

# The Emerging Africa



## CHANGE OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH



Delphi Economic Forum is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working in close cooperation with civil society, public organizations, businesses and individuals. It engages business, political, academic, and other top experts in an effort to address emerging challenges, influence the national and regional agendas and promote sustainable and socially responsible growth policies for Greece, Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean region.

**AUTHOR**

Dr. Marily Mexi

**EDITING**

Foteini Pipi

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The full conversation is available on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQs1BDvAkxY&t=4s>

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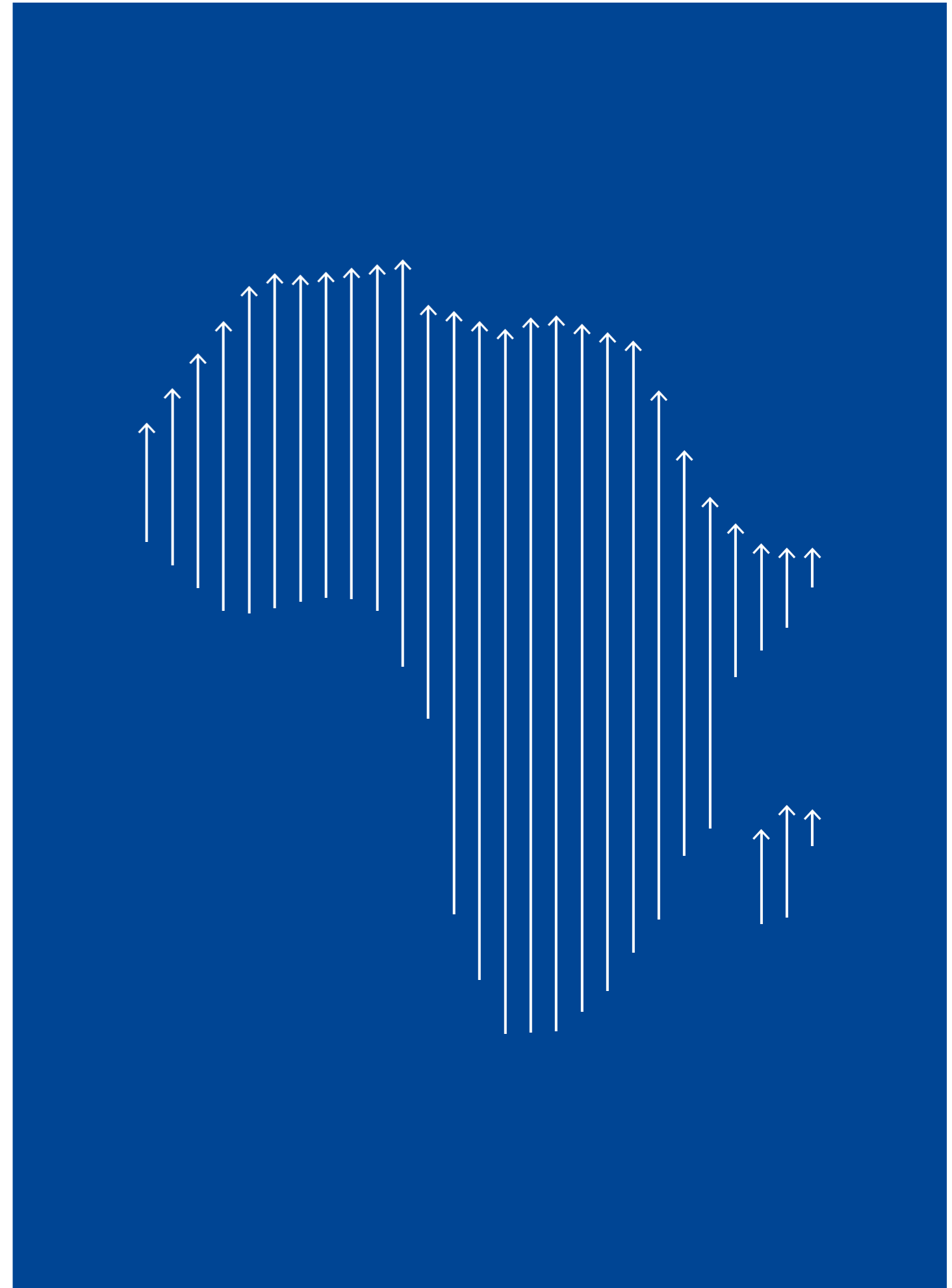
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[info@delphiforum.gr](mailto:info@delphiforum.gr)

