

JOINT EU-AFRICA STRATEGY

1. Joint EU-Africa Strategy

For more than 30 years, the African states and the European Union (EU) have been working together to develop new and mutually accountable models for their relations. From Yaoundé to Cotonou, the EU and Africa have jointly committed to cooperation and partnership through international treaties and more particularly the successive ACP-EU partnership agreements.

Since the first EU-Africa Summit in Cairo in 2000, both Africa and Europe have changed.

Both continents are at a cross road: Europe, 50 years after its foundation, is still searching for its identity and debating on the role it has the ambition to play on the world scene, while the Lisbon treaty ratification process is uncertain. Africa is building its own process of integration and cooperation with the creation of the African Union. "Emerging" powers such as China are increasingly playing a role in Africa. Thus, Europe, conceding in a recent EC Communication the key role of this country on the African continent, proposes to integrate China in a trilateral dialogue.

Since the EU strategy "*The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership*" was formally endorsed by the EU Heads of State and Government at the European Council on 15-16 December 2005, there has been increasing debates on the future of the relations between the EU and Africa, which finally led to the adoption of a strategy and an action plan by European and African Heads of States and Government in Lisbon in December 2007. This EU-Africa Strategy and its Action Plan are structured around 8 partnerships: peace and security; democratic governance and human rights; trade and regional integration; the millennium development goals; energy; climate change; migration, mobility and employment; science, information society and space.

2. What is the EU doing?

The European Union and the African Union have in the past years developed their relations since the first Euro-African Summit in Cairo in 2000. The EU and the AU have thus decided to develop a co-owned 'joint strategy' which "reflects the needs and aspirations of the peoples of Africa and Europe." The purpose of this joint strategy is to develop a political vision and practical approaches for the future partnership between the EU and Africa, based on mutual respect and equal partnership, common interests and the principle of ownership. The EU has stated that the official processes will be nourished and enriched through engagement with citizens and civil society organizations, resulting in not only an institutionally-centered strategy, but also one to which civil society on both continents can relate, contribute and support in their own work. However, although some efforts have initially been realized in 2008 in involving the European civil society in the debates, the participation of African civil society organizations is lagging behind.

Within the Council of the EU, the ad hoc working group on Africa has become permanent to coordinate EU member states' positions on the issues covered by the Joint Strategy. The establishment of this group is partly intended to facilitate a more systematic interaction with EU non-institutional actors. The group consists of experts from the EU member states and is meeting regularly. According to the action plan, similar mechanisms should reciprocally be set up on the AU side. In October 2008, the meeting of the two Commissions (EC and AUC) and several Africa-EU Troika meetings at ministerial level have made possible to stocktaking the progresses realized. The formalization of the Joint Expert Groups for each of the 8 partnerships should have been finalized by now.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament has developed a response: an own initiative report (rapporteur is MEP Maria Martens) on the state of play of EU-Africa relations (October 2007). The EP is also promoting dialogue with the Pan-African Parliament, with of a meeting of delegations from both parliaments in South Africa last October.

Funding modalities¹ for the 8 partnerships are still unclear. EU Member States are requested to provide financial contributions and to take the leadership on the implementation of the different partnerships. It is important to monitor the impact of that process on the programming of the 10th EDF regional and intra-ACP envelopes and during the mid-term review of the CSPs. The second review of the Cotonou agreement to take place in 2010 will also certainly be influenced by the EU-Africa Strategy and it is expected that the EU will use that opportunity to legitimize the use of the intra-ACP envelope of the EDF to support the implementation of the EU-Africa Strategy in the long run through pan-African programmes and facilities.

3. Our Recommendations

CONCORD has set up a specific working group in charge of monitoring the institutional process and its implementation, in liaison with a CSO Interim Steering Group which has been set up on the European side to elaborate recommendations on best ways to involve CSOs in the implementation of the strategy.

We urge the EU to take urgent measures to rebalance its relations with Africa at the following levels: political dialogue, trade negotiations and development assistance. We call upon the European Union to build these relationships within a joint project, owned by both parties, that actively engages with citizens and civil society organizations.

CONCORD therefore urges the EU and AU member states:

- To base real partnership between Africa and the EU on serious political dialogue rooted in mutual accountability and respect and transparency;
- To support the setting up of a platform for civil society dialogue on the African side, which should be engaged in a joint participative dynamic with European counterparts;
- To engage in an in-depth dialogue with all African and European stakeholders, in particular the parliaments, and to take time to properly consult and engage with citizens for a strategy that is fully owned by Europeans and Africans;
- To make sure that the dialogue and cooperation mechanisms set up by the EU-Africa Strategy are additional to those of the Cotonou Agreement and reinforce the relationship with the ACP as a whole (principle of additional and appropriate funding);
- To demonstrate this shared commitment to the promotion of all human rights and the fight against poverty by delivering on MDGs and the development objectives of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement;
- To share regularly and transparently detailed information on the implementation process and its funding starting with the joint report of progress that will be presented after the Troika meeting in Addis Ababa in November 2008.

CONCORD recommends to the JPA:

- To get involved and create space for parliamentary engagement in the strategy development process, as well as in the preparation of the AU-EU Troika meetings where the implementation of the strategy is being settled on. In this regard, to insist that the joint progress report that will be issued after the AU-EU Troika meeting in November is effectively scrutinized by national and regional parliaments.

For further information, please go on www.concordeurope.org

¹ The implementation of the Joint Strategy and the initiatives that will be launched in this framework will be financed through the existing funding mechanisms according to their respective domains of intervention and to their relevance with regard to the objectives and activities concerned, like the European Development Fund (EDF), the financing instrument for development cooperation, the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Instrument for Stability, as well as the Thematic Programs, and by the financial institutions of the EU like the European Investment Bank (EIB).