 'Made-In-Africa' and 'Promise of Africa' books tackle the African challenge from a commercial and visionary perspective. I believe we all must use the gift of our talent(s) as a vehicle to contribute to the African renaissance. Thus my contributions are centred on my passion and calling within reputation and brand leadership and advisory.

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