Olusegun Obasanjo in conversation with  
Anna Diamantopoulou and Nouredine Bardad-Daidj

# The Emerging Africa

Think Piece 02 is a summary of the onstage conversation that took place in Delphi Economic Forum IV between Anna Diamantopoulou and Olusegun Obasanjo, accompanied by Nouredine Bardad-Daidj.

The conversation featured DIKTIO Network for Reform in Greece & Europe as our programming partner. DIKTIO is a leading independent, non-partisan and non-profit think tank that aims to undertake cutting-edge policy research and practical policy advice.



## AFRICA'S JOURNEY IS ABOUT RISING FOR UNITY

One word is usually associated with Africa: Rising. Afro-optimist narratives have been zeitgeist in the past few years. President Olusegun Obasanjo tells us from the outset: More than capturing the region's economic promise, the "Africa Rising" narrative provides a language to imagine Africa as an object of hope and not just mercy. "The last two decades of the 20th century were lost [decades] for Africa," he admits, and goes on to warn that, "we cannot do things as usual and expect that things will work." He speaks about the need to go beyond the past. The situation in Africa needs to be different. In Obasanjo's world, we cannot turn a blind eye to the past; but history, no matter how traumatic, is not necessarily destiny.

Before telling us how to make Africa work, he unveils what can still go wrong: Africa's reality is multiple realities that are good, bad, and ugly. Yet, after 60 years of independence, African leaders cannot keep waiting for outsiders to solve their problems for them. Past policy pointers are important for shaping the future of *Africa Rising*. "At the beginning of this century," he explains, "the leaders of Africa decided that they needed to do things differently." Major initiatives exemplify this new confidence: First, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), established by 32 signatory governments; then, the African Union (AU), a geo-political entity covering the entire African continent. Could African Union be the next European Union? The intention of the AU is to create one of the world's largest single markets, accounting for \$4 trillion in spending and investment across the 54 African countries.<sup>1</sup> The African Continental Free Trade Area is launched on 30 May this year.

After this entire journey, who is Africa Rising for? Reflecting on this question, Obasanjo highlights the need for African leaders' "strong commitment to Union." His moment of truth: without integrating unity into the vision of Africa Rising, this vision fails. There is something empowering about Obasanjo's insistence on Africa's collective future. Africa's journey is full of challenges owed partly to incidents and



<sup>1</sup> Fofack, H. (2018), "A Competitive Africa." IMF, *Finance & Development*, December 2018, vol. 55, no. 4

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accidents of historical context and geography. For Obasanjo, Africans themselves have a duty to redefine their destiny. He thus argues for a robust and refreshing vision of Africa Rising. African governments do have it in their power to overcome the disastrous legacy of slavery and colonialism and work to change the image of the 'dark continent' long associated with Africa.

His message is about a new dynamism and self-confidence in *Africa Rising*, triggered by an eagerness to shape Africa's own future. "The more light we shed and spread, the more the darkness vanishes, across the continent."

## **BUILDING TO THE FUTURE — THE BIG 5 P'S OF AFRICA RISING**

<sup>2</sup>  
Obasanjo, O. (2016),  
"Africa and the G20's Moment of Truth."  
Project Syndicate, 5 September 2019

Aside from its internal predicaments, Africa Rising also needs to confront external challenges and global disruption. According to President Obasanjo, if Africa fails, multilateralism cannot succeed. In an increasingly uncertain ecosystem, world leaders should focus on a new multilateralism promoting sustainable growth in both developed and developing countries.<sup>2</sup> The vision of Africa Rising should be reaffirmed and put to the fore. Both President Obasanjo and Ambassador Bardad-Daïdj seem to agree: If Africa is to rise, we need to move the continent from the periphery to the center of world economy and politics. "Those who have thought of Africa as a forgotten continent will be surprised when we start working together in a sustained way, making Africa work." Obasanjo hopes that there will be conscious efforts for an integrated, united and, especially, sustainable Africa Rising. "We must make Africa Rising a sustainable event," is his key message.

