

AGGN FELLOWS PROTEST AFRICA'S NEGATIVE IMAGE IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA



AGGN fellows met in a week long workshop on Governance and Media held in the German city of Bonn from 30.3.2014 – 05.04.2014, organized by the Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute (ABI) under the auspices of African Good Governance Network (AGGN).

The AGGN forum which comprises a group of highly educated African academics who have either studied in Germany or

are still studying in Germany, was an apt platform that brought together a motley of speakers on the theme of Media with emphasis on Africa. The African scholars engaged the speakers in enriching discussions on a number of topical issues such as Media and Politics that was presented by Prof. Dr Stephan Kaußen of the Macromedia Hochschule für Kommunikation (MHMK) Köln, Media and Conflict by Jane Ayieko-Kummeth a former journalist, Media Freedom in Africa by Eric Topona of Deutsche Welle and African Media in Ger-

many presented by Hon. Kenneth Gbandi of Heritage Magazine.

The AGGN fellows particularly lamented the hitherto biased narrative of Africa in international media as a failing continent only famous for the three Ks (Krankheit, Krieg und Korruption) which largely ignores the positive attributes of Africa and its very ripe potential for growth and development. Hon. Gbandi appropriately highlighted the faces the negative press on Africa has assumed but he also brought to the fore how

this negative paradigm is slowly giving way to a more sanguine expectation. Other than the bad press Africa has experienced over the years from the Western world, a discussion on 'African Media – Foreign Influences: The Case of China in Africa' presented by Sergio Grassi of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung took center stage. Discussions on this topic largely centered around the interface between African Media and China's influences on this media and the role China has played in compelling the Western media to rejig its negative image of Africa.

The African Scholars visited Deutsche

Welle among other places in Bonn and particularly benefited from a Media Skills training conducted by Bernd Rössle from the Deutsche Welle Akademie. The skills training equipped the fellows with expertise to handle media interviews, hold press conferences as well as how to present news worthy items.

There was indeed consensus at the end of the workshop that Africa is indeed the 'future' given Africa's rising star even in international media that has hitherto been negative. Africa enjoys a substantial natural resource base and has a very young population full of potential. For this reason

a paradigm shift in the relationship between Africa and Western countries should be more of a partnership relationship as opposed to one of a master servant relationship. Africa's advantages notwithstanding, Africans in diaspora remain a critical voice for change in the African Continent. There is particularly urgent need to promote objective and independent journalism on the African Continent that will promote a more positive image of the continent.

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