



INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINING APARTHEID TO AND END

By Günter Verheugen

It is with great pleasure that I have received the letter concerning the 25 year jubilee of AWEPA. I remember very well our excellent and friendly cooperation. I am happy to contribute to the 25 years communications.

My first contact with AWEPA (at this time still AWEPA) was shortly after the foundation, probably early 1985. At this time, I was a member of the Committee on foreign Affairs of the German Bundestag and in my parliamentary group, the Social Democrats, the spokesman for Africa. My particular interest was the fight against Apartheid and for this reason I was very grateful for the opportunity to make contacts with a lot of like-minded colleagues in other parliaments.

I was regular participant of the AWEPA meetings and part of some special AWEPA missions. I have organised an AWEPA conference with a lot of leading representatives from the opposition in South Africa and the movements in exile. With the support of AWEPA I could prepare the famous visit to Willy Brandt, the president of the Socialist International, to South Africa, which changed the position of the SI and was important for the enforcement of a policy of sanctions against the apartheid regime.

When looking at AWEPA's greatest achievement I can only judge the years between 1984 and 1994 because after that period of time I took over different political responsibilities. I have never lost my great interest for Africa but I was no longer actively involved. During these 10 years the greatest achievement of AWEPA is obvious and beyond any reasonable doubt. AWEPA was instrumental to bring the system of apartheid to an end by creating a powerful network of policy makers in Europe and the US.

In my view there are major contributions which AWEPA can and should make in the African-European partnership focusing on the future. Firstly, to raise awareness in political circles that we are repeating the mistakes of the past and pay only lip service to the need to help African countries to overcome poverty and political weakness. Secondly, to make as many contacts as possible with African political leaders with the aim to encourage and to empower them to fight for a better future.

AWEPA has chosen 'Parliamentary Democracy' as its main theme for the 25 year jubilee and for me the big issue is still good governance but the chosen topic covers that as well.

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