According to President Obasanjo, these are the "five P's" that can ensure future progress in Africa: Politics, Protection, Population, Prosperity and Partnership.

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## POLITICS

<sup>3</sup> Temin, J. (2018), "Democratic Governance in Africa: Three Key Trends." Freedom House, 10 May 2019

<sup>4</sup> Obasanjo, O., Mahama, J.D., Bai Koroma, E. & Chilima, S. (2019), "West Africa's Democratic Tipping Point?" Project Syndicate, 18 February 2019

Africa's future lies with itself and democracy. If one looks at democratic consolidation, the outlook for the region is very positive. The spread of democracies in Africa since 1960 has been impressive. According to Freedom House, southern and west Africa, home to about 362 million people, have significantly improved their democratic governance.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the history of elections in Africa shows that there is a need for effective electoral management to ensure that the vote is a stabilizing force, not a destabilizing trigger of national crises.<sup>4</sup> In 2019 and 2020, Nigeria, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire will hold general elections. Obasanjo warns that civil society resistance is not enough to overcome the challenges ahead. The support of the international community continues to be required to ensure compliance with democratic rules and acceptance of electoral results.

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## PROTECTION

The world at large and Africa in particular are grappling with threats to peace and security in so many different forms, degrees, and dimensions. Given the nexus of migrations, low- and high-level violence and conflict across the globe, there is an increased need for the international community to work together and address protection concerns. In Africa, these concerns arise from a complex mix of external crises, such as those in Yemen and Syria, and internal conflicts and violence, most notably the Boko Haram, a jihadist terrorist organization that has ravaged northeastern Nigeria (where it is based), parts of Chad, Cameroon and Niger. After insurgency started in 2009, Boko Haram and infiltrated militants have killed more than 20,000 people and rendered over 2.3 million others internally displaced.<sup>5</sup>

While the provision of protection to people of concern requires international solidarity and cooperation, Obasanjo counsels that Africa must increasingly act together to protect its own communities and nations. “Africans themselves must desire and work for peace and security,” he tells us.<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, Ambassador Bardad-Daidj highlights what has been achieved so far to cement the foundations for lasting security and prosperity in the continent. The Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP), aiming at effective political-military crisis management, and the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), fighting cross-border terrorism and crime, are only a few examples. Yet, they provide a strong sense of hope and unity and encourage more actors to join in and push the vision of Africa Rising forward.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR (2017), Nigeria Situation 2017, Supplementary Appeal January – December 2017. Revised July 2017

<sup>6</sup> Obasanjo's Statement at the African Leadership Forum 2017, “Peace and Security for an Integrated, United and Sustainable Africa,” 24–25 August 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

## Given the nexus of migrations, low- and high-level violence and conflict across the globe, there is an increased need for the international community to work together and address protection concerns.

## POPULATION

Africa's greatest conundrum is demographics. Obasanjo shares the insights and concerns of Diamantopoulou regarding Africa's rapidly expanding population: Africa is the only continent that will double in size by 2050, reaching a population of 2 billion people.<sup>7</sup> It is hard not to notice the religious-cultural aspect of Africa's demographic trends. By 2060, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya are projected to join the list of countries with the top ten largest Christian populations, replacing Russia and Germany.<sup>8</sup> This comes with certain implications for all types of Eurocentric narratives that have in various different forms (western/eastern) combined White Christians and Nationalism throughout modern history.

