



Daily Message by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Hon. Evarist Bartolo

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'Africa'. For many of us, this word probably only means: poverty, immigrants, mission lands, diseases, famines, wars ...

Almost third of the world's remaining wealth and natural resources are found on the African continent. If this wealth is used to improve people's lives, Africans will greatly improve their lives.

It is the continent in which investment is growing.

It is not for nothing that for those Maltese who are already doing business with African countries, Africa is an opportunity for job creation and wealth in our country and in African countries.

We already have Maltese companies doing good business in different African countries in the fields of food, fish farming, shops, services for oil and gas companies ... They work from here and they employ people here and work in Africa and create jobs for Africans.

Out of every 100 euros we export, 9 we export to African countries.

Surely we can grow our trade with African countries if we take the new opportunities that are being created.

But first we have to think, talk and behave in a new and different way about Africa so that many of us no longer ignore this great continent that is as big to us as Europe or see it only as a problem instead of a great opportunity.

This year we were the first European country to come up with a strategy for trade with Africa.

We now have a place to grow our economic ties with different African countries.

The experience with Ghana is very good and shows us what we can achieve if we work hard and how much sense it made to open an embassy in Accra.

We are about to open an embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Certainly due to our size we cannot keep up with 55 different African countries and so we will concentrate more on Ghana, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Namibia and Rwanda without ignoring other countries.

Opportunities with Africa will increase now that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was born three days ago, creating a common market of 1,200 million people in 55 countries. different that they will start removing duties when they sell each other to increase trade between them.

This will be the largest common market in the world. The World Bank estimates that in the next 15 years, this move will lift 100 million Africans out of poverty and create millions of new African consumers who will buy more goods and services and increase trade.

This is the best way for Africans, instead of leaving their countries, to continue working and building a life for themselves where they were born.

This new reality will open up new opportunities for us if we know how to work wisely and our entrepreneurs are willing to invest in these countries and not simply see them as a market for the sale of products made here.

Our size and the fact that we did not have colonies in Africa and overcoming prejudices will help us to have a relationship of equal partners that we respect each other with these countries that also stem from political colonialism and that do not want to remain economic colonies.

The European Union must also improve its trade relations with Africa and our position between the two continents must be recognized as well as Covid-19 has shown European countries that they trade with other countries in Asia should also start doing it with countries in Africa, closer to home to improve their global supply chains. This also offers us more new opportunities.



Evarist Bartolo

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Malta