



PRESS RELEASE

Creating economic opportunities for young Africans continent's most urgent challenge, says Mo Ibrahim Foundation

2017 Ibrahim Governance Weekend discusses "Africa's tipping point"

Marrakech, 10 April 2017 – Creating economic opportunities for young Africans is the most urgent challenge facing the continent, threatening to undermine recent progress and create widespread instability, according to Mo Ibrahim.

Mo Ibrahim, Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, said: "Young people in Africa are becoming disillusioned. What will happen if we do not provide jobs when the tsunami of young people currently in education start looking for work? We will see further migration out of Africa and an increased threat of extremism. African governments and businesses must come together, as a major of urgency, to ensure that we are equipping our young people with the skills they need take control of their futures."

Mo Ibrahim was speaking at the 2017 Ibrahim Governance Weekend, a three-day series of special events hosted by the Foundation in Marrakech, 7-9th April.

At the heart of the weekend was the Ibrahim Forum, bringing together leaders from across Africa and around the world to discuss *Africa at a Tipping Point*, new research from the Foundation that reveals a “defining moment in Africa’s progress”.

The report, launched earlier this month, calls on African nations to harness the energy, and meet the expectations, of their young people to ensure that the progress of recent years is maintained. The Ibrahim Forum explored three areas of particular concern for young people in Africa.

The first session focused on the link between governance and terrorism, highlighting how the vacuum created through weak governance can create fertile ground for violent extremism.

Stressing the need for early intervention in areas of failing governance, **Jean-Marie Guéhenno**, President and CEO of the International Crisis Group, said: “Over time, chaos begins to set in and then terrorism prospers on chaos. Terrorism comes after a long period of neglect, and it is that neglect that prevention must address.”

Martin Kobler, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, said: “In mediation, we talk mostly to men above the age of 70. Youth is often totally detached from this process, but they are the majority of the population. They are not only the future of the country, they’re the present of the country.”

Aya Chebbi, Founding Chair of the African Youth Movement and a Mo Ibrahim Foundation Fellow, said: “It’s not being jobless that drives youth to terrorism. It’s the perception of injustice.”

The second panel explored the risk of a democratic recession in Africa.

Amina J Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, called on young people to become more involved in the democratic process. “We need an inter-generational transition. I don’t think people over a certain age should be at the helm of affairs looking at the future for people who are 60 years younger.”

Graça Machel, Founder of the Graça Machel Trust, called for more diverse institutions: “Democracy is about the voice of the majority. But our majorities in Africa – the

rural people, the women, the youth – have very little say in what is happening. We need serious thought on how to build institutional capacity at different levels to take into account all voices.”

The third panel addressed the challenge of inclusive economic growth and employment.

Moulay Hafid El Alamy, Moroccan Minister of Industry, Trade, Investment and Digital Economy, said: “Africa can take control of its own destiny. We have men and women of great quality.”

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chair of the Board of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, highlighted Africa’s vast potential: “If you look at the evidence, what we do not lack on the continent is aspiration. We are always about potential. What we need to do is make that aspiration real for our youth.”

Aliko Dangote, President and Chief Executive of the Dangote Group, stressed the importance of policy stability for investment and growth, and in creating jobs for young people: “In business, unless you plan, there’s no way you’re going to execute. Nobody will go into a country where there is no stability and invest their money there.”

Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, highlighted the importance of empowering women. “A bird can only fly on two wings. Africa is going nowhere if it is only flying on one wing. We have got to enable women.”

Concluding the forum, **Mo Ibrahim** said: “We need to fight for a much better Africa. Africa is huge – to move it forward we need everyone to come together.”

The Ibrahim Governance Weekend celebrated the Foundation’s tenth anniversary. Over the last decade, the Foundation has established a number of initiatives, including the Ibrahim Prize and Ibrahim Index, to strengthen leadership and provide the data to enable countries to improve standards of governance.

At a Leadership Ceremony on Friday 7th April, guests from Morocco and around the world celebrated progress and achievement in African leadership.

Delivering a message from His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, **Andre Azoulay**, Advisor to the King, said:

"I congratulate Mo Ibrahim on his efforts towards improved governance in Africa...I was keen to grant my patronage to your conference given the special interest I take in the preservation of our citizens' security and fundamental rights, as well as in human and sustainable development in Africa."

Speaking on the challenge of leadership in today's world, **Horst Köhler**, former President of Germany, said: "We have become used to the cynical idea that truthfulness is detrimental to successful political leadership...The erosion of trust in institutions and public leaders is, in my view, one of the major causes for the political and economic problems in Europe, the United States, and in Africa."

The ceremony showcased Africa's extraordinary musical talent, with performances from some of the continent's biggest stars. Senegal's Youssou N'Dour, Benin's Angélique Kidjo and South Africa's Hugh Masekela were joined onstage by one of Morocco's own stars, Hindi Zahra.

On Sunday 9th April, the Foundation hosted the Ibrahim Governance Cup, a public football match. Five-time CAF Champions League winners TP Mazembe, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, took on Morocco's Kawkab Marrakech. In a close-fought game played at Kawkab's home ground, Grand Stade de Marrakech, the hosts were narrowly beaten 1-0.

The weekend culminated with a huge public concert involving a host of musicians from Morocco and west Africa. Thousands of people from Marrakech were treated to performances by local stars Hoba Hoba Spirit, Hindi Zahra, Hamid El Kasri and Van, performing alongside Youssou N'Dour and Angélique Kidjo.

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- Photos and videos from the Governance Weekend can be found here: <http://mif.media/igw-2017>

Notes to Editors:

Mo Ibrahim Foundation

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was established in 2006 with a focus on the critical importance of leadership and governance in Africa. By providing tools to support progress in leadership and governance, the Foundation aims to promote meaningful change on the continent. The Foundation, which is a non-grant making organisation, focuses on defining, assessing and enhancing governance and leadership in Africa through four main initiatives:

- Ibrahim Index of African Governance
- Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership
- Ibrahim Forum
- Ibrahim Fellowships and Scholarships

Ibrahim Governance Weekend

The Ibrahim Governance Weekend is the flagship event of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, held every year in a different African hub. This three-day event convenes prominent African and Africa-focused political and business leaders, representatives from civil society, multilateral and regional institutions as well as Africa's major international partners to identify specific policy challenges and discuss priorities for action. The conversation is extended to a wider audience through music, art and sport at major public events, showcasing some of Africa's brightest talent.

Ibrahim Forum

Established in 2010, the Ibrahim Forum is a high-level discussion forum tackling issues of critical importance to Africa. The Forum convenes prominent African political and business leaders, representatives from civil society, multilateral and regional institutions as well as Africa's major international partners to identify specific policy challenges and priorities for action. Previous Forums have dealt with: African Urban Dynamics (2015), Africa in the next 50 years (2013), African Youth (2012), African Agriculture (2011) and African Regional Economic Integration (2010). Data and research on Forum issues are compiled by the Foundation as the basis for informed and constructive debate.

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