Making the voices of those who are affected heard

This African country has been having its own factory for the production of tomato purée from home-grown tomatoes for a long time. However, because a number of European governments provide financial support to producers in their own countries, tins from Italy are now cheaper. As a result, the factory in this African country has gone bankrupt. Tomato growers no longer have buyers for their products. They are sinking into poverty. Some farmers, therefore, try their luck in other European countries - some of them as illegal tomato pickers.

1

Because this Arab country supported the Second Iraq War, Western creditors cancelled half of its debts in 1991. Since then, this country has been the second largest recipient of US military aid and Germany's largest debtor. And this despite the fact that the state is a dictatorship. Germany has refused to cancel debt, although doing so would support democratisation in the Arab Spring.

2

Caribbean island states are regularly hit by natural disasters such as hurricanes, which cause enormous devastation. A lot of money is subsequently needed for emergency aid and reconstruction. Nevertheless, these countries generally have to continue paying to service their debts towards foreign creditors.

Germany was treated very differently after the Second World War. Half of the Federal Republic of Germany's foreign debt was cancelled in 1953. In order to avoid another debt crisis in Germany, the debt only had to be serviced out of current revenue. Thus Germany could have suspended servicing its debt if it had not achieved an export surplus.

3

In 1999 the G8 (the governments of Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Canada, Russia and the USA) decided at their summit in Cologne to cancel the debts of 39 highly indebted poor countries. The African country received debt relief in 2001 and 2006. As a result, it was once more creditworthy. This means that banks and private investors wanted to invest in the country again, which was the declared aim of the debt relief initiative. However, this means that there is a renewed risk of over-indebtedness. But this debt relief initiative was a one-off. There is no procedure for resolving future debt crises quickly and efficiently. The creditors simply act on the assumption that there will be no more crises.

4

If a country is insolvent and unable to repay its loans, the Paris Club decides what to do. The Paris Club is an informal group of official creditors consisting of the governments of 22 rich creditor countries. They discuss behind closed doors whether or not a country will receive debt relief. The debtor country has no say in this. Decisions are usually to the disadvantage of the debtor country, and they often do nothing to reduce the debt to a sustainable level.

5

Run-down roads and dilapidated water pipes, overcrowded schools and poorly equipped hospitals: many African states lack the money for important investments. But their treasuries could be fuller if international corporations paid their taxes.

According to the International Monetary Fund, African countries lose US$175 billion every year because international corporations move their profits to countries where they do not have to pay taxes. That is three times as much as they receive in development aid - money that the countries lack for investment in infrastructure, education and health.

6

In 2015, this African state paid more than 7.1 trillion of its national currency, Kwacha, in interest alone to domestic and foreign creditors. This is significantly more than the total public health budget for the same year of 4.6 trillion Kwacha. This means, of course, that there is also a lack of money for education or water and sewage pipes.

7

Due to unprecedented mobilisation - five percent of the population signed the petition - this Latin American country achieved debt relief of almost US$5 billion, which is about half of its total debt.

Government revenues are generated almost exclusively from exports of raw materials (minerals and agricultural products). This means that this country can easily slide back into a debt crisis if commodity prices fall. It must therefore be very careful when taking out new loans.

8