

The diaspora as a bridge

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Geneva's African diaspora, whose diversity Chapter I described, forms a bridge of a particular kind. Its members know both shores, speak the languages, understand the institutions and maintain networks in their countries of origin. They are entrepreneurs, executives, professionals, researchers and international civil servants. They invest in their countries, set up businesses there, transfer skills to them and sometimes represent Geneva companies there.

Geneva's companies and institutions have every interest in drawing on these skills. A bank serving an African clientele, a trader dealing with national companies, a fund investing in businesses on the continent all benefit from staff who know the realities on the ground. Diaspora associations, professional networks and university programmes make such connections easier.

The diaspora also performs a critical function. It casts a demanding eye on the financial centre, having sometimes witnessed in its own countries the effects of questionable practices. It takes part in the debates on the restitution of assets, on transparency in commodity trading and on corporate responsibility. This perspective, voiced from Geneva, contributes to the credibility of the commitments made by the financial centre.

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