Experts and policymakers are worried. Some countries, in particular Nigeria, are projected to have more than 400 million people by 2050, Diamantopoulou notes. This is an extraordinary increase that is causing forecasts of a Malthusian catastrophe for countries that cannot feed themselves. Studies find that, by 2050, 86 percent of the world's extreme poor will live in sub-Saharan Africa, notably amplified by population growth.<sup>9</sup> Obasanjo and Diamantopoulou agree: If it is not managed properly, Africa's situation will fuel unstoppable waves of migration to Europe, which, if harnessed properly, could trigger growth and new jobs that partly compensate for Europe's ageing population.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations (2017), World Population Prospects: Key Findings and Advance Tables. ESA/P/WP/248

<sup>8</sup> Pew Research Report (2019), The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections 2010-2050

<sup>9</sup> Goalkeepers Data Report (2018): The Story Behind the Data 2018. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation



# Africa is the only continent that will double in size by 2050, reaching a population of 2 billion people.

What can be done to offset demographic trends? To Obasanjo, Africa should adopt policies for embarking on the same transition towards smaller families that has occurred everywhere else – most notably in Asia after 1960 and Latin America after 1970. Education, particularly girl-child education, and family planning are key in this transition, he maintains.

Yet, population growth in Africa is Janus-faced. The reverse of demographic disaster is demographic dividend. The rise in numbers of young people may be both a challenge and an advantage. By 2050, the African continent will have the largest number of young people, making up nearly twice the young population of South, Southeast and East Asia, and Oceania.<sup>10</sup> Obasanjo warns us against the risks that can arise if the young population is not provided with the opportunities needed to improve their lives: migration, poverty, exclusion, revolts. Nevertheless, this unprecedented youth bulge can have unparalleled economic benefits. Obasanjo notes considerable increases in the share of the working-age population and, thus, a “demographic dividend” that can power Africa’s growth.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid

<sup>11</sup>  
Alison, S. (2017), “Olusegun Obasanjo’s greatest fear.”  
*Mail and Guardian*, 19 May 2017

## PROSPERITY

“Piece by piece, building a prosperous tomorrow—that is what Africa Rising is all about.” Obasanjo calls for a paradigm shift: African countries should focus on fighting poverty through wealth creation and employment. Indeed, development experts warn that almost all aid focuses on pooling resources (education, healthcare, water and sanitation) to alleviate poverty rather than creating growth and prosperity. This is a fundamental flaw. What is the value of pushing universal education in a poor country where a majority of the youth is unemployed? Poverty is more than the lack of resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Sustained and inclusive growth is also critical.

Then, a question comes to mind: How can we create prosperity? Creating prosperity means developing innovations that people can pull into their lives to help them achieve progress. This is not so far from reality in Africa. According to a Brookings report, African consumer expenditures are some of the fastest growing in the world and are expected to be lifted to \$2.1 trillion by 2025 and \$2.5 trillion by 2030, by a growing middle class.<sup>12</sup> Literally, in some parts of Africa access to mobile devices is more frequent than access to electricity. Moreover, in 2017 with a record-breaking \$650 million being raised from investors, the continent’s reputation as a future technology and startup hub is spreading. Examples of pan-African business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) platforms, including Zimbabwe’s EcoCash and Kenya’s M-Pesa (mobile phone-based money transfer and micro-financing services) as well as Jumia (Nigeria’s number 1 online shopping site), show that Africa is becoming one market.

But 30% to 40% of Africa’s regional trade is informal.<sup>13</sup> Debt is also a serious shortcoming, as many of the African economies are reliant on commodities, which lose value when global growth slows down. In addition, while new technology is promising to drive “frugal innovation” (doing

<sup>12</sup>  
Signe, L. (2018),  
“Africa’s Consumer Market Potential Trends,  
Drivers, Opportunities, and Strategies,” Brookings

<sup>13</sup>  
Lesser, C. & E. Moisé-Leeman (2009),  
“Informal Cross-Border Trade and Trade Facilitation  
Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa.” No 86, OECD

more with fewer resources) across the continent, there's a danger that it might also take jobs away from people. Hence, Africa needs to strike the right balance between enhancing efficiency, upgrading skills, and creating new jobs. Strategic and forward-looking choices matter in this context. As both President Obasanjo and Ambassador Bardad-Daidj contend, a more sustainable Africa Rising will be a more integrated one that is better prepared to respond to home-grown issues.

