



## Mali's President Amadou Toumani Touré: "Africa will have its chance"

"Demography, raw materials, and our people will certainly give us one day our luck," said Amadou Toumani Toure, President of Mali, on Tuesday when he addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg. His visit touched on routes out of poverty, immigration, the potential of the African continent and the importance of cooperation with Europe. "Europe is not far from us" and "now serves as a school for the African Union", said the President.

During his visit on 7 September - in which he met MEPs from the Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence and Development Committees, we caught up with him and asked him some questions.

**Mr. President, the financial and economic crisis has hit the world. How has your country been affected by the crisis?**

Although we have suffered less, there are factors on which the financial crisis has adversely affected our development. Our control measures, auditing, and monitoring loans have enabled us to not take the crisis hard. But we have suffered the consequences, especially in terms of development assistance.

Our partners who are the most generous have few difficulties, which will inevitably be detrimental to development aid. But Mali is the second largest recipient of development aid from the European Union.

A second point is our diaspora. It participates in significant advances in our country. These are more than 450 million euros a year it sends, which represents 11% of our gross domestic product. With the crisis, life became harder for the diaspora, and this is reflected in the money it sends to the country.

Third, we are a producer of raw materials. People are not buying as before.

**The EP recently called to a greater political will for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With just five years to go until 2015 - and a few days before the summit in New York from 20-22 September, how do you see the situation?**

We fully support the proposals of the European Union. The bottom line for countries and regions that are behind all is to see what steps to take to achieve the MDGs as quickly as possible. That is why Mali has always preferred using the budget to support projects, which allows us to decide ourselves what we will do.

This is perhaps not so much about the money but lack coordination and good distribution. We have made progress in the fight against AIDS but we may be weak on schooling. Of the different objectives, there are at least two or three that we can achieve in 2015. We will then close the account.

As for the UN meeting in New York, 5 years ago African Heads of State made fine speeches and received encouraging responses. The international community committed itself to the fight against poverty. But we must often remind them. We recognize that they face some challenges but if it takes commitment the we must honour it.

# Story

**The Centre for Information and Management of Migration, which opened two years ago in Bamako in cooperation with the EU, aims to provide sustainable solutions to the management of migration flows. What, in your opinion, the main challenges for North-South migration?**

First we must not shirk the debate. Immigration is a problem that affects us all. We've got two continents are not far from each other, it's only 14 km to Gibraltar! Second the two continents are linked in many ways, whether cultural or historical. We share some languages (French, Portuguese, Spanish, German, English). Europe and Africa are much more connected we do think. Furthermore, our main economic partners are the EU countries. "

**Africa is a vast continent, including the current state of development does not match its potential or its resources. How do you assess the role of Europe in Africa?**

The EU is an example. The shape and organization of the European Union has paid off and today serves as a school for the African Union.

Europe and Africa, this is not the sum of rich countries and poor countries but it is a solidarity that everyone agrees to consent. Not that we always agree but everyone must accept to sacrifice his ego for the benefit of "us".

Africa will certainly have his chance the next century. We have raw materials. We have a young population, very young: nearly 75-80% of the population of our continent are younger than 25 years.

Third, our capabilities have improved considerably. Today, across Europe, the largest schools of America, Canada, even China, we have African students. Demography, raw materials, capacity will certainly give us one day our luck.

As for Europe, it has always retained a special interest in Africa. I've never felt abandoned. But I think the next EU-Africa meeting should enable us to go further. As I said, Europe is not far from us. "