



CONCORD Cotonou Working group
Briefing paper

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 Yaounde to Cotonou, the EU and Africa have jointly committed to cooperation and partnership through international treaties.

Since the first EU-Africa Summit in Cairo in 2000, both Africa and Europe have changed. Both continents are at a cross road: Europe turned 50 this year, and is still in search of its identity and its role in the world scene. 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.

2007 is seeing increasing debates on the future of relations between the European Union and Africa. The EU strategy "*The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership*" was formally endorsed by the EU Heads of State and Government at the Brussels European Council on 15-16 December 2005. This first strategy has been widely described as unilateral. However, the European Commission and EU member states are now keen to develop a strategy jointly with the AU in preparation of the next EU-Africa Summit that would be organised in Lisbon during the Portuguese presidency. The EU-Africa Strategy and its Action Plan is structured around 4 main clusters: peace and security; trade, economic relations and regional integration; governance and human rights; key development issues.

For many years European NGOs have been very active regarding questions on European aid to ACP countries, especially through the monitoring of the **European Development Fund (EDF)**, which is the biggest development cooperation instrument in the world (€23 billion for 5 years), but also through the monitoring of the free trade agreements between the EU and the ACP regions (these are known as the **Economic Partnership Agreements, EPAs**). According to the institutional calendar, these negotiations should be finalized at the end of 2007 at the same time as the programming of the 10th EDF.

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 European Union and the African Union 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, common interests and the principle of ownership. **The EU has stated that the official processes will be nourished and enriched with ideas from the public consultation;** Resulting in not just a strategy for officials, but also one to which civil society on both continents can relate, contribute and support in their own work.

EU institutions state that a new platform for political dialogue between the EU and Africa as equals is needed. The European Union must build these relationships within a joint project, owned by both parties, that actively engages with citizens and civil society organisations. Any Joint Strategy will depend on trust at all levels for its effectiveness as a partnership. This will require time and effort.

Within the Council of the European Union, an ad hoc working group has been set up to coordinate EU member states' positions on the wide range of 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.

The joint drafting process of the Strategy and Action Plan should be finalised by the end of October. The Summit will take place at Head of States and Government level in December and is expected to approve both documents; however, the agenda is not ready yet, and the progress made has been slower than expected.

The European Parliament is developing a response: drafting an own initiative report (rapporteur is MEP Maria Martens) and also promoting linkages with the Pan-African Parliament.

3. Our Recommendations:

CONCORD has contributed to the consultation process organized by ECDPM on behalf of the European Commission.

Key advocacy messages

We urge the European Union 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 organisations.

CONCORD therefore urges the EU and AU:

To base real partnership between Africa and the EU on serious political dialogue rooted in mutual accountability and respect;

To engage in an in-depth dialogue on governance with all African and European stakeholders. Every effort must be made to avoid a one way European concept of governance being imposed resulting in new conditions placed on developing countries

To demonstrate this shared commitment to the promotion of all human rights and the fight against poverty by delivering on MDGs and the development aims of the Cotonou Treaty

To enhance regional integration in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states before implementing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and to open a real debate on alternative processes with ACP authorities and civil societies

4. Recommendations to the JPA

Get involved and create space for parliamentary engagement in the Strategy development process, as well as at the AU-EU Summit scheduled for December 2007. Urge the AU and EU Member States to take time to properly consult and engage with citizens for a strategy that is fully owned by Europeans and Africans. Insist on regular information and transparency of process from the EU and AU and to make the Summit in Lisbon a milestone in this process and not an end in itself.

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