How can all these be put onto a more strategic footing? The ultimate goal, Obasanjo says, is to forge strong partnerships. Obasanjo is certain about one thing: Partnership is the final, the all-inclusive big 'P' — a 'must' and a precondition for (re)imagining Africa's future.

By 2050, the African continent will have the largest number of young people, making up nearly twice the young population of South, Southeast and East Asia, and Oceania.



## PARTNERSHIP

“Within Africa, we cannot develop in silos. We have to come together, we have to integrate.” But if Africa is to rise for all, productive partnerships must also be about exploring relations with its external partners. Europe is Africa’s biggest partner and trader. The new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs plans to create up to 10 million jobs in Africa over the next five years and improve the climate for business. Europe is emulating China’s approach to Africa, focusing more on trade and less on aid. The recent change in EU policy involves what the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker calls a “partnership between equals.”

Indeed, this can find expression in Obasanjo’s inclusive vision of Africa Rising. “Africa is not a basket case,” says the visionary President, calling on Africa’s partners to acknowledge equality as comparative fairness. Deep down, though, his words convey a renewed interest in African institutions and African solutions to African problems. Who is Africa Rising for if not for Africans?

President Obasanjo is concerned that Africa Rising might prove a lightweight bubble that will shrink and collapse if partnerships are not pushed forward. African leaders and nations cannot afford not to work together. They must rise to the challenge. His passion for an Africa ever more integrated leaves us with an outlook of optimism and high hopes: “The journey of Africa Rising has been truly remarkable. This journey must continue. But if it has taught us anything,” Obasanjo concludes, “it is the importance of making the benefits of integration more sustainable.”

**African countries should focus on wealth creation rather than on poverty reduction.**



# The interview of Olusegun Obasanjo with Anna Diamantopoulou accompanied by Nouredine Bardad-Daidj was authored by Dr. Marily Mexi.

Marily Mexi is the Director of DIKTIO – Network for Reform in Greece and Europe. A political scientist by training, she holds a Doctorate (DPhil) in Politics and International Relations from the University of Oxford (St. Anne's College), an MPhil in Political Theory from the University of Oxford (St. Hugh's College), an MSc (with distinction) in European Social Policy from the London School of Economics, and a BA (with high distinction) in History from the American College of Greece. She has also completed post-doctoral research at the Department of Politics and International Relations of the University of Geneva. Currently, Dr Mexi is also Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Relations of the University of Geneva, at the Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), and at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Geneva. Her professional experience includes advisory work for international organizations (ILO) and governments on the future of work and social policy.

## H.E. OLUSEGUN OBASANJO

Former President,  
Federal Republic of Nigeria

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo was born on 5 May 1937, in Abeokuta, Ogun State, southwest Nigeria. He was educated at Abeokuta Baptist High School and Mons Officers Cadet School in Aldershot, England. In 1958, Obasanjo enlisted in the Nigerian army. He was commissioned in 1959 and served in the Congo (now Zaire) the following year. In his two decades in the military, Obasanjo advanced steadily through the ranks. He made Major in 1965, Lieutenant Colonel in 1967, and Colonel in 1969. Meanwhile, in 1960, Nigeria gained its independence from Britain, and a period of intense political instability followed. In 1966, the military seized power. In 1969, Biafra (the country's eastern, predominantly Christian region) seceded from Nigeria and civil war broke out. During the civil war, Obasanjo served as Commander of the 3rd Marine Commando Division. Under his leadership, federal troops split the Biafran Army into two enclaves and forced a surrender less than a month later. Following the war, Obasanjo returned to his former position as Chief of Army Engineers. After he was promoted to Brigadier General in 1972, he enrolled in an advanced training course at the Royal College of Defence Studies in London. Two years later, he returned to Nigeria and was appointed Federal Commissioner for Works and Housing. The political situation in Nigeria, then under military rule, continued to be unstable. In 1974, the Nigerian head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, declared that a return to civilian rule would be postponed indefinitely. Opposition to Gowon's rule grew, and in 1975 Obasanjo, along with Murtala Muhammed, led a bloodless coup that overthrew him. The following year, Muhammed was assassinated, and Obasanjo was appointed head of state and commander-in-chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. He assured Nigerians that he would follow a strict program to return Nigeria to civilian rule. During his time in office, Obasanjo proved himself to be a tough leader, unafraid to stand up to colonial powers. In 1979, after three years as Nigeria's leader, Obasanjo handed

