



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe



2nd Africa Europe Youth Summit (Tripoli, 25-28 November 2010)

Opening speech by Denis HUBER, Executive Director of the Council of Europe North-South Centre

First of all I would like to praise our partners : the Pan African Youth Union (PYU), the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the statutory bodies on Youth of the Council of Europe, the ICMYO members of the Steering group - for carrying the political process which led to the Summit ; and the National Organisation of Libya Youth (NOLY) - for hosting this 2nd Africa Europe Youth Summit.

I would also like to thank the European Commission - and the European Union - for its political and financial support, not only to this Summit but also to the Africa Europe Youth Cooperation Programme carried out over the last two years.

Almost three years have passed since the 1st Africa Europa Youth Summit took place in Lisbon in early December 2007. Like others who are here today, I had the chance to participate in it. In fact, it has been my first official appearance in my (then new) capacity as Director of the Council of Europe North-South Centre. And I must say that I have been impressed by the level of enthusiasm, energy and commitment which was emerging from the 300 young Africans and Europeans who were gathered there. Another thing was quite obvious : there were also high expectations. Something had to be done to meet them !

This is why I promised, during the closing session, that we would make sure that this 1st Afrique Europe Youth Summit would not remain a "one shot event", but that it would be the start of a process. And I quoted John Lennon who, 40 years ago, "imagined" the following : "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one – I hope someday you will join us, and the world will live as one".

Looking back to what happened during the last three years, and trying to reply honestly to the question : "Did we fulfill this promise?", I am tempted to say : "Yes we did". Indeed, with the financial and political support of the European Commission, and together with all our institutional partners, we have negotiated and set up (in 2008), and then managed, implemented and monitored (since 2009) a comprehensive Euro-African Youth Cooperation Programme aimed at :

- empowering youth organisations
- providing training and capacity building to youth leaders
- strengthening sub-regional youth structures and youth policies in Africa
- profiling the African Youth Charter

- promoting Intercultural Dialogue between our two continents and within African and European societies
- giving visibility to, and strengthening the networking with, the African Diaspora in Europe
- mapping the youth reality in Africa
- developing new pedagogical approaches for the training of trainers
- strengthening the relationship and cooperation between the two regional institutions at various levels.

In one word, we have been bringing today's and tomorrow's Africa and Europe closer together.

During the last two years over 700 youth leaders and youth multipliers in Europe and Africa had a direct access to this programme, which certainly is leaving a very positive foot print in our two regions and contributing to their joint future.

The programme will continue in 2011 and it is our intention to relaunch it for the period 2012-14, building on the priorities which will emerge from the Tripoli meetings this week. In this connection, we expect that the coming days will be the occasion to renew the political momentum between Africa and Europe and to evaluate the state of implementation of the Lisbon agreements (both the short comings and the achievements). This is true at the Youth level as well as at the level of Heads of State or Government.

In this connection it is crucial to establish a close link between our Youth event and the 3rd Summit of Heads of State or Government that will be evaluating the EU-Africa Joint Strategy and renewing its action plan. The Youth Summit can produce real effects only if it is strategically tackling the same priorities and shadowing the Heads of States's agenda.

In this respect, I welcome very much the fact that the precedent initiated in Lisbon of having two youth representatives addressing the Summit of Heads of State will be also followed here in Tripoli. And I congratulate the European Youth Forum who has in addition been entrusted with the presentation of the outcomes of the Civil Society gathering, which took place in Cairo earlier this month. A further sign of the growing recognition of youth in Euro-African Cooperation.

To conclude, I offer the availability and the commitment of the North-South Centre to organise a follow-up meeting of this Summit already in early 2011 and to continue this journey by implementing a renewed and hopefully reinforced Africa Europe Youth Programme. We will remain faithful to the commitments that European and African youth will make during the coming days, and we want to continue to walk this path together with the ones that represent the youth of the two continents and their joint priorities.

To echo my initial question and answer : "Did we keep our promise? Yes we did", I would like to add an additional one : "Can we go further? Yes we can!".

And my very last words will be to quote an African say : "When you travel alone, you can go very fast. But when you travel with a friend, you can go very far."