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**World Cup 2010: Why the South
Africans should get the Cup**

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World Cup 2010: Why the South Africans should get the Cup

Bonn, 21 June 2010. Admittedly, the South African national team's chances of winning the World Cup were limited from the start. However, the South Africans will also be jubilant after the final.

It can be said already that they have managed to make the mega event a success: images of the modern stadiums as well as the dynamic cities Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg are sent around the world. In addition, the football-crazy population is infectious with euphoria and vitality. All of this lets the country shine in a positive light – an effect that was intended.

Never before were so many expectations – beyond those of purely sporting interest – set for a World Cup. The prospect of a kind of “Development Double Pack” has been held out: on the one hand, South Africa should continue to develop by profiting from the investments and tourists who have been lured by the World Cup. On the other hand, the perception of the rest of the world should change. A new image of Africa should emerge, beyond poverty, hunger, epidemics and violence. Indeed, a much-vaunted change of image appears to have taken place in the last few days. If one follows the reports in the economic press about the coming into existence of major African companies and the market potential of many countries, in the meantime, Africa is also being seen as a continent of possibilities. And yet, despite the images that are currently going around the world, images of modern and dynamic South Africa in many areas of life, we cannot afford to forget that in many countries of Africa there is still abject poverty, hunger, a miserable health care system and an emphasis on violence to resolve conflicts.

Since the end of apartheid, South Africa itself has always been committed to the continent, has been heavily involved in the African Union and in its declarations always placed itself on the side of the African countries. In actual fact, however, South Africa is playing in a different league. The socio-economic development much more advanced than in the rest of the continent. This is clearly evident from the fact that it would not be possible to host such an event in any other African country. That's why we also owe South Africa our respect: it has assumed the role of ambassador for the entire continent during the World Cup and played this role impressively, for example when Archbishop Desmond Tutu declared all guests to the World Cup to be Africans, since Africa is ultimately the cradle of humanity.

Beyond South Africa's role as ambassador, the question about the impact of the World Cup on the host country itself remains. From an economic standpoint, World Cups are often risky for the hosting countries. Thus, like in other countries previously as well, the expenses have increased continuously since the World Cup was awarded to South Africa in 2004. According to the most recent estimates, the South African government has now invested around 4m euros for new constructions and the modernisation of stadiums and transport infrastructure.

Against the background that the unemployment rate in South Africa is 25 %, an estimated 5.7 million people are HIV +, around 20 % of the population does not have access to electricity and 30 % does not have access to improved sanitary facilities, a critical discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the World Cup is appropriate. There are serious points of criticism:



the corruption scandals in some stadium constructions and the banning of small businesses from the areas around the stadiums and fan fests due to pressure from FIFA. In addition, rural areas hardly profit from the investments surrounding the World Cup, and in South Africa's cities, complex measures for modernisation beyond the centres are required. Measures that were taken under substantial time pressure and to some extent without sufficiently consulting the population were not always found to be optimal.

Good developments are just as obvious however. Despite all concerns and criticism of politics and the administration, South Africa has demonstrated its ability to perform and at the same time sent a positive signal to foreign investors. Moreover, the additional visitors strengthen the tourist industry even in the weak overall winter season. Through their reports, the attractiveness of the travel destination South Africa can increase significantly. Something positive can be gained even from the cases of corruption and other negative reports: the South African civil society and the media discover the scandals, criticize precisely and accurately, thus holding politicians, the administration and the private sector accountable.

Especially exiting will be the next few years, in which it will be seen whether hopes that the poor population has invested in the hosting of the World Cup will be fulfilled. The country will still require a lot of time in order to reduce the extreme income inequality and raise the standard of living in the entire country. To live up to these challenges requires social cohesion, patience and constructive action by all actors of society. It is to be hoped that in the coming years all of this will be in existence in South Africa. For the moment however South Africans deserve a cup for the fact alone that contrary to initial fears the World Cup is up and running and the ball is rolling.



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