power over to elected president Shehu Shagari. In doing so, he became the only military ruler in Nigeria's history to voluntarily step down in favor of a democratically elected government. While in office, Obasanjo oversaw the creation of a new constitution for Nigeria and implemented a wide range of governmental reforms. In 2008 he was appointed by the United Nations as a Special Envoy for Africa and has since observed democratic elections on behalf of the African Union and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) in many countries across the continent. This was the culmination of a life spent on the frontline of African politics. A strong advocate of investment in Africa, he has launched a foundation that aims at addressing the essential issues for the development of the continent. President Obasanjo has received several awards: Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1980; Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger, 1990; and several honorary degrees. He is the author of: *A March of Progress: Collected Speeches* (1979), *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War* (1980), *Africa in Perspective: Myths and Realities* (1987), *Africa Embattled* (1988), *Constitution for National Integration and Development* (1989), *Not My Will* (1990); many articles for various journals including *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Review of International Affairs*, and *New Perspectives Quarterly*.



## AMBASSADOR NOUREDDINE BARDAD-DAÏDJ

Algerian Ambassador  
to the Hellenic Republic

Ambassador Noureddine Bardad-Daïdj started his career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria in 1982 and has since held various positions at the Ministry's departments, reaching the level of Director General of the Diplomacy and International Affairs Institute, Ambassador-Counselor in the Minister of Foreign Affairs Cabinet, in charge of International Economic and Financial Affairs and Director General for Europe at the same Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served his country in various diplomatic capacities in Latin America, France, Lebanon and, before his current position in Greece, as an Ambassador for his country in Nigeria, Benin and Togo (with residence in Abuja) and India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives (with residence in New Delhi). He represented his country in various regional and international organizations, such as the United Nations general Assembly, the United Nations Development as well as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Program. He has a long list of professional associations to his credit among them the chairmanship of the Algeria-European Union Association Committee, of the Monitoring Committee for the dialogue with NATO and of the Main Committee of the International Labor Conference of the ILO. The Ambassador is a professor of Development economics and economic law, speaks several languages and holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Pantheon – Sorbonne University (Paris I). He is author of various books and essays, among them “The IMF, the World Bank and the structural adjustment of the developing countries/A little story of a big misunderstanding” and “Algeria, A transition to succeed”.



## ANNA DIAMANTOPOULOU

President, DIKTIO Network  
for Reform in Greece and  
Europe, Greece

Anna Diamantopoulou is President of DIKTIO – Network for Reform in Greece and Europe. She is a Civil Engineer by training, with graduate studies in Regional Development. Anna Diamantopoulou was a Member of the Greek Parliament for 11 years, and European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities during 1999–2004. She served as Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs during the years 2009–2012, and as Minister of Development, Competitiveness and Shipping (March–May 2012). She is Presidium Member of the “Friends of Europe,” the Brussels-based think tank exploring thinking on the future of the EU, and Steering Committee Member of “Notre Europe – Jaques Delors Institute,” the Paris-based think tank dedicated to European integration and unity. She has served as the Chairperson of the Party of European Socialists’ Forum on the European Dimension of New Social Europe. Anna Diamantopoulou was a Fisher Family Fellow (2012) at the Harvard Kennedy School lecturing on European Affairs, Distinguished Scholar at Singapore’s Lee Kuan School of Public Policy (2015), and Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy (2016 to present).





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### Contact details

9 Karneadou Street  
Athens 106-75  
210 72 89 000  
[info@delphiforum.gr](mailto:info@delphiforum.gr)

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