

African and European writers attack “cowardice” of their leaders

In a few days Heads of State from Africa and Europe will meet in Portugal to discuss issues common to two continents whose histories, for good and bad, have intertwined for centuries. This is a historic opportunity to inaugurate a new era founded on shared values and a genuine friendship where we can support each other and learn from each other.

But that will not be possible while the summit meeting shies away from discussing two of the world's worst humanitarian crises, those in Zimbabwe and Darfur. Despite Europe's and Africa's shared responsibility to address such crises, neither one is on the agenda. No time has been set aside for formal or informal discussion.

What can one say of this political cowardice? We expect our leaders to lead, and lead with moral courage. When they fail to do so they leave all of us morally impoverished. Where they funk the difficult issues they make themselves irrelevant. Why should we listen to the mighty when the mighty are deaf to the cries of the afflicted? Millions of Africans and Europeans would expect Zimbabwe and Darfur to be at the very top of the agenda. It is not too late.

List of signatories to the letter (so far):

European : Vaclav Havel, Günter Grass, Roddy Doyle, Tom Stoppard, Jose Gil, Colm Toibin, Jürgen Habermas, Dario Fo, Franca Rame
African : Prof. Wole Soyinka, Mia Couto, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Gillian Slovo, Ben Okri, Nadine Gordimer, John M Coetzee, Goretti Kyomuhendo