

Press Releases - Africa Summit – 01.2019

Isabel dos Santos in the European Parliament: "Africa must go digital"

The businesswoman participated as a speaker at the Africa Summit 2019, a summit held in the European Parliament on opportunities for African nations and their relationship with Europe

Isabel dos Santos has spoken at the European Parliament today about the role of technology in the future economy in Africa and defended the technological development applied to the diversification and growth of several sectors of activity in that continent, from banking to agriculture.

"A huge challenge for Africa is to know how it is going to be digital. We still do not have that answer. To be competitive we have to use technology and we have, above all, to educate the population so that it can use this technology ".

The chairwoman of Unitel spoke as a guest speaker at the Africa Summit 2019, a summit taking place today in Brussels with the aim of expanding the areas of cooperation and deepening challenges and opportunities in the partnership between the European Union and African nations.

When speaking at the panel dedicated to the subject "Africa and Emerging Technology," Isabel dos Santos said that "after the mobile revolution, the next revolution in Africa will be the digital one. In a short time, there will be more sales and transactions through e-commerce than through traditional stores, and for the first time many Africans will have a bank account and that will happen thanks to digital banking."

According to the businesswoman, the area of urban planning in Africa is also a technological challenge: "Public transportation with comfort, safety and affordable prices is still an unsolved question in most African cities. It is imperative to apply technology in urban planning and in African smart cities to improve quality of life and optimize costs".

"We need support to implement urban planning and the building of African smart cities, equipped with good public transport systems, where technology has a role and allows improving the quality of life with lower costs, better management of environmental resources, and better using of our soils."

Pointing out the example of the agriculture sector, Isabel dos Santos also said that "if we want a competitive agricultural sector in Africa we will have to focus on cutting edge agricultural technology or other technological development in order to optimize costs, to be competitive (...) and I believe that to achieve this, it is essential the qualification of governments and populations, so that they cease to be afraid of these new concepts "

Isabel dos Santos also stressed that in order to invest in technological development in Africa there are key issues such as stability and continuity of the legal framework, attracting of investment and job creation, which should be considered as a priority, so that the continent becomes appealing and able to retain young talent.

"We have to promote a better life for all and work with a focus on people and the sustainability of the environment", she said.

The businesswoman mentioned the importance of quality in education as a key to the development and growth of emerging nations, emphasizing that "quality education, innovation and technology will enable us to grow and eliminate the current gap between Africa and the rest of the world". She also spoke about some specific examples of development in Angola's recent history and how technological evolution had an essential impact on the country's reconstruction, GDP growth, and accelerated development.

Highlighting the role of companies such as mobile operator Unitel, which launched a submarine fibre optic cable linking Africa, Brazil and the United States, in partnership with Google, Isabel dos Santos also mentioned the importance of supporting small businesses and promoting local production, through purchasing in the domestic market to "create more and greater opportunities for Africans, in order to meet the needs of all and contribute to their well-being. "We have to meet the expectations of African consumers of having the same standard and level of quality as any other consumer anywhere in the world".

She also added that technology was used by Unitel to help combat and prevent malaria in Angola, as well as the protection of the Palanca Negra Ginga.

Africa Summit is organized by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group and it intends to discuss key issues for African nations, such as democracy, security, economics, health issues, emerging technologies, the use of aid for the growth of nations and the development of a future relationship on trade cooperation.

Isabel dos Santos intervened as chairwoman of Unitel, the largest mobile operator in Angola. Founded in 1998, and launched on March 8, 2001, Unitel's main activity is the provision of mobile voice and internet services. As the leading mobile operator in Angola, Unitel was the main responsible for the implementation of the mobile telecommunication network in the country, and it was one of the first operators to commercially launch the 4G network in Africa - an essential contribution to guarantee the best quality in data access and transmission across the continent. With more than 11 million clients and around 3,000 direct employees in Angola, it is one of the largest private employers in the country.